

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this teaching series, you will have an opportunity to learn to know the Bible. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. Today we introduce the book of JEREMIAH - PART 2. We will study an outline of the history in Jeremiah's time and give a summary of his prophecies in chronological order.

POINT 1. AN OUTLINE OF HISTORY AND JEREMIAH'S PROPHECIES (in chronological order)

The book of Jeremiah is a combination of history, biography and prophecy. The book of Jeremiah has not been written in chronological order, because it was compiled over a period of time and had at least four editions. The book covers mainly that period in history when the kings of Judah faced the growing Babylonian Empire. The prophet Jeremiah began to prophesy during the reign of king Josiah in 627 B.C. and prophesied till well after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. We may divide Jeremiah's prophesying into five periods as follows;

The first period of Jeremiah's prophesying was from 627-622 B.C.

Roughly Jeremiah chapters 1-3, 7, 10-11 belong to the first period of Jeremiah's prophesying. (In 568 B.C. ch1:1-3. In 627 B.C. ch. 1:4-19. In 627-622 B.C. ch. 2:1 to 3:5, 3:6 to 4:2, 7:16-20, 7:30 to 8:3, 10:1-16. In 622 B.C. ch. 11:1-5). Read these parts against the history of king Josiah and his reformation:

King Josiah reigned from 639-608 B.C.

He did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and followed the example of his ancestor, king David, and did not turn aside to the right or to the left (2 Chron 34:1-2). He was a godly king and a great reformer. His religious and moral reformation may be divided into three stages:

The first stage of his reformation was from 632-628 B.C.

While king Josiah was still a youth of 16 years old (632 B.C.), he began to seek the God of his ancestor David (2 Chron 34:3). This means that he personally renounced the corrupt, polytheistic religion of his two predecessors. The death of king Ashurbanipal of Assyria in about 632 B.C. helps to explain how a young man of 16 years old could successfully defy his Assyrian overlord by ceasing to honour the Assyrian gods.

The second stage of his reformation was from 628-622 B.C.

When Josiah was 20 years old (628 B.C.), he began to extend his reformation to Jerusalem and eventually to all of Judah and even to the former territory of the northern kingdom of Israel. The call of Jeremiah the prophet in the 13th year of king Josiah, that is, in 627 B.C., and his vigorous prophesying against the gross idolatry in Jerusalem and Judah (1:4 to 4:2) may have been the strongest force that stimulated Josiah to act more and more strictly against rooting it out. 2 Kings 23:4-20 and 2 Chronicles 34:3-7 relate how Josiah gradually tackled the problem of rooting out idolatry: He removed from the temple the cult vessels used in the worship of foreign gods and thus terminated the *official* worship of idols in the temple. He observed the same carefulness in Judah. First he only removed the foreign idolatrous priests and only later he brought the Levitical priests to defile the idolatrous high places where priests had burned incense to the Lord. Only after he had removed the idolatrous priesthood, he began to destroy the idols. He destroyed the important idols of the neighbouring nations, including the idols of their overlord, Assyria. In Jerusalem, he defiled the 'Tophet', which was a burning place where children were sacrificed for Moloch. This gruesome idol was a sign of loyalty to Assyria. Josiah removed the horses and burned the chariots used in worship of Shemesh, the sun-god, just in- or outside the temple area. He destroyed other roof- and temple altars in Jerusalem. He destroyed the high places on the Mount of Olives, where Ashtoreth, a naked female image and other fertility gods of Canaan were worshipped. After he had destroyed all the idols in the southern kingdom of Judah, he also destroyed all the idols in the territory of the former northern kingdom of Israel. He began by completely destroying and defiling Israel's great altar at Bethel, just as another prophet had prophesied would happen three hundred years before in the time of king Jeroboam (1 Ki 13:1-5). He destroyed the temples on the high places in the cities of Samaria and slaughtered the idolatrous priests of the high places on their own altars and defiled them.

The third stage of his reformation was in 622 B.C.

When Josiah was 24 years old (622 B.C.), the book of the Law was found while restoring the temple in Jerusalem. It probably got lost during the terrible time of religious decay under king Manasseh. The reading of this book of the Law caused Josiah to humble himself before the Lord. On the one hand, he stamped out completely public idolatry. He killed all the mediums and spiritists and destroyed all the remaining idols and abominations that could be seen in the land, in accordance with the Old Testament Law. On the other hand, he formally restored the worship of the Lord in the temple. Before him, there was no king like him who turned to the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses, nor did any like him arise after him.

The second period of Jeremiah's prophesying was from 622-608 B.C.

Roughly Jeremiah chapters 4-10 belong to the second period of Jeremiah's prophesying (In 622-609 B.C. ch. 4:3 to 6:30, 7:21-29, 8:4 to 9:26, 10:17-25. In 608 B.C. ch. 22:10-12). Read these parts against the history of king Josiah after his reformation and of king Jehoahaz:

The history of king Josiah after his reformation.

Josiah's reformation changed *the outward* religion of the people of Judah, but it did not change *the inner wicked nature* of the people! Therefore, Jeremiah's prophesying directed itself against all other manifestations of their wickedness. Although public idolatry was stamped out, *the hearts* of the people were still unconverted! Jeremiah preached against adultery and prostitution (5:7-8; 9:2), deceit and injustice (5:26-28), oppression and violence (6:6-7), greed (6:13; 8:10), unwillingness to repent (8:4-6), ignorance of God's requirements (8:7), and going from one sin to another (9:3).

During the end of Josiah's reign, the Assyrian Empire crumbled and the Babylonian Empire was established. As the Assyrian Empire crumbled, king Necho II of Egypt desired to renew Egypt's claims on the Syrian coast and Palestine. However, Babylon inherited the western part of the Assyrian Empire after the destruction of Assur and Nineveh. A clash between Egypt and Babylon was therefore unavoidable. The Egyptian army marched north to Carchemish in 608 B.C. to assist the Assyrian army against Nabopolassar of Babylon, but Josiah opposed and delayed him at Megiddo. Josiah probably intended to unite the former northern territory of Israel with the southern territory of Judah and regarded king Necho's activities as a threat to his extended kingdom. In this battle at Megiddo in 608 B.C., Judah's godliest king, Josiah, died.

The history of king Jehoahaz.

King Jehoahaz reigned only in 608 B.C. He ruled only for 3 months. On his return south from Carchemish, king Necho II of Egypt deposed him, brought him to Riblah and later exiled him to Egypt, where he died.

The third period of Jeremiah's prophesying was from 608-597 B.C.

Roughly Jeremiah chapters 7, 11-23, 25-26, 35-36, 45-46 belong to the third period of Jeremiah's prophesying (In 608-605 B.C. ch. 7:1-15, 26:1-24, 11:6-17, 12:1-6, 46:1-28. In 605 B.C. ch. 25:1-38, 36:1-8, 45:1-5, 36:9-32. In 605-601 B.C. ch. 35:1-19. In 601 B.C. ch. 12:7-17. In 598 B.C. ch. 13:1-14, 21:11 to 22:9, 22:13-19. In 597 B.C. ch. 13:15-27, 14:1 to 15:21, 16:1-21, 17:1-27, 18:1 to 20:18, 22:20-27, 22:28-30, 23:1-8). Read these parts against the history of king Jehoiakim and king Jehoiachin:

One. The history of king Jehoiakim as a vassal of king Necho II of Egypt.

Jehoiakim reigned from 608-598 B.C. He was the son of Josiah and an older brother of Jehoahaz. On his return from Carchemish, king Necho II of Egypt appointed him to the throne and changed his name from Eliakim to Jehoiakim, as a sign of his vassalage to Egypt. In order to pay the Egyptian dues, Jehoiakim imposed heavy land taxes. He did evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his fathers (Amon and Manasseh) had done. The reformation of Josiah was forgotten and the people again reverted to idolatry. The prophets Jeremiah and Habakkuk prophesied against this rebellious decay. King Jehoiakim also shed much innocent blood, including of the prophet Uriah (2 Ki 24:4, Jer 26:20-23). During his reign, king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon twice invaded the kingdom of Judah.

Two. The history of king Nebuchadnezzar's first invasion into Judah in 605 B.C.

Nebuchadnezzar was the crown prince of Babylon and was in charge of the Babylonian army. He fought the Egyptians in the upper Euphrates region in 606 B.C. During the 4th year of the reign of Jehoiakim (46:2), that is, in May to June 605 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar made a surprise attack on Carchemish, sacked the city and annihilated the Egyptian army of king Necho II at Hamath.

Subsequently, during July-August 605 B.C., he conquered Syria and Palestine as far as the border of Egypt (Josephus Ant. x.6). Jerusalem was besieged and Jehoiakim, until now a vassal of king Necho II of Egypt, was captured. He was bound in chains and was probably taken to Babylon in order to secure Judah's loyalty to Babylon. Some temple vessels and hostages, including the prophet Daniel and his friends, were also taken to Babylon (Dan 1:1-3). Jehoiakim, however, must soon have returned to Jerusalem to resume his reign (2 Ki 24:1; 2 Chron 36:6).

King Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar's father, died in August 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar heard of his death while he was still in Palestine and he rode across the desert to Babylon in order to be officially crowned as king of Babylon in September 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar ruled till about September 562 B.C.

Three. The history of king Jehoiakim as a vassal of king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

According to chapter 36 (1-7), during the 4th year of Jehoiakim (605 B.C.), the Lord commanded Jeremiah to write his first scroll. However, when Jeremiah's scroll was read to king Jehoiakim a few months later, Jehoiakim cut it up and threw it into the fire. He did not believe that king Nebuchadnezzar would come and destroy the land of one of his loyal vassals, the land of Judah, as Jeremiah predicted would happen in his scroll (36:8-32). King Jehoiakim was an oppressive and covetous ruler. He built costly royal buildings by making use of forced labour (22:13-17).

From external sources we know that in 601 B.C., the Babylonians fought against the Egyptians and both sides sustained heavy losses. After their virtual defeat, the Babylonians remained at home to re-equip their army. Probably because of this, king Jehoiakim rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar and transferred his allegiance to king Necho II of Egypt (2 Ki 24:1). At first, king Nebuchadnezzar did not intervene, but only stimulated the local Babylonian garrison-troops as well as Judah's neighbouring nations to make raids into Judah, and thus confine Jehoiakim to Jerusalem (2 Ki 24:1-2). However, after 18 months, the Babylonian army was re-equipped and they raided the Arab tribes of Kedar and East Jordan in 599 B.C. (49:28-33). In 598 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar began his second invasion of Judah. During this siege of Jerusalem, in December 598 B.C., king Jehoiakim died. He died 3 months and 10 days before the fall of Jerusalem (2 Chron 36:9). Jeremiah had prophesied that he would receive "a donkey's burial" (22:18-19) and according to the historian Josephus, his body was thrown outside the city wall!

Four. The history of king Jehoiachin.

He reigned only in 597 B.C. Jeremiah prophesied the end of both his rule and dynasty in Jeremiah 22:24-30. He ruled for only 3 months and 10 days (2 Chron 36:9). He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father had done.

Five. The history of king Nebuchadnezzar's second invasion into Judah in 598-597 B.C.

This invasion which had begun under king Jehoiakim in 598 B.C. ended under king Jehoiachin in 597 B.C. King Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem in March 597 B.C. King Jehoiachin, his mother, his servants, his captains and his officials went out to meet the king of Babylon. His capitulation probably saved the city from being destroyed. But king Nebuchadnezzar removed the temple vessels to the temple of Bel-Marduk in Babylon (2 Ki 24:13; Ezra 6:5) and led the following people away into exile: King Jehoiachin, the king's mother, the king's wives; the king's officials, the leading men of the land (all the nobles or princes); the captains and about 7000 mighty men of valour (soldiers); about 1000 craftsmen and smiths, all strong and fit for war; and 10 000 captives. None remained except the poorest in the land.

Six. The history of king Jehoiachin's release from prison in 561 B.C.

The chapters 2 Kings 25 and Jeremiah 52 are virtually the same and this was written by an unknown writer in Babylon. In March 561 B.C, king Evil Merodach of Babylon, who succeeded king Nebuchadnezzar, released Jehoiachin from prison and elevated him to a position higher than all the other kings at Evil-Merodach's court.

The fourth period of Jeremiah's prophesying was from 597-586 B.C.

Roughly Jeremiah chapters 21, 23-24, 27-34, 37-40, 49-52 belong to the fourth period of Jeremiah's prophesying (In 597 B.C. ch. 23:9-40, 24:1-10, 29:1-32, 49:34-39. In 594 B.C. ch. 27:1 to 28:17, 51:59-64. In 588-587 B.C. ch. 21:1-10, 34:1-22, 37:1-21 when the siege was temporary raised, 38:1-28, 39:1-14, 32:1-44, 33:1-26, 30:1-24, 31:1-40, 39:15-18, 52:4-30, 40:1-6). Read these parts against the history of king Zedekiah:

One. The history of king Zedekiah as a vassal of king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

He reigned from 597-587 B.C. After Nebuchadnezzar had deposed and exiled Jehoiachin to Babylon, he appointed Zedekiah as king and changed his name from Mattaniah to Zedekiah as a sign of his vassalage to Babylon. It seems that both the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel regarded Jehoiachin as the last legitimate king of Judah (Jer 22:30; Ezek 17:11-14). Zedekiah ruled over the poorest of the land, and from among them, new officials, captains and false prophets emerged. The Lord regarded them as "split open figs that cannot be eaten due to rottenness" (29:16-19; 24).

In 596 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar fought a battle against Elam (49:34) and in 595 B.C. he mastered a rebellion in Babylon. Thus king Nebuchadnezzar was again kept busy at home. Therefore, in the 4th year of Zedekiah's reign, in 594 B.C., ambassadors from the surrounding nations, Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon came to Zedekiah in Jerusalem, probably to negotiate a rebellion against king Nebuchadnezzar. According to chapter 27 and 28, Jeremiah prophesied vigorously against the false prophets who incited the nationalist party to rebel against Nebuchadnezzar. Zedekiah went to Babylon, probably to quell the rumours of a planned rebellion and to allay Nebuchadnezzar's suspicion (51:59). Nevertheless, Zedekiah finally broke his covenant with Nebuchadnezzar and sent his envoys to king Hophra of Egypt for help (2 Ki 24:20; Jer 52:3; Ezek 17:15-21).

Two. The history of king Nebuchadnezzar's third invasion into Judah in 588-586 B.C.

From his 17th to 19th year, Nebuchadnezzar campaigned against the West. From his headquarters at Riblah he directed the siege of Jerusalem. The siege began in January 588 B.C. King Hophra of Egypt marched to support Zedekiah in his revolt against Nebuchadnezzar. But when the siege was temporarily raised to meet the Egyptian army, king Hophra returned in haste to Egypt, and left Jerusalem to be devastated by king Nebuchadnezzar. Jerusalem fell in July 587 B.C. Zedekiah and the men of war fled by night, but Zedekiah was captured in the plain of Jericho and his army was scattered. He was taken to Riblah in the land of Hamath, where Nebuchadnezzar slaughtered his sons and the princes of Judah before his eyes, then blinded him and exiled him in chains to Babylon. He was imprisoned in Babylon until he died.

Jerusalem was destroyed and the people were exiled in August 586 B.C. Nebuzaradan, the captain of the bodyguard, came to Jerusalem and burned the temple, the palace and all the houses of Jerusalem. His army broke down the walls of Jerusalem. He took the following people into exile: the deserters from Judah, who had fled to the Babylonians during the siege, the rest of the artisans and the rest who survived the siege. But he left some of the poorest in the land to be vine-dressers and plough-men (52:12-16). He also took everything of value from the temple to Babylon (52:17-23).

The fifth period of Jeremiah's prophesying was from 586-568 B.C.

Roughly Jeremiah chapters 40-44 belong to the fifth period of Jeremiah's prophesying (In 587-568 B.C. ch. 52:1-3, 40:7-16, 41:1-18, 42:1 to 43:13, 44:1-30. In 586 B.C. 52:31-34, the death of the last king of the theocracy). Read these parts against the history of the Jews after the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.:

The history of the Jews after the fall of Jerusalem.

King Nebuchadnezzar appointed Gedaliah as governor of Judah, but he was soon assassinated. The rest of the Judeans or Jews were afraid that king Nebuchadnezzar would come to punish them, and so they fled to Egypt. They even forced the prophet Jeremiah to go with them. In 568 B.C., king Nebuchadnezzar invaded Egypt and destroyed much of Egypt. He also took some of the Jews in Egypt captive to Babylon.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

First. During the next week, read Jeremiah 27-52. Next week we will introduce the book of Jeremiah - part 2.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and preach God's Kingdom" and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".