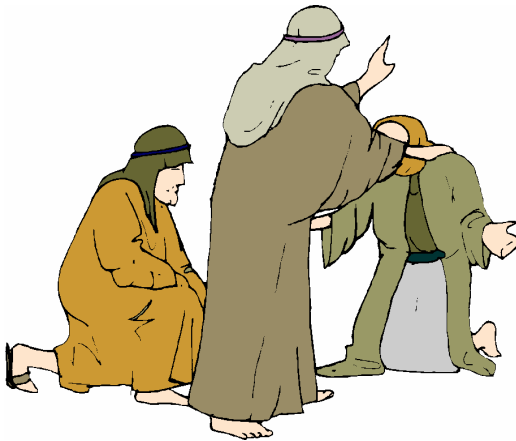


**THE PROPHECIES OF  
JEREMIAH  
AND THE CHARACTER  
OF GOD**



**HOPE OUT OF DESPAIR**

**PHIL CLARKE**

Jeremiah prophesied in the forty years prior to the destruction of Jerusalem and the final fall of Israel / Judah in 586 BC. The Book of Jeremiah, which spans the reign of the last five kings of the beleaguered nation of Judah, gives insight into his character and his experience of God. Here are four studies outlining key aspects of the Book of Jeremiah, the message of the prophet and life of the people of God.

## **A. CALLING**

### **CHAPTER 1**

What are the main elements of Jeremiah's call to be a prophet demonstrated here?

What do you understand by the terms 'call' and 'prophet'? What are the differences in these then and now?

God reassures Jeremiah that he knows him very well but Jeremiah still has many reservations about fulfilling this calling.

How does God reassure you and challenge you?

Identify and interpret the varied images of hope and destruction made visible to Jeremiah here.

He is destined to proclaim God's message to people who do not wish to hear it.

Is there a role for the prophet today and, if so, what?

Jeremiah's long ministry shows great faithfulness in a discouraging task. Often he feels a failure as his message is ignored - but despite many set backs he never gives up.

## B. MOULDING

### CHAPTER 18

Identify some everyday scenes in which you can see a parable of God's purposes as Jeremiah does in observing the potter at work.

Calling is one thing but continuing to be moulded is another! We are works in progress. How is the Potter shaping you? What are his tools?

Note the assurance of God's concern for his pot, his people. Explore the potter's desire to mould the pot and the resistance of the clay.

What are the outcomes in your life?

What other images would you use to express the God who is at work in you, in his people and in his world? For Jeremiah persecution is a large part of honing his personality and ministry – ch. 36, 37 & 38.

## C. JUDGING

### CHAPTER 8 v. 18 - 9 v.1 & 32 v. 1 – 15

A heart felt plea from Jeremiah inspired by the missed opportunities of God's people to repent. How is the harvest over for them (and us)?

Symbols of hope and despair in an acted parable of the purchase of land immediately prior to invasion by a foreign power.

Jeremiah is called to apparently foolish actions in order to display the wise plan of God far into the future. How are you foolish for God?

How can our actions interpret God's standards, expectations and requirements? In what sense is Jeremiah salt and light for the world that has turned its back on God? The majority of Jeremiah's prophecies concern imminent disaster and the need to repent but by chapter 39 all Jeremiah's warnings have been ignored and Jerusalem falls to the Babylonian armies.

#### D. **RESTORING**

#### **CHAPTER 29 & 31 v. 27 – 34**

A letter to the Jewish exiles in Babylon.

Jeremiah offers no easy solutions and dashes hopes of a swift return home. He warns against 'prophets' who tell people what they want to hear instead of speaking God's word. He indicates that the Jews should prepare for a long stay in exile but that beyond this there is hope.

Think of instances in your own experience where God says, in effect, 'make the best of plan B'.

29 v. 10 – 14 Future, hope and prayer. There will be a restoration. Identify the promises and the conditions/requirements. How are these fulfilled?

31 v. 27 – 34 What are the characteristics of the new covenant predicted by Jeremiah? How are these fulfilled in Christ?

#### **For Further Study**

R.K. Harrison - Jeremiah & Lamentations, IVP

D. Kidner - The message of Jeremiah:

Against wind & tide, IVP

R. Davidson - Jeremiah vol. I & II, St. Andrews Press