



Church of God Sunday School

JEREMIAH, THE WEEPING PROPHET

Jeremiah 36:1 — 39:18; 52:1-34
2 Kings 25:1-30

During the reign of King Josiah, God spoke to a young man named Jeremiah. Before Jeremiah was born, God had chosen him to be "a prophet unto the nations." Jeremiah felt unable to do this! He told God, "I cannot speak: for I am a child [young and inexperienced]." But God told Jeremiah that he must go where God sent him and he must say what God told him to say.

God encouraged Jeremiah, saying, "Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee." God touched Jeremiah's mouth and said, "I have put my words in thy mouth." God had an important work for Jeremiah to do. (Read Jeremiah 1:1-10.)

After the death of King Josiah, Jeremiah wrote a lamentation (a mournful song). Judah would never again have a king who loved the Lord. Each king after Josiah did evil in the sight of the Lord, and the people quickly returned to idol worship.

For more than forty years, Jeremiah continually warned the people to repent of their sins. He told of the terrible judgment that was coming. But they would not listen. They did not like what Jeremiah had to say.

Men from Jeremiah's hometown wanted to kill Jeremiah, but God warned him (Jeremiah 11:21). Then Jeremiah was beaten and placed in stocks (Jeremiah 20:1-2). After these terrible things happened, Jeremiah tried to stop speaking the "word of the LORD," but he couldn't! He said that God's "word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones" (Jeremiah 20:9). He could not keep silent!

When Josiah's son, Jehoiakim (*juh-HOI-uh-kim*), had been king for four years, the Lord told Jeremiah to write down all the words God had spoken against Israel, Judah, and all the nations. A scribe named Baruch (*BAR-ook*) came and wrote the words as Jeremiah spoke them. At Jeremiah's request, Baruch took these words and read them to the people "in the house of the LORD."

When the princes of Judah heard what Baruch was

reading, they were afraid! They took the book Baruch had written and brought it to the king. (But first they told Baruch to hide himself and Jeremiah.)

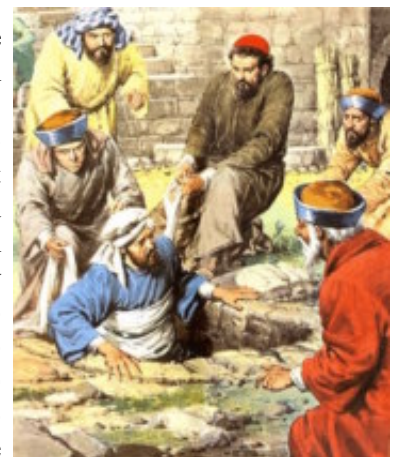
As each page was read, the king took a penknife, cut out the page, and threw it into the fire. His princes begged him not to destroy the scroll. But the king did not listen. He continued until the entire book was burned up! He was not afraid of Jeremiah's words! The king ordered men to search for Baruch and Jeremiah, "but the LORD hid them."

God told Jeremiah to write another book with the same words that were in the first one (and many more). The Lord promised that King Jehoiakim would be punished for what he had done, and he was. When he died, no one mourned for him. His body was cast outside the city and left unburied (Jeremiah 22:18-19; 36:30).

Jeremiah continued to face persecution, but this did not stop him from warning the people. False prophets told the people that Jeremiah's warnings were untrue. Once God told Jeremiah to place a wooden yoke on his neck to warn the people not to resist the Babylonian rule they were under (Jeremiah 27:2, 12).

When Jeremiah did this, a false prophet whose name was Hananiah (*han-uh-NI-uh*) took the yoke off of Jeremiah's neck and broke it, saying that in two years the Lord would "break the yoke of the king of Babylon." Hananiah caused the people to believe a lie. Because of that, Jeremiah prophesied that Hananiah would die. Two months later he was dead (Jeremiah 28:1-4, 15-17).

Zedekiah (*zed-uh-KI-uh*) was king at that time. He would not listen to Jeremiah either. Soon the city of Jerusalem was surrounded by the Chaldean (*kal-DEE-uhn*) army. When the Chaldeans heard that the



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Egyptian army was coming to help the people of Judah, they left Jerusalem. Jeremiah warned the king that the Chaldean army would return. However, false prophets told the king, "The king of Babylon shall not come against you, nor against this land."

A false charge was brought against Jeremiah. It was said that he was trying to join the enemy—the Chaldeans. Because of this lie, Jeremiah was arrested, beaten, and thrown into the dungeon of the prison.

King Zedekiah secretly had Jeremiah brought to his house, and he asked him, "Is there any word from the LORD?" Jeremiah told him that he would be "delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon." Then Jeremiah asked the king not to put him in the prison dungeon, for he feared that he might die there. Zedekiah allowed Jeremiah to be kept in the court of the prison instead. Jeremiah was given a piece of bread each day.

However, it was not long until several princes became angry at Jeremiah's warnings. They convinced the king to put Jeremiah in a deep, muddy dungeon. The dungeon was so deep, Jeremiah had to be let down with ropes tied around him. The princes hoped that he would die!

But one of the king's servants, an Ethiopian named Ebedmelech (*EE-bid-MEL-ik*), pleaded with the king for Jeremiah. The king listened to Ebedmelech, and Jeremiah was brought out of the terrible dungeon!

Again, secretly, King Zedekiah asked Jeremiah what to do about the Chaldeans who had surrounded the city. Jeremiah told him if he would surrender, he would live, his family would live, and the city would not be destroyed. Zedekiah was a weak king, greatly affected by his counselors and princes. Not only did he not heed the words of Jeremiah, he did not want

anyone to know he had asked Jeremiah for advice!

When the city of Jerusalem was captured, Zedekiah fled in the night, hoping to escape. However, he was captured and brought back. He saw his sons put to death. Then he was blinded, and heavy chains were put on him. "And the Chaldeans burned the king's house, and the houses of the people, with fire, and brake down the walls of Jerusalem."

Zedekiah and his people were taken to Babylon as prisoners. (Only a few of the poor people were left.) The temple of the Lord was burned, and the precious vessels that were used in the temple were taken to Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar (king of the Chaldeans, or Babylon) treated Jeremiah very kindly. Jeremiah was taken out of the prison and invited to live in Babylon, where he would be treated well (Jeremiah 40:4). But Jeremiah remained in Judah so that he could continue to speak God's words to the people. Sadly, the people would not listen. Eventually, Jeremiah was forced to go and live in Egypt, where he remained until he died.

During his ministry, over and over Jeremiah had warned kings and the people, but they would not listen! Jeremiah is often called the "weeping prophet" or the "prophet of the broken heart." The Book of Lamentations is five mournful songs that are said to have been sung by Jeremiah after the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah.

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**MEMORY VERSE:**  
*"Before I formed thee . . . I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." —Jeremiah 1:5*  
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