

Dr. Allan MacRae, Jeremiah, Lecture 9

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**Assignment on Jer 31 Predictions about Zion, Ephraim, Judah and Israel
[0:0]**

The assignment for next time relates to one chapter, but it has four parts to it. The chapter is Jeremiah 31. The first part of it is: What, if anything, is predicted about Zion in this chapter? (give reference). Second: What is predicted about Ephraim in this chapter? (give reference). Number three: What, if anything, is predicted about Judah in this chapter? (give reference). Number four: What if anything, is predicted about Israel in this chapter? (give reference). See, it all relates to the one chapter, and the assignment just gathers together the material under these four different headings: Zion, Ephraim, Judah and Israel.

Post-Exam Review: Historical Background of Jeremiah [0:57]

Now, let's look just for a minute at the questions you just had for the exam. Number one: "Discuss the historical background of the book of Jeremiah." This, of course, is very important for understanding the book. I wouldn't feel too badly if someone spent nearly half the time answering this question, but I didn't really expect you necessarily to put that much time on it, of course. Giving the main things is quite satisfactory. But it is a big question and it is very important for understanding the book. Remember that the book begins about the middle of the reign of king Josiah and it was a time when things were peaceful and the people were drifting into carelessness. It was then that God called Jeremiah to bring them

back from their sin, back to remembrance of God. Then we have the death of Josiah, which begins an entirely different sort of period, one in which they were very much under the shadow of foreign aggressors. And at the death of King Josiah, we have his son, Jehoahaz, made king by the people but only reigned three months before the King of Egypt took him away to exile and his older brother, Jehoiakim, was made king in his place. Then four years later the king of Babylon came and he made Jehoiakim swear fealty to himself and took away some of the people, some of the leaders into exile. I have already mentioned to you that Daniel was one of those who was taken at that time. Then we had Jehoiakim, supposed to be subject to the King of Babylon but all the time he was planning how he could get his freedom and scheming with the Egyptians to get freedom.

But after an 11 year reign, Jehoiakim's reign was ended and he was succeeded by his son Jehoiachin. And the only difference in Hebrew between their names is a final "m" and a final "n." But in English, for some strange reason, we spell the first one "kim" and the second one "chin," which makes them much easier to recognize than if we just had a final "n" or final "m."

Jehoiachin, all the people thought was the great hope of the nation. This young boy that they knew little about, well he was going to be a wonderful man, not like his wicked father. But after three months, the king of Babylon carried him off and some of the people off into exile. The King of Babylon then appointed as king an uncle of his, Zedekiah. He was the third son of Josiah to be king. He appointed him king, and Zedekiah reigned for 11 years. And the end of which the

Babylonians came and besieged the land, and destroyed Jerusalem, and carried all the people into exile. That's a rather large question of course, but it's quite important as background.

Discuss 2 Kings 23:29 Help or Oppose King of Assyria [4:20]

Then number two: "Briefly discuss 2 Kings 23:29;" and since I said briefly, it is quite satisfactory if you only dealt with the one matter that we have mentioned in that connection, a matter which is rather important for interpretation. The fact is that the King James version says that Pharaoh said to King Josiah, "I'm not concerned with you; I've come up against the King of Assyria." But the more recent translations say, "I've come up to help the King of Assyria." And it's an exact opposite meaning. But the fact is that the Hebrew preposition "'al" there, just like our English word "with," can have either meaning. We fought with Germany forty years ago. We fought with England against Germany forty years ago. "With" can mean "against" or as an ally the same as the Hebrew preposition "'al". So in a position like in this verse, the critics said the book of Jeremiah or the book of Kings was wrong. But the thing that was wrong was our taking one of two possible interpretations of the preposition. Now we know the facts and know that the other interpretation should be taken. Maybe if instead of translating it as "I come up to fight against him," as, "I come up to fight with him" that would have been better. We thought that the preposition might have meant "against" but when we thought about it more we could see that it could just as well mean "on his side."

Describe Jeremiah's Relationship to Each King

[Josiah, Jehoiakim, Zedekiah] [6:17]

And the third question was: "Describe Jeremiah's relation to each king who reigned in Judah for any considerable length of time during his career." Now, the only ones who did were only three, of course. This question doesn't touch on Jehoiachin nor does it touch on Jehoahaz, the oldest son. But as for the other three, you might really have covered this in question number one and simply say it was covered under number one. Or you could point out those three and the relation of Jeremiah to them, and of course, this would conclude what the historical background wouldn't necessarily include, that Jehoiakim, was very hostile to Jeremiah and would liked to have killed him. But the nobles interfered and protected Jeremiah. And you'd want to point out that Zedekiah was a timid man who probably wanted to do right, but is listed in the books of Kings as having been a king who did evil, not only because he did some things that were evil, but also because even when he wanted to do right, he didn't dare because of his fear of the leaders and the nobles who had a rather wicked attitude--at least, most of them.

Discuss Jer 20:7 "You have deceived me" [7:32]

Then number four was: "Discuss Jeremiah 20:7, 'Lord thou hast deceived me.'" Now the Hebrew word there does not mean "deceived" but it means to lead you into a certain direction that you would not necessarily have selected for yourself. And that could be a wicked deed, it could involve deceit, but the idea of deceit is not inherently part of the word.

Jeremiah's Attitude toward People of the Northern Kingdom [8:06]

And then number 5: "What was Jeremiah's attitude toward the people of the Northern Kingdom." Most of what he says about them (he doesn't say much in our section we looked at) but most of what he says is good and presents God as not having cast off the northern tribe as many people today think he did. Scripture presents Jeremiah as looking to those people who are already in exile and telling them that God is still interested in them and urging them to be faithful to God, to turn away from whatever wickedness is among them. Jeremiah makes it very clear that God has not cast them off, but God's mercy will remain with them.

Various Names of the Kings [8:48]

Number six: "List all names found in the Bible to designate any kings who reigned in Jeremiah's time." Of course, you all know that Jehoahaz was also called Shallum and that Jehoiachin is also called Coniah and Joachin.

Student speaking: "Excuse me, wasn't Jehoiakim also known as Eliakim?"
 Response: Yes, his name was Eliakim but the King of Egypt changed it to Jehoiakim so that also should be included there.

Discuss Jer 1:11-12 Almond Tree

Number seven: "Discuss Jeremiah 1:11-12." The important thing there was how in his inaugural vision he saw an almond tree. It is a play on the Hebrew words "almond" and "watch man," but not just on words, but on the fact that the almond tree was the first one to bud in the spring when there was no other sign and spring was coming. And God is saying to Jeremiah, "I am going to do many

things of which the people do not yet see any sign of. You are to be my spokesmen to point out to them what is ahead.

Nebuchadnezzar and Nebuchadrezzar (same king) [10:04]

Student question: "Question number six, does this only refer to the kings of Judah that were mentioned?" Response: Well that would be sufficient, yes. Yes I didn't have in mind naming any others but there would certainly be nothing wrong if they were named. One might point out, that would be very interesting in that connection, to point out that King Nebuchadnezzar, I think I've already mentioned, is regularly called Nebuchadrezzar here. And I believe you will find most anywhere in the Bible where a name is given in two ways, the higher critics will generally say it is a mistake, somewhere the writers had it wrong. But you will never hear today anybody say that about this king because I think most recognize that Daniel, who was at the court of Nebuchadnezzar, called him the way the people said it there, Nebuchadnezzar. But that Jeremiah, who mostly knew Nebuchadnezzar from inscriptions and writings, gave his name the way it was actually written.

And of course, it isn't a matter of misspelling; there is no correct spelling for Nebuchadnezzar's name in Hebrew because Nebuchadnezzar did not write Hebrew and it is always very difficult to transcribe names from one language to another. If I asked you, "What is the correct way to write the name had it been in Chinese?" You may see his name written two different ways in English and you would never dream it is the same man. And the reason is there is doubtless one

way to write his name in Chinese, but when you put it in another language, it is very hard to know how to do it. Different people may transliterate it in different ways and there is no way to say which is right.

But in the case of Nebuchadnezzar, there are these two possibilities, and the NIV version has regularized it. They made it Nebuchadnezzar all through, which I would not think is good except for the fact that they have a footnote under the first use of “Nebuchadnezzar” and where they say “Nebuchadnezzar very frequently,” and that saves people from thinking they are two different kings.

Summary of Jeremiah 1-20 [12:29]

We have looked most of our time up till now at the first twenty chapters of the book and for a fair part of that I gave you just some rough titles for sections. It is pretty hard to really divide this part into sections because the first twenty chapters, a greater part of them, is presenting the messages that Jeremiah gave, and in those messages his thought would go to one topic. Then he would see the need to emphasize another topic, and then he might come back to the first. It is very hard to make really important divisions among his thoughts sometimes. He moves rather rapidly, as is true with most of us when we are thinking about matters. We are apt to think about this aspect and think of the other aspect as we speak to an audience. You talk about another aspect a little, then you come back to the first. But we have, most of us, been trained to try to present things in a more logical way, one, two, three. We deal with this subject, then we deal with that one. We deal with a third subject.

And so Jeremiah, in these first twenty chapters, or the greater part of them, is dealing with a few primary ideas. In dealing with them, Jeremiah has many phrases. You doubtless noticed in our reading how many phrases there are that are commonly used among Christians, many verses that are often quoted without people even realizing that they came from the book of Jeremiah. He had a great ability with words, figures, and presentations, but it is not presented in the one, two, three, or A, B, C order which we think of as a more logical presentation. It is presented in the fire of the situation in order to try to move the people.

But there is also in this section a very considerable amount of autobiographical material showing how he felt. Not so much what happened to him, but as how he felt. That material of that sort is almost entirely confined to these first twenty chapters.

But there is a point at which there is a very important division in the book, and that is at the end of the first twenty chapters, because the first twenty chapters deal with his general message, the presentation he gave interspersed with his emotional reactions to situations, and the Lord specifically dealing with him. There are comparatively few specific references to individuals in this first part, and kings play practically no part in this first section. It is more of a general nature and addressed mostly to the people and not dealing very specifically with the rulers of the nation.

Now this first part we could devote a whole semester to, but I don't think we would understand it nearly as well as we will after getting more an idea of

what follows. That's why I've given you a good many assignments in later chapters because they give you more of an idea of the very turbulent times in which Jeremiah lived, and of the general situations which he faced and his dealing with some of these specific situations. You have got quite an idea of that, not so much from our lectures as from the material you have read, and most of that is quite clear in your reading material. So in the assignments I gave you, I believe you would feel that it tremendously improved your ability to understand the first 20 chapters. I think in the light of the remaining parts of Jeremiah, you can go back to the first section in later years and you can find many great treasures from it. Much is tremendously useful to you, a great blessing to you, but I think much easier to understand after you have the impression of Jeremiah's general situation that you get from the later chapters. So that is the first main section of the book and it makes quite a unit. Chapters 1-20, which ends with that pitiful call of Jeremiah's wishing that he had never even lived, so terrible are the problems he had to face. Though even as he gives way to these emotional expressions of his terrible misery in what he has to do, yet he returns constantly to recognizing God's great leadership and God's blessing and the fact that he can put complete trust in God, no matter what comes.

Later Chapters Covered in Assignments [15:29]

Now, Jeremiah 21-29 is another rather definite section of the book and the following chapters 31-34 form another section that is quite diverse from it. These are two rather sharp lines: important divisions in the book are at the end of chapter

20 and at the end of chapter 29. And in chapters 21 through 29 the emphasis is on two features; it is Jeremiah's enunciation of the specific sins of the kings and of the false prophets. These two, the kings and the false prophets, are the main subject in these nine chapters. These nine chapters are easier to get interested in than the first twenty because there is much more personal, much more specific information about these events. In assignments we have looked at most of these chapters.

Jer 21-29 Sins of Kings and False Prophets [17:06]

Now, we notice that these chapters are not arranged chronologically. The first twenty chapters represent a development, as we have seen described in chapter 36. King Jehoiakim tried to destroy the scroll Jeremiah had written. Jeremiah makes a new scroll and adds many similar words to it. So I think we can say that the thought, the emphasis that Jeremiah had during the reign of Josiah, is well expressed in chapters 1-20, but it also includes elements similar to them written during the reign of Jehoakim, or possibly even during that of Zedekiah.

Chapters 21-29 are not arranged chronologically. About half of these chapters tell about events during the reign of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah. A little less than half of them tell about events, or predictions, given during the reign of King Jehoiakim. One of the chapters, we could not tell where it belongs chronologically except by seeing how his prophecy goes, and from that we learn that chapter 22 must have been written in the time of Jehoiakim. The first of these chapters, chapter 21, jumps forward to the time of Zedekiah, sees the siege already

in progress and gives the message Jeremiah gave during that great siege of Jerusalem, where he told the people that God was going to give the city over to the king of Babylon, that there was nothing gained by their resisting the king of Babylon, and if they would surrender to him, God would cause that their lives would be spared. But if they continued to resist that the king of Babylon who was besieging them, they would probably lose their lives; if they didn't resist, at the very least they would be carried off into captivity.

Then the twenty-second chapter, we looked at in some length a little while back and we noticed that in the twenty-second chapter, Jeremiah goes through the kings up to the time the chapter was written. And we noted he doesn't go beyond King Jehoiakim and he predicts the end of Jehoiakim's reign. So it is quite obvious that it must be during Jehoiakim's reign that this chapter was given. We saw that in this chapter he refers back to Josiah. People tended to mourn Josiah's loss but he said, "Don't weep bitterly for what is past, you've got worse things ahead. Don't weep bitterly for the dead king or mourn his loss, rather weep bitterly for him who is exiled, he will never return." Some of the people were doubtless thinking, "Pharaoh has taken the people's choice, King Jehoahaz, off into Egypt as a prisoner. Oh, he'll come back and deliver us from this bad king Jehoiakim whom Pharaoh put over us." But Jeremiah says, "Weep bitterly for him, he will never return or see his native land again."

Rebuke of Jehoiakim (Jer 22) [20:54]

Then he goes on to speak about King Jehoiakim and to rebuke King Jehoiakim for his plans to build his palace by unrighteousness, and for the great luxury that he is going to live in and have no interest in the welfare of the people. He says, “This is what the Lord says about Jehoakim, ‘They won’t mourn for him. He will have the burial of a donkey, dragged away and thrown outside the gates of Jerusalem’” (Jer. 22:19). Some people say it says in the book of Kings that he, King Jehoiakim, died and was taken to his fathers, slept with his fathers (2 Kings 24:6), and so they say this is not true what Jeremiah predicted. We cannot prove that it is true. Perhaps there was an uprising in which Jehoiakim was killed and his body thrown outside the city. We can’t prove that, but if we believe that the book of Jeremiah was written at that time by Jeremiah himself, we know it must have been fulfilled. It is simply inconceivable that the Jewish people would have accepted as a book from God’s prophet, a book that made a prediction like this, if it was perfectly obvious it was not fulfilled.

As the people looked at Jehoakim and saw his meanness and his wickedness and said, “Oh, but wouldn’t it be wonderful when he is succeeded by this fine son of his, Jehoachin. He’ll be the king and then good times will come back; he’s a grand fellow.” And that’s the way people in monarchies are so ready to do; to accept the young fellow they know little about. They think he is just going to be perfect when he grows up. The answer that Jeremiah gives is that this

man is a despised, broken pot. He and his children will be hurled out, cast into a land they do not know. And of course that was fulfilled shortly after.

Well, I won't have time to rush through the rest of these sections, but we want to get on the next section, chapters 30-34, in which Jeremiah turns away from rebuking the people and points to God's wonderful mercy in the future. So we'll continue from there next time.

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