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*Part One: Selections From Jeremiah,
Ezekiel & Daniel*

Lesson One Sunday Jeremiah: Reign of Josiah

The prophetic ministry of Jeremiah stretches from the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah (628/27 B. C.) until some time after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B. C. More than any other prophet, Jeremiah was the prophet of the decline and fall of the southern kingdom, the man God raised up to speak to Judah in its darkest days. Since his ministry carried over into the period of exile, our study of this period must begin with this prophet. In the first four lessons of this quarter we will attempt to gain understanding of Jeremiah's position in relation to the history of God's people and of God's purposes in the world. Regrettably, we will not be able to read the entire book of Jeremiah at this time—We plan to return to it later on the adult level!—but an attempt will be made to convey the “flavor” of the book by means of selected readings from it.¹

The first lesson consists of readings from the reign of Josiah.² An attempt has been made to select readings that will provide some understanding of the times.

Reading for Thursday: Jeremiah 1

Historical Setting (1:1–3)

1. Review the reigns of Josiah, Jehoiakim and Zedekiah. Be sure you are able to sum up the main characteristics and developments of each. Consult Second Kings 22–25 and the study guide on the divided kingdom if necessary.

2. Two kings are omitted. Who? And why?

¹ This is not intended to discourage anyone from reading the whole book, but only to explain that the limits of the present course will not permit detailed discussion of the whole book in class. In fact, reading of the whole book is encouraged and can undoubtedly enrich a student's contribution to class discussion.

² See my *Notebook on Jeremiah*, especially pages 1, 12 & 69, where I contend that the first twenty chapters of Jeremiah date from the reign of Josiah.

Jeremiah's Call to the Prophetic Office (1:4–10)

1. How would verse 5 provide needed assurance and a basis for conviction in Jeremiah in view of later difficulties and challenges to his authority (as 43:2, for example)?

2. What was Jeremiah's initial response? (v. 6).

3. What encouragement was provided? (vv. 7–8).

4. What is the significance of verse 9?

5. Describe the position assigned to Jeremiah in verse 10 in view of the fact that the Hebrew for "set over" is rendered "made overseer" in Genesis 39:4, 5 and "made governor" in Jeremiah 40:5, 7.

6. Jeremiah's position (v. 10) must be understood in the light of verse 9. How would he exercise the functions described in verse 10?

Two Visions Providing Assurance and Confirmation Regarding the Mission Assigned to Jeremiah (1:11–16)

1. What is the significance of the almond-tree? (vv. 11–12). That is, what does it represent?⁴

2. What additional thought is then provided by the boiling pot? (vv. 13–16).

Charge to Jeremiah and Assurance of Divine Aid and Protection in this Difficult and Dangerous Assignment (1:17–19)

1. What reaction was Jeremiah told to expect?

2. What did he, nevertheless, have to do?

3. What encouragement was he given?

4. What is the significance of the figures used in verse 18?

⁴ Observe the play on words. Hebrew for almond-tree means to be awake, watchful, alert; hence the "awake" or the "watching" tree. The almond-tree was so called as being the first tree to awake from winter's sleep; the first to bud or blossom forth.

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Though time will not permit discussion of Jeremiah 2:2–3:5, it would be helpful to read this section which evidently sums up Jeremiah's first speech to the nation. It sets forth *Jehovah's Verdict on Israel's History*. (Think as you read. Is that a good heading?)

Readings for Friday

For Friday an attempt has been made to select some readings that will provide insight into conditions in Judah during the reign of Josiah, conditions that would soon bring on the complete destruction of the southern kingdom. An effort has been made to provide outlines enabling a reader to see the larger context from which the readings are lifted. See my *Notebook on Jeremiah* for fuller explanation and analysis.⁵

Introductory Outline of Jeremiah 3:6–6:30. The first three passages are lifted from this body of material, which may well be headed *The Rejection of Impenitent Israel*. The major subdivisions are:

1. The Change of Heart Necessary to the Salvation of the Nation and the Fulfillment of its Destiny (3:6–4:4).
2. The Burning Wrath of God, Which Will Consume Judah in the Absence of the Repentance Demanded by Jehovah (4:5–31).
3. The Moral Necessity of Punishment Upon "Such a Nation as This" (ch. 5).
4. The Outcome of the Period of Testing: The Rejection of a Worthless People (ch. 6).

Reading No. 1, Jeremiah 3:6–10

1. Review two background points:
 - 1a. Who was "Israel" as contrasted here with "Judah"?
 - 1b. What had happened to Israel long before the time of Josiah?
 - 2a. Give a summary description of the reign of Josiah.
 - 2b. What was Jeremiah's analysis of Josiah's reformation? (v. 10).

⁵ You may not be able to do all the readings for Friday, but study as many of the passages as you can.

Reading No. 2, Jeremiah 5:1–9

1. What were the conditions in Judah which made judgment necessary?
- 2a. Why did Jehovah not pardon?
- 2b. Was he being hard-hearted?

Reading No. 3, Jeremiah 6

1. With what is Jerusalem threatened in this chapter?
2. What conditions brought on such a threat?
3. Note especially verses 27–30:
 - 3a. What figure is used in this passage to represent what has happened in Judah?
 - 3b. How is the work of Jeremiah to be understood in the light of this passage?
 - 3c. What explanation is provided by the passage as to why Judah must be destroyed?

Introductory Outline, Chapters 7–10. The subject of the next major unit of Jeremiah is *The Way of Salvation*. Judah was under a delusion about this matter as we see in the first reading below. Jeremiah insists that the only way of salvation is through the knowledge of the true God. But Judah refuses to know Jehovah (cf. 9:3, 6). Therefore the nation faces disastrous judgment. In the second reading below we see the lesson which would be taught by the disaster to come upon Judah. The lesson which they refused to learn in any other way would be forced upon them through that disaster.

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Reading No. 4, Jeremiah 7:1–15

1. This passage shows the false security felt by Judah. Explain the delusion which caused the nation to feel secure in spite of its sinfulness.

2. How did Jeremiah refute and expose the delusion? (vv. 12–15). Why the reference to Shiloh?

Reading No. 5, Jeremiah 10:17–25

1. What is indicated in this passage as to the experience Judah was to suffer?

2a. What was the great lesson taught by the disaster suffered by Judah?

2b. Note especially verse 23 and contrast verse 21. How was that lesson taught by Judah's experience?

***Readings for Saturday: Jeremiah 9:1–6; 11:18–12:6;
15:10–21; ch. 20***

These readings all relate to the man Jeremiah and his experiences during the reign of Josiah. Each of the following questions should be kept in mind as you read each passage. You will likely find a part of your answer to each question in each of the passages.

1. Describe the reaction to Jeremiah's message and the feelings of Jeremiah himself.

2. How was Jeremiah's faith greatly tested by his experiences?

3a. How was Jeremiah able to endure? What help did he receive from God? What gave him courage?