

JEREMIAH

GOD STATEMENT FOR JEREMIAH: THE GOD WHO _____(a) THE _____(b)

Jeremiah is a challenging book. One reason is because it's so _____(c); by word count it's the largest prophetic book in the Old Testament. It's also not in _____(d) order so it can be hard to follow. Also, some of it is _____(e) material which can add another level of challenge. And, finally, it's _____(f). It covers the last 40 years of the Southern Kingdom's (Judah's) downward spiral to destruction. Jeremiah is known as "the weeping prophet" because he was plagued with deep emotional agony over the unrepentant nation of Judah, the upcoming destruction of Jerusalem, and the exile of its people to Babylon.

Before we take a look at the book, let's put Jeremiah and his ministry on a timeline. As we saw in our last lesson, Isaiah died around 681 BC. Jeremiah was born about 40 years later, around 640 BC, in a village near Jerusalem. His father was a priest, so, surely, he grew up accompanying his dad to the Temple from time to time. God called him to begin his prophetic ministry in _____(g) BC during the reign of King Josiah (the last good king of Judah), and he preached to the people of Judah for about 40 years, until Jerusalem finally fell in _____(h) BC. So, Jeremiah was the last prophet God sent to Judah before the fall of Jerusalem.

Because the book of Jeremiah isn't in chronological order, some have called it the most confused book in the Old Testament. Despite the challenges of outlining the collections of Jeremiah's sermons, poems, and essays, we'll arrange it in three parts to help us remember it.

PART ONE: JEREMIAH'S CALL (Chap 1)

God told Jeremiah that He had set him apart for God's work even before he was _____(i) (Jer 1:4-5). But, like Moses and Gideon, Jeremiah finds a reason to _____(j) God's "offer" (Jer 1:6). But, like with Moses and Gideon, God reassures Jeremiah by promising that He'll protect him and be with him (Jer 1:7-10).

PART TWO: JUDGMENT ON JUDAH IS COMING (Chaps 2-25)

This section contains material that *mostly* came before 605 BC. That's the year of the battle of _____(k) where Babylonian put the final nail in the coffin of the Assyrian empire. After that battle, the two remaining regional powers were _____(l) in the north and _____(m) in the south . . . and _____(n) was stuck in between.

The emphasis on Jeremiah's messages is _____(o) rebellion. God told Jeremiah to accuse the entire nation of breaking the covenant that was given at Sinai. _____(p) and _____(q) were the fundamental problems. Israel filled the land with Canaanite shrines and worshiped those worthless idols. God used the imagery of adultery to describe their idolatry:

The Lord said to me in the days of King Josiah: "Have you seen what she did, that faithless one, Israel, how she went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and there played the whore? And I thought, "After she has done all this she will return to me," but she did not return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it. She saw that for all the adulteries of that faithless one, Israel, I had sent her away with a decree of divorce. Yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but she too went and played the whore. Because she took her whoredom lightly, she polluted the land, committing adultery with stone and tree" (Jer 3:6-9).

God tried to bring them to their senses, but they refused to respond to His _____(r). So, Jeremiah declared that judgment must come; and he said it would come "from the north" (Jer 4:5-7)—that is, from the _____(s) who would invade from the north. Of course, _____(t) can't be blamed for the coming judgment; the _____(u) are to blame—there isn't a righteous person in the land (Jer 5:1-9).

In chapter 7 Jeremiah really ramps up his work as he brings the hammer down on hollow _____(v). The people believe their services in the Temple will secure them from God's _____(w) (Jer 7:1-4, 9-10). They could not have been more wrong. God won't tolerate just going through the motions of worship. He wants pure sacrifice or none at all.

Jeremiah's preaching won few—if any—converts; but it sure won many enemies. Preaching the truth to people who have no interest in the truth can bring plenty of _____(x) and _____(y), and that's exactly what it brought to Jeremiah. His enemies made life miserable for him. He was considered a traitor. He was threatened. He was shunned. He was hated. On one occasion he was beaten and put in stocks (Jer 20:1-2). But God kept delivering him from these dangers (Jer 11:18-20). And

no matter how much he suffered, he wouldn't stop _____(z). He *couldn't* stop preaching. The word of God _____(aa) in Jeremiah's bones, and it just had to come out (Jer 20:9).

God's instrument of punishment for Israel's _____(bb) was the king of Babylon (Jer 25:8-13). When King Zedekiah sent representatives to Jeremiah to see if God would save _____(cc) from the Babylonians (Jer 21:1-2)—Zedekiah was probably hoping God would pull-off something similar to what He did about a century earlier when Hezekiah was king—the answer came back, in effect, “Not a chance” (Jer 21:3-7). The Babylonians were on the march to Jerusalem . . . and it would result in a march back to Babylon for God's people who survived the destruction of the holy city.

PART THREE: RESTORATION IS COMING (Chaps 26-52)

This section contains material that *mostly* came after 605 B.C. There are more _____(dd) stories in this section about Jerusalem's destruction. We see _____(ee) and the _____(ff) go up in flames (Jer 39:8). We see King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon capture King Zedekiah, and then order that Zedekiah's sons be slaughtered right before his eyes. Then Nebuchadnezzar gouged out Zedekiah's eyes so that the last thing he saw was his sons being butchered (Jer 39:6-7).

And, in this section, there are more dark stories about Jeremiah's persecution, like when he was tossed into a cistern (a deep pit for water collection) where he sank up to his armpits into the slime and muck, and he was left there to die (Jer 38:4-13). And there was the time a band of Jewish rebels kidnapped him and took him Egypt against his will. These rebels apparently thought they'd be safe from Nebuchadnezzar's reach in Egypt. Jeremiah, however, delivered a message to them from God: “Do not go to Egypt!” (Jer 42:22). Their response to Jeremiah was “You lie!” (Jer 43:1-2). So they went, and they died (except for a very small remnant, Jer 44:27-28). The Bible doesn't record Jeremiah's death, but according to early Christian tradition he was stoned to death in Egypt by his fellow Jews who hated the truth he continued to preach.

But, in the midst of all the darkness of this section, we find a collection of Jeremiah's messages of _____(gg) for the _____(hh) of _____(ii). While hope wasn't completely absent from his preaching in the earlier chapters of the book (for instance, see Jer 23:5-8), it sure wasn't the focus. The focus of that section was more on “tearing down and plucking up” rather than on “building and planting” (Jer 1:10).

Jeremiah wrote to the newly _____(jj) Jews in _____(kk)

and told them to settle down and start building new lives because they're going to be there for a while, which in this case meant _____(ll) years (Jer 29:1-14). God's message to the surviving remnant couldn't be clearer—He's going to _____(mm) them to the _____(nn) from which He had _____(oo) them.

The future _____(pp) of Israel to their homeland is again declared with certainty in Jeremiah 30:3: "For behold, days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will restore the fortunes of my people, Israel and Judah, says the Lord, and I will bring them back to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall take possession of it." At that time their oppression will be over (Jer 30:10-11), their horrible, sin-caused wounds will be healed (Jer 30:12-17), they will be filled with rejoicing (Jer 30:18-21), their covenant relationship with God will be restored (Jer 30:22), and it will be the end of God's wrath (Jer 30:23-24).

But God, through Jeremiah, said some more very interesting things about this coming restoration of Israel to the Promised Land. He said it would establish a _____(qq) covenant with His people (Jer 31:31). And with this covenant would come with some groundbreaking ideas. For one thing, this covenant would reside in people's _____(rr) (Jer 31:33). In other words, the only people in covenant with God would be those who truly _____(ss). Physical DNA won't be able to bring someone into this covenant with God. Also, in this covenant group, there will be no need to teach people to know God, because they'll know Him (Jer 31:34). In other words, in the new covenant there won't be an "unbelieving majority" as there was in Jeremiah's day. Again, the covenant group will only consist of believers. And, finally, this new covenant will _____(tt) _____(uu) (Jer 31:35-37).

All of these concepts that God said will characterize the new covenant and the new restored kingdom have caused a lot of confusion among Jews who read these "_____ (vv) promises" of Jeremiah and the other prophets. Many keep looking for that promised descendent of David who will come and lead the _____(ww) nation of Israel to eternal peace, prosperity, and security. Unfortunately, their thinking about Jeremiah's prophecies along those lines is terribly misguided.

It's important to keep in mind that the prophets—spoke not only to their own age, but also to the _____(xx). This means there is often _____(yy) levels of fulfillment to such prophecies. So, on one level, Jeremiah's promise that the Jews would return from Babylonian captivity to Canaan was fulfilled when King Cyrus of Persia allowed the Jews to return and rebuild the Temple (Ezra 1:1-4). But, on a second level, and the most important level, Jeremiah's promises of a new covenant spoke to God's ultimate plan of bringing humanity back into eternal

_____ (zz) with Him through the work of _____ (aaa).

THE LESSONS OF JEREMIAH

- _____ (bbb) and _____ (ccc) are always required for acceptable sacrifice. God wants a pure sacrifice or no sacrifice at all. Don't trust the God-given system of worship more than you trust the God who gave the system (Jer 7:8-11, 21-23).
- Telling the _____ (ddd) will often bring strong opposition (1:17-19; 20:7-10). As a preacher of truth, Jeremiah stands outside of accepted society. He is not welcome in his community any more than Isaiah was.
- Love the _____ (eee) more than you love personal comfort and well-being. Jeremiah suffered because he loved the truth more than comfort, friends, or anything else (Jer 20:9). We must be more satisfied with God's _____ (fff) than anything.
- Find _____ (ggg) in the _____ (hhh) of God to be with you and ultimately honor you because of your commitment to Him. God promised Jeremiah that He would be with him through all the trials (Jer 1:17-19), and Jeremiah clung to that promise (Jer 20:11-13).
- There is always time for _____ (iii) (Jer 3:6-4:4), but there may come a time when we may be so hardened by sin that we can't repent (Jer 7:16; 17:1).
- Our choices are to stand with _____ (jjj) and suffer _____ (kkk), or stand with the _____ (lll) and suffer _____ (mmm) later. Jeremiah chose to stand with God and suffer during his life. Because of that choice, he is now free from suffering forever.
- Don't lose sight of the central theme of the Bible. The central theme of the Bible is the defeat of _____ (nnn) and the renewal of _____ (ooo). Babylon represents the evil world system that seeks to destroy God's people. But God will defeat them and once more live among His people in perfect fellowship.
- View _____ (ppp) from God's perspective, not the world's. From the world's perspective, Jeremiah was a failure. He was penniless and friendless. In God's eyes, however, he was one of history's most successful people. He faithfully obeyed God.

KEY PASSAGES IN JEREMIAH

- Jeremiah 1:4-10
- Jeremiah 6:11-15
- Jeremiah 17:9
- Jeremiah 20:9
- Jeremiah 23:5-8
- Jeremiah 31:31-34

FILL-IN-THE-BLANK ANSWER KEY:

[a] ENFORCES	[ii] Israel
[b] COVENANT	[jj] exiled
[c] long	[kk] Babylon
[d] chronological	[ll] 70
[e] poetic	[mm] restore
[f] depressing	[nn] land
[g] 627	[oo] expelled
[h] 586	[pp] restoration
[i] born	[qq] new
[j] decline	[rr] hearts
[k] Carchemish	[ss] believed
[l] Babylon	[tt] never
[m] Egypt	[uu] end
[n] Judah	[vv] restoration
[o] covenant	[ww] political
[p] Idolatry	[xx] future
[q] immorality	[yy] two
[r] correction	[zz] fellowship
[s] Babylonians	[aaa] Jesus
[t] God	[bbb] Faith
[u] people	[ccc] obedience
[v] worship	[ddd] truth
[w] wrath	[eee] truth
[x] pain	[fff] presence
[y] suffering	[ggg] comfort
[z] preaching	[hhh] promise
[aa] burned	[iii] repentance
[bb] rebellion	[jjj] God
[cc] Jerusalem	[kkk] now
[dd] dark	[lll] world
[ee] Jerusalem	[mmm] more
[ff] Temple	[nnn] Babylon
[gg] hope	[ooo] Israel
[hh] future	[ppp] success