

## How Far Must He Go?

God calls Jeremiah to Announce Israel's Judgment

### *Ties that Bind Series – Part 1*

Jeremiah 11:1-13

January 10-11, 2026

#### Introduction

- **2026: The Year of Breakthrough** – going from stuck and in bondage to total freedom is our goal. Every series this year is designed for that purpose. We begin with the book of **Jeremiah**, the **longest<sup>1</sup> bible book by word count!** To fit it in, and avoid its highly repetitive nature,<sup>2</sup> I deconstructed it and broke it into its **6 natural themes**. To crush it down this much means compressed learning, so it's going to **sound a bit like school** to get started but once we are locked in, it will flow much better. Get your note pad out, it's a lot. But we begin personally...
- God's love for people is immense – there is no greater act of love than personal sacrifice for another person and that is what God did for mankind. **We cannot fathom how patient He has been with us**. We think about the times that He finally has to bring correction, discipline, and judgment, but miss the millions of subtle and sometimes not-too-subtle whispers and warnings before that happens.
  - He is the Creator, we are the creation – **it's vital that we always remember how we got here in existence**. God was already here. He made us. **He created us for a purpose**. He didn't just create us for us to do our own thing. Despite the stunning freedoms He provides, **we are still designed for a reason**. **We don't get to make that reason up**, He's the determiner of the reason and He said that **we were created FOR HIM**. Therefore our purpose only makes sense in relation **TO HIM**. All other things we do are ancillary.
  - He wants us to thrive – **God didn't make us to lose us**. **He didn't make us to die**. **He wants us to thrive more than we want to thrive**. And He will do radical things to make sure that happens.
- When things have rotted too far - Lk 13:6-9 – *"And he told this parable: 'A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. <sup>7</sup> And he said to the vinedresser, 'Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?' <sup>8</sup> And he answered him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. <sup>9</sup> Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.' "*
  - Have you ever had to let go of a plant? – you love that plant but everything you do for it doesn't work. It's ugly and messy and so much work! **You got the plant to beautify your home and enjoy but now it's anything but beautiful and quite the hassle**. You did the Miracle-Gro, you asked the Green Acres lady, you did all

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah is actually the longest by word count but 2<sup>nd</sup> to Psalms in chapter and verse. The word count goes: 1.) Jeremiah (33,002 words); 2.) Genesis (32,046 words); 3.) Psalms (30,147 words); Ezekiel (29,918) and Exodus (25,957). Honestly, it all depends on how you define 'longest', and what language we are talking about (translations are different with different word count).

<sup>2</sup> Jeremiah has really one theme and talks about it from a bunch of different directions and uses a lot of examples to make the point: Israel broke the covenant with God and now they needed to be judged. That's a difficult and repetitive book to preach, which is why it's been avoided until now.

the right things but this plant refused to participate so you gave up and needed to dump it.

- Too Valuable - But now let's say that the plant was your **moms** long time plant that you inherited after **she recently passed away**, and you don't want to part with it. You Google and discover that there is **one last chance but it's radical for the plant**: you need to put it in a new bigger pot. The shock to the plant is going to be extreme and it may not work, but hey it's dying slowly anyway. So, you buy the big pot, grab some new soil and go for it. **The plant practically dies** and now you are praying over the plant like an insane person. Eventually, after **reducing down to nothing, new life sprouts in time**. It worked, but dang that was painful for the plant!

### Sometimes that only answer is to RE-PLANT

- End of a Chapter - The Book of Jeremiah comes after thousands of years of God dealing with the Jewish people. We are coming in at the tail end of one of their chapters. **A lot has happened so far**. We are not just catching God on a bad day lashing out at His people. **This has been building for hundreds of years with countless warnings and attempts to turn things around**.
- Covenant - The most important concept to understand about Israel and the Jewish people is the idea of COVENANT. Once you understand it and a little bit about why God designed the Hebrew people group and what the plan was, all of their history makes a ton more sense.
  - Types of Contracts (one-way; two-way) – the term covenant is **an ancient and religious form of contract**. It is a binding agreement of how things **MUST** go. There are one way contracts and two way contracts. Another way to say it is: **Unconditional (I will) vs. Conditional (I will; you will)**. When God promised mankind that He wouldn't wipe them out with another worldwide flood, it was called the **Noahic Covenant**. God was PROMISING and bound to fulfill what He said He would do. It had nothing to do with what mankind did but all about what God was or wasn't going to do. He was binding Himself. **But most covenants are two-way contracts**. **It's when two parties agree to a set of circumstances and mandated expectations for a mutual benefit**. This is the type of the practical covenant with the Jewish people.
  - Started One-Way & Unconditional to Jews – Honestly it started with a one-way contract and that happened with a relative nobody, albeit a good and wealthy man, named **Abram** who lived in the Middle East (Mesopotamia region). **God came to this man and said He was going to do something new through this man** (Gen 12, 15 & 17). God promised that He would make Abram, or Abraham's lineage into a **mighty and massive people group who would be blessed in order to minister to the whole world**. He promised that they would one day have **territory of their own** in which to live and thrive (Gen 13:14-17; Dt 29:1-30:20). God promised that **He would be personally connected** and involved in this people group.

- Two-Way; Conditional Covenant with National Israel – Once God built them into a numerous nation and set them free from bondage to Egypt via the Exodus through Moses, He gathered them at the foot of Mt. Sinai and began to talk to them about how they were to operate at a NATION. This was no longer about whether or not God was going to be with His people, love the Jews, get them into a land, etc. Those were already locked. The shift came when God set them up as a semi-formal nation and they had an ASSIGNMENT to do.
- Pre-National & National – I use the term 'national Israel' loosely since they may not be considered a 'nation' until they have territory which didn't happen until after the desert wandering for 40 years. To be fair, God wanted to go directly from Mt. Sinai (instructions) to territory (Promised Land) without delay and they were the ones that delayed that reality. Therefore for 40 years they were semi-national (a nation without a land).
- Israel's assignment – The Jewish people are not just another people group on the planet. They are God's specific people group with a very specific and odd assignment. They were to be a living, breathing, drama to educate the world on who God is and what He wants. They were the point people for all nations on earth to discover and get close to their creator.
  - Ex 19:5–6 – *"Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; <sup>6</sup>and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel."*
  - Lives not their own – the challenge with being SPECIAL is that God created them for a purpose that they didn't necessarily all sign up for (don't get me wrong, at one time they all signed up for it – Ex 19:8. But many were born afterward that were just born into it). They were built for a reason that they may not be in alignment with. But God is God and He gets to pick and design who and what He wants for whatever reason He desires. He told this new nation how it was GOING to be, but explained that they had a 50% part in the process (primarily regarding whether it was going to go well or go poorly.)
    - Ex 19:7–8 – *"So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him. <sup>8</sup>All the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do." And Moses reported the words of the people to the LORD."*
    - Ex 24:3 – *"Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the rules. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do."*
- IF/THEN contract (Ex 19-24) – It was at Mt. Sinai that God gave them the details on what it meant to be a Jew on this planet and that it was as a display for God's purposes. In return God would do good things for them that He wouldn't do for any other nation. He would bless them, help

them to succeed, thrive, grow, expand via supernatural means...**BUT it all hinged on one word, OBEDIENCE.** This is where the **IF/THEN** language came in. God explained very clearly how it was going to work so no one could say they didn't know. IF Israel did what God told them to do and were obedient, they would be the most blessed nation on the planet. However, IF they did not, and were disobedient and did things their own way or tried to cast Him aside, they would fall apart and be conquered by other nations and God Himself would stand against them for a time.

- Mosaic Covenant = National Contract = the Law – It is this contract that we refer to when we read in the Bible and talk about The **Old Testament Law** or the Mosaic Law. It was God telling them the **rules and regulations, expectations and assignments, they had to follow in order to remain in His blessing.** The contract is laid out in detail mostly through the books of Exodus and Leviticus in the Old Testament. Further clarifications and explanations were made after that (especially through the prophets) but that was the heart of it.
- Why is God so demanding? – it's worth asking the question about why God was so demanding on Israel. Why make them do all these weird things? Why make them so strange as a people group? Why put them in the middle of difficulty? Why? The answer lies in **God's love and desire for ALL HIS PEOPLE. The planet cannot connect to a Creator they do not know and they cannot hear about Him without a messenger. Israel would be that messenger.** Just as the Church today is a living breathing ambassador for God, telling the world what God is like and what His heart is, so too were the Jewish people the first to do this. God could have remained separate and in obscurity, but the whole point of creating us was to connect relationally. **Israel were going to be the ONE nation on earth that could help everyone else connect with God. High calling; high challenge.**
- Vicious Expectations – what happens when the one doorway to God becomes polluted, corrupt, and misleading? Can you imagine? What if there was only one church in a remote town and it was only known for corruption and selfishness? What chance does the town have to walk with God? That is the reason why God was so vicious about Israel upholding their responsibilities and role. And vicious it was. It was a blatant **BLESSINGS/CURSES contract.** IF they obeyed they were super blessed. If they rebelled they were literally cursed by God and wrecked. Granted, God is extremely fair, kind and extraordinarily patient, but when it came time for judgment, God wasn't fooling around because it was shutting the door to heaven for other people. It's the same rationale that caused Jesus to throw over the tables of the money changers in the Gentile section of the Temple during His ministry.
  - Blessings for Obedience – Lev 26:3-13 - *"If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, <sup>4</sup> then I will give you your rains in their season,*

and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.<sup>5</sup> Your threshing shall last to the time of the grape harvest, and the grape harvest shall last to the time for sowing. And you shall eat your bread to the full and dwell in your land securely.<sup>6</sup> I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid. And I will remove harmful beasts from the land, and the sword shall not go through your land.<sup>7</sup> You shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword.<sup>8</sup> Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall chase ten thousand, and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword.<sup>9</sup> I will turn to you and make you fruitful and multiply you and will confirm my covenant with you.<sup>10</sup> You shall eat old store long kept, and you shall clear out the old to make way for the new.<sup>11</sup> I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul shall not abhor you.<sup>12</sup> And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.<sup>13</sup> I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their slaves. And I have broken the bars of your yoke and made you walk erect.”

- Curses and Punishment for Disobedience – Lev 26:14-45 – “But if you will not listen to me and will not do all these commandments,<sup>15</sup> if you spurn my statutes, and if your soul abhors my rules, so that you will not do all my commandments, but break my covenant,<sup>16</sup> then I will do this to you: I will visit you with panic, with wasting disease and fever that consume the eyes and make the heart ache. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it.<sup>17</sup> I will set my face against you, and you shall be struck down before your enemies. Those who hate you shall rule over you, and you shall flee when none pursues you.<sup>18</sup> And if in spite of this you will not listen to me, then I will discipline you again sevenfold for your sins,<sup>19</sup> and I will break the pride of your power, and I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze.<sup>20</sup> And your strength shall be spent in vain, for your land shall not yield its increase, and the trees of the land shall not yield their fruit.<sup>21</sup> “Then if you walk contrary to me and will not listen to me, I will continue striking you, sevenfold for your sins.<sup>22</sup> And I will let loose the wild beasts against you, which shall bereave you of your children and destroy your livestock and make you few in number, so that your roads shall be deserted.<sup>23</sup> “And if by this discipline you are not turned to me but walk contrary to me,<sup>24</sup> then I also will walk contrary to you, and I myself will strike you sevenfold for your sins.<sup>25</sup> And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall execute vengeance for the covenant. And if you gather within your cities, I will send pestilence among you, and you shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy.<sup>26</sup> When I break your supply of bread, ten women shall bake your bread in a single oven and shall dole out your bread again by weight, and you shall eat and not be satisfied.<sup>27</sup> “But if in spite of this you will not listen to me, but walk contrary to me,<sup>28</sup> then I will walk contrary to you in fury, and I myself will discipline you sevenfold for your sins.<sup>29</sup> You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters.<sup>30</sup> And I will destroy your high places and cut down your incense altars and cast your dead bodies upon the dead bodies of your idols, and my soul will abhor you.<sup>31</sup> And I will lay your cities waste and will make your sanctuaries desolate, and I will not smell your pleasing aromas.<sup>32</sup> And I myself will devastate the land, so that your enemies who settle in it shall be appalled at it.<sup>33</sup> And I will scatter you among the nations, and I will unsheathe the sword after you, and your land shall be a desolation, and your cities shall be a waste.<sup>34</sup> “Then the land shall enjoy its Sabbaths as long as it lies desolate, while you are in your enemies’ land; then the land shall rest, and enjoy its Sabbaths.<sup>35</sup> As long as it lies desolate it shall have rest, the rest that it did not have on your Sabbaths when you were dwelling in it.<sup>36</sup> And as for those of you who are left, I will send faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies. The sound of a

*driven leaf shall put them to flight, and they shall flee as one flees from the sword, and they shall fall when none pursues.<sup>37</sup> They shall stumble over one another, as if to escape a sword, though none pursues. And you shall have no power to stand before your enemies.<sup>38</sup> And you shall perish among the nations, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up.<sup>39</sup> And those of you who are left shall rot away in your enemies' lands because of their iniquity, and also because of the iniquities of their fathers they shall rot away like them.<sup>40</sup> "But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers in their treachery that they committed against me, and also in walking contrary to me,<sup>41</sup> so that I walked contrary to them and brought them into the land of their enemies—if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their iniquity,<sup>42</sup> then I will remember my covenant with Jacob, and I will remember my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land.<sup>43</sup> But the land shall be abandoned by them and enjoy its Sabbaths while it lies desolate without them, and they shall make amends for their iniquity, because they spurned my rules and their soul abhorred my statutes.<sup>44</sup> Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not spurn them, neither will I abhor them so as to destroy them utterly and break my covenant with them, for I am the LORD their God.<sup>45</sup> But I will for their sake remember the covenant with their forefathers, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the LORD."*

- What was the plan/covenant? – although we don't have time to go through all of the Mosaic covenant here and explain all the details of what God was expecting of Israel, I can sum up **the biggest elements of it** (usually found in some form of the 10 commandments). I will highlight **the big 3**:
  - Le 20:26 – "You shall be holy to me, for I the LORD am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine."
  - 1. Keep God as your one and only focus – **no other gods**, no doing it your own way, no becoming like everybody else, it's **God only**. The motive is love and the outcome is obedience. (Commandments 1-3)
  - 2. Live out religious systems and displays as instruction to the world – Things God demanded Israel to do were not random, they were very purposeful. They were **tangible lessons about God's holiness, human sinfulness, and how to walk separate and united to God**. There are basically **6 classifications** and types of these. They are:
    - A. Sabbath – Commandment #4 explained that the Jewish people were to stop working and set aside a day each week to connect with God and one another. It was a display of relying on God, His provision, and not putting selfish performance first. We live FROM rest principle as well as keeping God as primary.
    - B. Tithe – there were multiple tithes (examples: one was like a national tax to keep things going, one was for the poor, one was for offering to God, etc.) but they were all about contributing or worship. It was breaking any selfish hold money can have.
    - C. Purity Laws: the clean/unclean system. It was about ritual cleanliness (righteousness) vs. soiling (sin).
      - Examples of general clean v. unclean regulations were: touching a dead body made you unclean. Bodily discharge is unclean



(menstrual, hemorrhage, childbirth, semen, etc.), certain skin conditions made you unclean (under general term of leprosy), etc.

- **Kosher system: Clean/unclean food animals** - These classifications were unclean animals you can't eat (beasts that chew cud, or 'part the hoof' (camel, rock badger, rabbit, pig), water animals that don't have fins or scales are unclean (eels, lobster, crab, etc.), certain birds (eagle, vulture, falcon, raven, ostrich, etc.), all winged insects that walk on legs, except those that have jointed legs above their feet and hop (locust, cricket); animals that walk on paws; rodents; lizards, snakes (on belly).
  - Le 11:46-47 – *"This is the law about beast and bird and every living creature that moves through the waters and every creature that swarms on the ground,"<sup>47</sup> to make a distinction between the unclean and the clean and between the living creature that may be eaten and the living creature that may not be eaten."*
  - Some dietary laws seem more practical – not all dietary codes and regulations were spiritual lessons, some were just healthy ideas to keep the nation healthy: example: how to handle roadkill, fat of animals that died naturally, etc.)
  - Blood rules – see below for more explanation but preparation of food is a big deal in the kosher system.
- Intermixing rules – although it may not be technically a 'kosher' issue (which usually has to do with food), there are a lot of rules about not mixing one type with another type. For example: sowing field with two kinds of seed is a no-no; breeding cattle of different kinds is wrong;
- Random rules – example: there are some rules that I can't tell you why they are there: planting a fruit bearing tree renders it's fruit forbidden for 3 years. The 4<sup>th</sup> year it goes to God. You can eat it the 5<sup>th</sup> year. Another law about 'rounding off the hair on your temples or marring the edges of your beard, is weird. I'm not sure where to categorize these.
- **D. Sin restoration (Lev 1)**– this was the **sacrificial system** (explaining the seriousness of sin and cost), and offerings system. Some of the offerings were simply a reminder of God's importance and to put Him first along with providing a tangible way to give back in thanks. There were various types of sacrifices: animal, grain, wine, etc.
  - Dealing with blood – there is a lot of talk in the Bible about blood. Why? Because in the ancient world, blood represented life. If someone was stabbed on the battlefield, as their blood ran out their life ran out. Therefore, God used preparation of blood (draining it out of animals not to eat it), as a display about life and death. Blood was used to consecrate (make holy) as well since it came at a cost. Ultimately we see that it pointed to the sacrifice of

Christ on the cross for the cleansing of our sins (communion = blood and body).

- Mostly unintentional sins – Interestingly the vast majority of the sacrificial system was to handle unintentional sins rather than intentional sins. Here's why. The sacrificial system was partly to reconnect relationally with God but most of it was designed to maintain the covenant. Intentional sins were a violation of the covenant and would have that consequence. We think about this system in terms of personal sin, but for Israel it was more about national sins and impacts. If they did something unintentionally they could clear the record and not have a bad outcome. All intentional sins had to be dealt with practically and restored (ex. stealing had to be given back with interest).
- E. Priesthood – this was about **dealing with the separation of man and God due to sin and the necessity of purity**. The Tabernacle was a visual display of this principle. Even the priests garments and processes said spiritual things (stones on their shoulders, the ephod, the ritual cleansing, etc.).
- F. Festival calendar (Lev 23) – this was about **remembering God's nature and works**. He had done great things and those need to be celebrated. Other festivals were for the health of the nation (ex. teaching rest) and sheer worship of God. There are 7 major festivals (Lev 23): 3 Spring feasts: Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits; 1 Summer feast (Pentecost/Shavuot); 3 Fall feasts (Rosh Hashanah/Trumpets, Yom Kippur/Atonement, Tabernacles/Sukkot). Of course the Sabbath is weekly.
- The necessity of exactness – **God was very serious about doing these things the right way, to the right degree, and not shortchanging any of them. Why? Because they were displays of spiritual matters and if the process is altered it sends the wrong spiritual message, which is dangerous. Additionally the system was created specifically so that absolute obedience would be required as a test of focus**. If they took it seriously they would jump through all the hoops, if they didn't they would cut corners. It was a demanding system.
- 3. Lead & rule with God's heart – many of the laws and codes were **how to treat people from God's perspective**. They were about justice, fairness, kindness, and love. Examples of these are:
  - How to treat underprivileged groups: slaves; virgins; widows; orphans, poor, foreigner, respect older men (gray), etc.
  - How to judge criminal matters (and definition of criminal actions) along with restitution codes. Eye for an eye premise (Lev 24:17-20).
    - Big 6 - Commandments 5-10 = honor parents, murder, adultery, stealing, lying, coveting.)



- How to judge spiritual violations and what to do about it (sins). There are the obvious, but also sorcery, mediums, etc.
- How to handle money matters in community
- Proper conduct toward neighbors – expectations of sharing, helping neighbors, don't make vows, etc.
  - Le 19:18 – "...you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD."
- Unlawful sexual relations – incest, bestiality, homosexuality, \*women on their period, prostitution, adultery, parent/child sexual partners at same time
- How to handle the Canaan Campaign – Ex 23:20ff lays out the specific rules of what to do when taking the Promised Land.
  - How to handle land rights once in the Promised Land.

### Lesson

- Israel's situation – Our story begins **roughly 600BC (2600 years ago)**. Israel was long since split into the **North** and the **South** (now known as Judah). The **north of Israel had been wiped out by the Assyrian Empire roughly 120 years prior** due to judgment for breaking covenant with God. The **South believed themselves to be morally better** and they were, but only a little bit. Mostly they still existed because of **a few good leaders. But by this time they too had fallen** into the same patterns as their northern neighbors and they were now **perpetually out of alignment with God**.
- Enter Jeremiah – One day God calls on a young man to be His primary voice for the troubled nation.
  - *Je 1:1–10 – "The words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah, one of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, <sup>2</sup>to whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. <sup>3</sup>It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, and until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the captivity of Jerusalem in the fifth month. <sup>4</sup>Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying, <sup>5</sup>"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations." <sup>6</sup>Then I said, "Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth." <sup>7</sup>But the LORD said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a youth'; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. <sup>8</sup>Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the LORD." <sup>9</sup>Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the LORD said to me, "Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. <sup>10</sup>See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant."*
- Jeremiah – Who was he?
  - Jewish Priest – Likely **born c. 650BC, a descendent of Aaron**, Moses' brother, **Jeremiah grew up in the southern Levitical & Priestly town of Anathoth in the tribal region of Benjamin, 3 miles northeast from Jerusalem, which became the center of his ministry**. He seems to carry some of Hosea's ministry influence.

- Jos 21:13–19 – “...And to the descendants of Aaron the priest they gave Hebron, the city of refuge for the manslayer, with its pasturelands, Libnah with its pasturelands, <sup>14</sup> Jattir with its pasturelands, Eshtemoa with its pasturelands, <sup>15</sup> Holon with its pasturelands, Debir with its pasturelands, <sup>16</sup> Ain with its pasturelands, Juttah with its pasturelands, Beth-shemesh with its pasturelands—nine cities out of these two tribes; <sup>17</sup> then out of the tribe of Benjamin, Gibeon with its pasturelands, Geba with its pasturelands, <sup>18</sup> Anathoth with its pasturelands, and Almon with its pasturelands—four cities. <sup>19</sup> The cities of the descendants of Aaron, the priests, were in all thirteen cities with their pasturelands.”
- Prophetic Ministry – he was called to be a prophet (likely at the age of 23) in the 13<sup>th</sup> year of King Josiah (good king of the South), 627BC. He had an estimated 57 year ministry (if he started at 23 and died at 80) and ministered during the reigns of at least 5 Israelite kings (Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah – as well as Gedaliah the Jewish governor)
  - Reform was brewing – In 621BC, 6 years before Jeremiah started prophesying, the good Jewish king, Josiah led major reforms in Israel after being captivated by God’s word he found. Perhaps Jeremiah was hoping to ride that wave. Although Jehoiakim, Josiah’s son was very different and may have turned that tide quickly. He called Jehoiakim out personally. That was the king that burned his scroll in defiance.
  - One of the ‘major’ prophets – due to the length of his biblical book. We know more about him and his ministry than perhaps any other old testament prophet.
  - Constant conflict – like many other prophets who had the assignment of prophesying judgment, he was in constant conflict with everyone around him, specifically the leadership of Israel. He was oppressed constantly by his people. At one point when the siege of Jerusalem was temporarily lifted due to an Egyptian nation issue elsewhere, Jeremiah tried to leave to go back South and was arrested on charges of desertion and placed in prison. Later he was dropped in a dry well to die but was rescued by an Ethiopian eunuch (by king’s allowance), and he was placed on a type of house arrest. At another point he was kidnapped by Israelite rebels and taken to Egypt (where he continued prophesying). Leaders knew that he was God’s man but didn’t like his words. They wanted his advice but only some of it. Other prophets said he was false, while he said they were false.
  - Famous prediction (Babylon) – the Lord revealed through Jeremiah that it would be the rising empire of Babylon that God would use to bring judgment upon Israel and take His people into exile (Babylon took the Assyrian’s capital, Nineveh in 612). Oddly enough Jeremiah told Israel to surrender to them as God’s weapon and called Nebuchadnezzar, ‘the servant of the Lord’, even though it was a pagan nation. He was accused of treason and convicted. Later he was acquitted but seems to have been banned from preaching again in the Temple.
    - The practical reason for Babylon’s arrival – it was during king Jehoiakim that things got messy. He and Jeremiah didn’t get along. He came up with the idea of rebelling against their new owners (Babylonian Empire) and withheld tribute in defiance. It was in retaliation that King Nebuchadnezzar sent an army against them to lay siege to Jerusalem.

Ironically, Jehoiakim died before the siege began and his son, Jehoiachin took over and in time surrendered to the Babylonians (597BC) which calmed things down. Jehoiachin was removed and Babylon put in another king that would obey better: Zedekiah (597-586BC). Thankfully he listened a bit more to Jeremiah, but not enough to turn anything around long-term. After paying tribute for 10 years, he too was politically swayed to partner with Egypt against Babylon and for a second time Nebuchadnezzar sent an army and this time finished the job (August 586).

- Dual purpose assignment – **Warning/judgment and hope.**
- Rough personal life – **He loved his people but was rightfully angry at them. His job was to proclaim their disaster** and God told him not to intercede for them (7:16; 11:14; 14:11), but sometimes he still did (14:7-9, 19-22). **He wasn't allowed to get married or have a family. He wasn't allowed to do fun things** (15:17; 16:8). He spent a lot of his time **weeping** (the book is called the Weeping Prophet book), and **complaining** to God or **arguing**. **He hated his calling (20:7-18), but was faithful and obedient and still loved God deeply.** Many scholars say that he was likely shy, introspective and sensitive, which is tough for someone in constant public conflict.
- Terrible time to be alive as a Jew – Jeremiah lived during one of the most difficult eras of Israel's history. **He was there in Jerusalem** (587-586 BC – 40 years into his ministry) **when it was brutally sieged by the Babylonians**, invaded, the temple was destroyed and everyone was taken into captivity. It was the first time in their history that the nation as a whole (North & South) were moved out and the lost the land. Thankfully 70 years afterward they were allowed to return, but Jeremiah was dead by then.
- Rough end – although the Bible doesn't record his death **tradition says that he was stoned to death in Egypt** by the Israelite rebels who kidnapped him and brought him there. It's believed that he died c. 580-570BC but that's a guess. The most common time is 570BC which made him **80 years old.**
- What was Jeremiah's Assignment?
  - **Anchor Scripture: Je 11:1–13 - "The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: <sup>2</sup> "Hear the words of this covenant, and speak to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup> You shall say to them, Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Cursed be the man who does not hear the words of this covenant <sup>4</sup> that I commanded your fathers when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, Listen to my voice, and do all that I command you. So shall you be my people, and I will be your God, <sup>5</sup> that I may confirm the oath that I swore to your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as at this day." Then I answered, "So be it, LORD." <sup>6</sup> And the LORD said to me, "Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem: Hear the words of this covenant and do them. <sup>7</sup> For I solemnly warned your fathers when I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, warning them persistently, even to this day, saying, Obey my voice. <sup>8</sup> Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but everyone walked in**

*the stubbornness of his evil heart. Therefore I brought upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do, but they did not.”<sup>9</sup> Again the LORD said to me, “A conspiracy exists among the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.<sup>10</sup> They have turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, who refused to hear my words. They have gone after other gods to serve them. The house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant that I made with their fathers.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, thus says the LORD, Behold, I am bringing disaster upon them that they cannot escape. Though they cry to me, I will not listen to them.<sup>12</sup> Then the cities of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem will go and cry to the gods to whom they make offerings, but they cannot save them in the time of their trouble.<sup>13</sup> For your gods have become as many as your cities, O Judah, and as many as the streets of Jerusalem are the altars you have set up to shame, altars to make offerings to Baal.”*

- How the book came to be – **Jeremiah is the 2<sup>nd</sup> longest book of the Bible** (after Psalms). **After 20 years of preaching in Jerusalem. He collected all his writings and prophecies and had them written down by a scribe (Baruch). Baruch gathered stories about Jeremiah too.** That’s why it reads like a biography sometimes and autobiography at others. Sadly the first total copy was burned by King Jehoiakim in anger and rebellion, so Jeremiah had to dictate a second (and larger) edition (36:32).
- Book Structure – it’s not directly chronological. It jumps around.
  - **Chapters 1-24** collection of Jeremiah’s writings BEFORE exile = challenge, warning and promised judgment. This is likely the original ‘scroll’ of his writings.
    - The reason for the Judgment: Israel broke covenant with God - by worship of other gods. Jeremiah uses the metaphor of adultery, prostitution and unfaithfulness.
    - Accuses leaders: priests, kings and prophets have abandoned the covenant.
    - Rampant social injustice – the failure of the leaders led to the most needy being taken advantage of: widows, orphans, immigrants. Violation of Torah. No one cared.
  - **Chapter 25** – transition: It’s time, Babylon is coming -God had enough and the new empire of Babylon was rising to do God’s bidding.
  - **Chapter 26-45** – Babylon’s Here!
    - Recounts when Jerusalem fell under siege
    - **Hope Break = Chapters 30-33** – in alignment with Moses’ predictions, he explains that God would not ultimately abandon His people but renew His covenant with them and transform Israel’s hearts. He will heal their rebellion so they can truly love and follow Him fully. One day they will return to the land and through the line of David, the Messiah will come and fulfill all things.
  - **Chapters 46-51**- Judgment against 7 surrounding nations & Babylon itself.

- **Concluding Chapter 52** – Another account of the Destruction of Jerusalem and Exile in order to explain chapters 1-24 were fulfilled.
  - Final story of hope – A Davidic king (Jehoiachin) is shown favor by Babylon instead of being killed to highlight that lineage is still alive, which means God is still on track to bring the Messiah.
- This series in a nutshell - **This series chronicles the 6 major elements that were keeping Israel from God's best and disappointing Him.** They are:
  1. Rejection of identity – refusing to uphold the covenant between them and God as His people. Failure to be who they were designed to be.
  2. Selfishness & Disloyalty – wanting other things more than God and pursuing things that are selfish. Feeding self is the key here.
  3. Hardhearted Apathy – simply don't care enough about God to bother living for Him. It's living a practically secular life as if He doesn't exist. Sometimes the darkest soul simply doesn't care to notice. Ignoring God is the key here.
  4. Ignoring Injustice – both in society and in personal lives, it's making choices to benefit off the loss of others. It's selfishly trying to gain at the cost of other people or allowing it to happen on their watch. Harming others is the key here.
  5. Idolatry (misplaced trust) – trusting in other things of this world to save them and soothe them, than God. It's putting attention, money, resources, and time into things that can't ultimately save or solve anything, but get our full effort. Trust in STUFF is the key here.
  6. Following Bad Leadership – the voices and influences in their lives and in ours are getting us focused on the wrong things at the least, and flat out lies at the worst. Israel had both lying prophets and horrible shepherds caring for them, but they chose those leaders to be their influencers. What are our influencers doing with us? Joining with bad people and voices is the key here.
- The Hope – **in the darkest place, God had a plan.** He would not abandon Israel, but remake them. **He was going to personally solve the matter through the Messiah.** What did God ultimately want? Relationship not agreement. Jesus brought that. We have that. **What difference should that make for us today compared to Israel of yesterday?**
  - A Coming New Covenant - **Je 31:31–34** - *"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, <sup>32</sup> not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. <sup>33</sup> For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>34</sup> And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."* (cf. chp 32)

- This is ONLY through Jesus Christ and what He did on the Cross – each week of this series we will tie our reality and calling to the work of Jesus Christ and the cross. He did EVERYTHING to set us up for success and connection. What will we do with that beautiful and powerful gift?

### Conclusion

- The Core Problem in Israel = **Rejection of Identity** – The reason Israel was so messed up was that they forgot who they were and what they were created for. They got so distracted by what everyone around them was doing that they set aside God's plans and tried to live independently and selfishly. But it didn't work. They weren't built for living another way, than God's way.
  - How this connects to us – Just as the Jews were designed to be WITH God and act FOR GOD to show the world how to connect with Him, so too are we, modern day Christians. We too are the salt of the earth and light of the world. So, too are we called to live differently and not for ourselves. So too do we feel a dissatisfaction with life when we live outside of our design. So, too do we hijack our purpose and joy when we live for ourselves against God.
  - What do we do? – we begin by refocusing on who God is and what He wants. We shift our lives into alignment to Him. We read His word, we talk to and listen to Him through prayer. We begin each day asking: What do you have planned for me, Lord? We soften our hearts and lay before Him our priority list, our agenda, our calendar, our checkbook, and our lives. We are His body on this planet doing what He wants to do. It's there that we find deep satisfaction, joy, peace, hope, meaning and purpose.
- God pushes for change – God is more interested in our breakthrough than we are. He will set things up so that we will be forced to face our self-imposed chains. Too often we have grown accustomed to our slavery and want to remain there and not make any changes. We are slowly sinking but don't want to bother doing the difficult adjustments. God has built us for more and sometimes He will go to extreme lengths to get our attention. Should He have to?



- The book of Jeremiah in a nutshell - <https://bibleproject.com/videos/jeremiah/>
  - General Info
    - Who was Jeremiah? - Israelite priest in Jerusalem mostly living and recording the end of South (Israel) – the North had already been wiped out and exiled.
    - Predicted Babylon would bring judgment and take people into exile.
    - Rough life - Lived through siege and destruction of Jerusalem personally and into the exile.
    - How the book came to be - After 20 years of preaching in Jerusalem. Collect it all and write it down with a scribe (Baruch). Baruch gathered stories about Jeremiah too. It's all arranged to explain Jeremiah as a prophet of Justice and Grace.
    - God calls Jeremiah – with dual purposes: A. to Israel and B. to nations. A. Uproot and tear down but B. also plant and build up. Warning and hope.
  - Chapters 1-24 collection of Jeremiah's writings BEFORE exile.
    - The reason for the Judgment: Israel broke covenant with God - by worship of other gods, building idol shrines. Jeremiah uses the metaphor of adultery, prostitution and unfaithfulness.
      - Accuses leaders: priests, kings and prophets have abandoned the covenant.
      - Rampant social injustice – the failure of the leaders led to the most needy being taken advantage of: widows, orphans, immigrants. Violation of Torah. No one cared.
    - Chapter 7 – Jeremiah's temple sermon – everyone worshipping like things are fine but outside worshipping other gods even Molech. Jeremiah pronounces God is coming in judgment – God will even destroy His own temple and soon send an enemy from the north to conquer Jerusalem (Babylon).
  - Chapter 25 – transition: It's time, Babylon is coming – Israel haven't turned back despite warnings – It's told during the 1<sup>st</sup> year of Babylon as a nation under king Nebuchadnezzar, God tells Jeremiah to announce that the Babylonian armies are coming to take them to exile for 70 years. The analogy is used of a full cup of God's anger they have to drink.
  - Chapter 26-45 – Babylon's Here!
    - Jeremiah begged - Israel to come back to God but leaders reject him.
    - Recounts when Jerusalem under siege; Jeremiah was kidnapped and taken to Egypt by Israelite rebels, and oppressed.
      - Chapters 30-33 = Hope - In the middle of all of that in chapters 30-33 he has a message of hope. He picks up on Moses' prediction of after exile (Dt 30) God would not abandon His people but renew His covenant with them and transform Israel's hearts. Jeremiah says (31:33) that one day God would write the Torah on the hearts of His people. He will heal the rebellion so they can truly love and follow Him fully. One day they will return to the land and through the line of David, the Messiah will come and that's when all nations will acknowledge and come to know Israel's God as the true God.

- Reminder that God wins - Despite Israel's apostasy God won't let sin get the final word. God's faithfulness will come through no matter what.
- Chapters 46-51- Babylon coming for all the other nations around as well.
  - Chapters 46-49 = Series of poems talking about destruction of other nations: Egypt; Philistia; Moab; Edom; Ammon; Damascus; Hazor
  - Chapters 50-51 - Longest poem is about Babylon itself – God will judge them too: Although he used them he doesn't endorse them but will judge them too. They are busted for pride, idolatry and injustice too. It harkens back to Genesis and the archetypal rebellious nation. They will be given over to their own destruction.
- Chapter 52 – Another account of the Destruction of Jerusalem and Exile – story told about 2 Kings 25 – Babylon's final attack on Jerusalem. Explains chapters 1-24 were fulfilled.
  - Final story is about the king of Israel Jehoiachin (lineage of David) who is released from prison and shows him favor to eat at the royal table.
    - The Point = Glimmer of hope. Promises of hope. God hasn't abandoned His people nor the line of David, pointing to a coming Messiah.