



Jeremiah

Chapters 19-33

*"You who have escaped
from the sword,
go, do not stand still!
Remember the LORD
from far away,
and let Jerusalem
come into your mind...."
--Jer. 51:50*

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Literary Structure of Jeremiah

On the micro level the book resists being outlined in a logical structure. Jeremiah's ministry was during a tumultuous time, the structure and compilation of his book reflects that fact.

That his words were recorded and maintained is miraculous in itself. With the help of his scribal assistant Baruch, the record of Jeremiah's ministry were captured and memorialized for all generations as a testimony to the Lord.

However, the following outline provides some structure to the book on a macro level.

The Prophet Jeremiah	Chapters 1-52
The Call of Jeremiah	(1)
A Prophet to Judah	(2-45)
A Prophet to the Nations	(46-51)
The Fall of Jerusalem	(52)

Chapter 1, is a call narrative to establish Jeremiah's credentials as a prophet of the Lord. For the most part, chapters 2-45 concern the southern kingdom of Judah with a focus on the prophecy of destruction on the city of Jerusalem and the Temple. In chapters 46-51, Jeremiah becomes the prophet to the nations. The final chapter, is a narrative describing the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians.

The general logic of the book is discerned when one considers the work as a whole. The first 45 chapters are written to establish the credentials of the prophet as having words that are true. Chapter 52, historically validates the prophets words. Therefore, the prophecies to the nations are certain and they would do well to heed them, lest they share the fate of Judah and Jerusalem--*"let Jerusalem come into your mind!"* (Jer. 5:1:50)



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A Prophet to Judah (2-45)

The prophet's ministry to the kings of Judah leading up to the fall of Jerusalem and deportation to Babylon is recorded first. The section can be generally divided into four parts.

A Prophet to Judah	Chapters 2-45
Prophecies of Judgment on Judah	2-25
Contending with False Prophets	26-29
Prophecies of Restoration for Judah	30-33
The Fall of Jerusalem	34-45

For I hear many whispering. Terror is on every side! "Denounce him! Let us denounce him!" say all my close friends, watching for my fall. "Perhaps he will be deceived; then we can overcome him and take our revenge on him." But the Lord is with me as a dread warrior; therefore my persecutors will stumble; they will not overcome me. They will be greatly shamed, for they will not succeed. Their eternal dishonor will never be forgotten. Jer. 20:10-11

The Royal Rejection of Jeremiah (19-25)

In Chapter 18:1-11, the Lord holds out hope for the nation of Judah if they will repent and turn back to the Lord. However, Jeremiah's prophecies are roundly rejected. Instead of attacking the sin and evil in the midst of the people, the people plot against the prophet:

Then they said, "Come, let us make plots against Jeremiah, for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, let us strike him with the tongue, and let us not pay attention to any of his words." Jeremiah 18:18

The Lord's response to the peoples intransigence is to dramatically enact a sign of judgment against them. In the sight of all the people, Jeremiah is told to break a potter's vessel (cf. 18:1-11) and declare that the Lord will "do to this place" as has been done to this broken vessel (19:1-15). While this judgment could have been averted through repentance, the Lord's prophecies of judgment because they "have stiffened their neck, refusing to hear my words."

Rather than embracing Jeremiah as a blessing, they received him as a criminal. The chief officials arrested him and beat him. (20:1ff.) Jeremiah's rejection was personally devastating. (20:7-18)



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One man could lead Judah to repentance, the King! Jeremiah challenges King Zedekiah to heed the voice of the Lord and repent:

For if you will indeed obey this word, then there shall enter the gates of this house kings who sit on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their servants and their people. But if you will not obey these words, I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that this house shall become a desolation. Jer. 22:4-5

The call to the kings of Judah to repent will go unheeded. They have a false security in their “palaces of cedar” (22:14) but they have build their houses with unrighteousness and injustice (22:13-17).

Therefore, their judgment is prophesied (22:18-30). The Lord will completely wipe out this branch of David’s line (Josiah’s sons) for their corruption: “for none of his offspring shall succeed in sitting on the throne of David and ruling again in Judah.” (22:30)

The royal rejection of Jeremiah by Josiah’s sons, does not mean that the Lord has abandoned his covenant with David. There are other branches to the Davidic tree and the Lord promises that days are coming when the Lord will reestablish the Davidic line.

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. 6 In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: ‘The Lord is our righteousness.’ --Jer. 23:5-6

My heart is broken within me; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, like a man overcome by wine, because of the Lord and because of his holy words. –Jer. 23:9

In the meantime however there remains a season of the most severe judgment Judah has ever known. It is a prophecy of judgment and disaster so severe, it makes Jeremiah’s heart break and his bones shake (23:9). The people turn to the word of false prophets.



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Contending with False Prophets (23:9-29)

One of the challenges facing Jeremiah was from false prophets. The false prophet contradicted the Word of the Lord and misled the people through their deception. They deceive by telling people what they want to hear instead of what they need to hear.

Thus says the Lord of hosts: "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord. They say continually to those who despise the word of the Lord, 'It shall be well with you'; and to everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say, 'No disaster shall come upon you.'" —Jer. 23:16-17

*But if they had stood in my council, then they would have proclaimed my words to my people, and they would have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their deeds.
—Jer. 23:22*

The false prophets do not stand in the council of the Lord or consult him in prayer. They speak lies in the name of the Lord (23:25).

What ensues is a battle of the prophets: the false prophets vs. the true prophet in Jeremiah. Jeremiah continued to prophesy judgment and exile. He tells of an exile of 70 years in Babylon because of their failure to listen to the voice of the Lord (25:1-14). In a vision Jeremiah receives a cup of wrath which is to be drunk by all nations beginning with Jerusalem and Judah and ending with Babylon (25:15-16).

Many of the false prophets and officials called for Jeremiah's arrest and death.

Then the priests and the prophets said to the officials and to all the people, "This man deserves the sentence of death, because he has prophesied against this city, as you have heard with your own ears." —Jer. 26:11

Some people heeded the prophet's words remembering the words of Micah and the repentance of Hezekiah (26:16-19). Jeremiah called the people to submit the exile and judgment and willingly come under the yoke of Babylon. If they resist, they will die. (27:1-22)



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By encouraging the people to fight Nebuchadnezzar, the false prophet Hananiah ensured the death of all who would not listen to the true voice of the Lord. (28:1-17)

Jeremiah on the other hand, encouraged the people to submit to the exile and take a long term view of their captivity.

“Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5 Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. 6 Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. 7 But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. –29:4-7

In submitting to the Lord’s exile, the people will ultimately prosper. God will restore the righteous remnant who heeds the words of the prophet.

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. –Jer. 29:11

The false prophet Shemaiah contradicted Jeremiah’s message. (29:24-32) But he spoke rebellion against the Lord.



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Prophecies of Restoration for Judah (30-33)

Jeremiah has moved in his speech from judgment, to encouragement of a remnant. Now he turns to prophecies of restoration.

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.” –Jer. 30:3

He again raises the hope of a new Davidic king. (30:9) The Lord will turn his peoples mourning into joy and he will restore.

At the heart of the message of restoration is the promise of a New Covenant.

31 “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. 33 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” –Jer. 31:31-34
