

*JEREMIAH*  
&  
*LAMENTATIONS*

*IN*  
*HISTORICAL*  
*CONTEXT*

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# THE HISTORY OF THE FALL

It all starts when King Solomon's heart turned away from the Lord <sup>a</sup>. True to His word the Lord split the kingdom when Jeroboam, Solomon's heir to the throne took power. Jeroboam intended to continue and expand the harsh policies of his father. So, in the year 931BC <sup>b</sup> nine of the tribes turned away from the house of David. Only the tribe of Benjamin remained loyal to Judah. Also, by this time the tribe of Simeon had already been adsorbed into Judah.

So, at this point in history, we have nine tribes in the kingdom of the north known as Israel. Most of the Benjaminite territory became part of Judah.

For about 200 years the tribes of the northern kingdom turned away from God. For forty years Hosea warned the northern kingdom of the coming rath of God (755BC – 715BC).

They did not heed his warnings and fell to the Assyrians in 722. The Assyrians forced into exile 27,000 Israelites. and brought conquered people from Assyria and Babylon into Israel to fill the void. The Northern Kingdom became a province of Assyria.

In 612BC the Babylonians and Meds over through Assyria rule and in 605BC they forced another exile of the northern kingdom to Babylon. Between 605BC and 586BC Babylon captures most of the major cities of Judah. The strong fortifications of Jerusalem hold out until 586BC when King Zedekiah makes a failed attempt to escape and the city falls. The Babylonians destroy the temple and every important building in Jerusalem. In a final act of vengeance, they tear down the city walls.

<sup>a</sup> Read 1Kings 11:7-39

<sup>b</sup> The dates in this document are debated by scholars and theologians. What is presented here is the most accepted dates. The dates are important only to show a relativity of time and events.



# THE BOOKS BY JEREMIAH

Jeremiah comes into the picture in 626BC and prophesies until 586BC when he is forced to flee to Egypt. There he writes the second of the two books credited to him. The first of his books, **Jeremiah**, is believed to have been written over several years, starting in 609BC and ending some time after his escape to Egypt in 586BC <sup>a</sup>.

How does it all get started, well, as always, it starts with God. His rath has fallen on the northern kingdom. His patience with Judah has been more tolerant because of His love for and promises to David. Now, I envision, God setting the timer for Judah.

## **JEREMIAH (The weeping prophet)**

God goes to the land of the Benjamite's and calls on Jeremiah, a Levite, the son of the High Priest (See Appendix). Jeremiah is to inform the people that God is near the end of

his patience with Judah. Gods timing is perfect. King Josiah is ruling Judah. He was a godly ruler who had started a revival in Judah <sup>b</sup>. It was in to this environment God brought Jeremiah. People were buying in to King Josiah's revival. However, the revival did not last. The next 4 kings "did evil in the eyes of the Lord <sup>c</sup>". Alas Jerusalem falls and Jeremiah with his associates flee to Egypt.

All of Jeremiah's prophecies were written as songs or poetry. When you see indented verses, you will be reading a prophecy. Repetition is a predominate characteristic of Hebrew poetry. Note also it has no rhythm, nor does it rhyme. Not even in the original language.

<sup>a</sup> Jeremiah was not fleeing from the Babylonians. He was fleeing from turncoat Jews that joined the Babylonians in their destruction of Judah. A hint of the atrocities of Jew on Jew is given in Jeremiah 38:19-20

<sup>b</sup> Josiah was king from 640BC to 609BC. His revival was in its 14<sup>th</sup> year when God brought forth Jeremiah. 2 Kings 23:1-25

<sup>c</sup> See 2 Kings 23:31-37, 24:1-20

## **JEREMIAH CONTINUED**

Throughout the book, between the prophecies, Jeremiah raised questions and expresses complaints (12:1-2) (15:10). He often demonstrates principles with real life situations. Look for the potter's workshop, wearing a yoke, marries a prostitute with children and with the entire country being overran and destroyed he buys a field. In the end, Judah falls.

## **LAMENTATIONS**

Jeremiah is now in Egypt. He has finished the Book of Jeremiah. He is now lamenting over Judah's rejection of God. He writes a song which we call Lamentations.

The song tells of the people's rejection of the covenant between the people and God. It tells of the suffering, humiliation, exile, and the murderous treatment of the people of Judah.



The song covers in detail merciless treatment of the people of Judah, the utter destruction of all the towns, villages, and finally Jerusalem. In chapter after chapter the sufferings are rehearsed time and time again. The whole book seems to be a downer, but wait. There are strategically inserted little glimmers of hope. These are the true message of Lamentations.

## **SUMMATION**

As you read Jeremiah and Lamentations you should be looking for: What did God want from his people. How did the people reject God. How did God punish the people. What was the promise of redemption. It is all there we need only to open our hearts and minds to find the truth in the word.



# APPENDIX

## THE LINEAGE OF JEREMIAH



