

MONDAY
27 JULY

Jeremiah 13:1-11

Psalms 82 or

Deuteronomy

32:18-21

Matthew 13:31-35

TUESDAY
28 JULY

Jeremiah 14:17-26

Psalms 79:8-16

Matthew 13:36-43

WEDNESDAY
29 JULY

Jeremiah 15:1-10

16-26

Psalms 59:1-4, 18-26

Matthew 13:44-46

THURSDAY
30 JULY

Jeremiah 18:1-6

Psalms 146:1-5

Matthew 13:47-53

FRIDAY
31 JULY

Jeremiah 26:1-9

Psalms 69:4-10

Matthew 13:54-58

SATURDAY
1 AUGUST

Jeremiah

26:11-16, 24

Psalms 69:14-20

Matthew 14:1-12

THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

PART XXIV – JEREMIAH – A BOOK ABOUT DESPAIR AND CONSOLATION

Richard Greatrex continues our book-by-book series about the Bible.

Born out of a national tragedy so devastating that it resonates throughout the rest of scripture – Jerusalem fallen, the first Temple destroyed, the Davidic monarchy crushed and a majority of Judah exiled – the prophecies of Jeremiah swirl with both despair over a people who have abandoned their God and hope that the one God will remain faithful and will, in time, draw them out of the abyss.

Jeremiah's prophetic life covers forty momentous years in ancient Middle Eastern history, beginning in 626 BC, during the reign of Josiah, and continuing until shortly after the destruction of the Temple in 587 BC. His book is a sprawling compilation, the second longest in the Hebrew Bible, swinging back and forth through the fall of the Assyrian empire, the rise of Babylon under a Chaldean dynasty and the God-defying misrule of a succession of ever weaker Davidic kings that eventually results in Judah losing its political independence, its ruling family, its elites and its artisans to become a petty Babylonian province.

As Judah piles apostasy upon apostasy, rejects God's message and persecutes Jeremiah, God's messenger, so Jeremiah prophesies ever more trenchantly, not only that they will face humiliating punishment at the hands of God's agent, Nebuchadnezzar, but that the covenant is being torn up and the nation's dearest possessions, the Temple and the Davidic monarchy, will be sundered. Yet chapters thirty to thirty-three, at the book's heart, detailing Judah's blackest hours, are also known as the “*oracles of consolation*”, offering continual strands of hope: God will not abandon the chosen people; this present, shattering, punishment is not final.

The Hebrew text of Jeremiah is substantially longer than, and in a different order from the Greek edition found in the Septuagint, indicating that compiling the prophet's pronouncements, along with details of his life, was slow and complex. However, despite its aura of intricacy and despair, Jeremiah's fearsome fidelity to God's message shines through. God will not abandon the chosen ones; redemption is always possible.



Jeremiah holding one of his scrolls, in the Byzantine basilica of St Vitale in Ravenna, Italy

That double lament is important in a time when many people are lamenting the loss of species and habitat and are warning of the huge risk of climate change, and yet those prophets in our midst – including some very young women – are ridiculed and in some places openly persecuted.

Jeremiah gives a public sermon calling for change, or else destruction will come, but the religious authorities and the ordinary people can't bear to hear it and want to put him to death. The loincloth is meant to cling to the body as Judah is meant to cling to God, but it is “*ruined... good for nothing*” because the people refuse to hear God, stubbornly following their own will and going after other gods to serve and worship.

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God of those who cry out in warning,
help us to put aside our fears
and listen for your voice in their words.
Bless those who see with clarity how we must change
to become your faithful people once again.

PRAYER



Edited by
Caroline Hodgson
and
Heather Smith

Seventh week
after Trinity

Monday 27 July to
Saturday 1 August
2020

WEEK