

Jeremiah

The weeping prophet:

The ministry of Jeremiah is commendable on the basis of longevity. Though he did not serve as long as Isaiah, Jeremiah is believed to have served the Lord for approximately forty-seven years.

Historical political context:

Jeremiah likely began his prophetic ministry during the days of Josiah who came to be king in Judah at 8 years old. Though he was young, godly advisors around him helped to establish a godly pattern in the land. When he was in his early 20s he began making great reformations which meant the destruction of idolatry and a renewed worship of Yahweh in obedience.

After Josiah's death, his second son was set up as king by the people of Judah, rejecting to follow normal heirship by the eldest, Eliakim. Jehoahaz was only on the throne for three months when Necho, Pharaoh of Egypt invaded and carried him away captive to Egypt where he died according to Jeremiah's prophecy (22:11-12).

Necho established Eliakim to rule and changed his name to Jehoiakim. He was a wicked king who tolerated and promoted rampant sin in the land. (Habakkuk's prophecies came during this time.) In 605 b.c. Babylon defeated Egypt at the battle of Carchemish and became the dominant power in the middle east. That same year Nebuchadnezzar invaded Jerusalem, but didn't have a complete victory until after he became king in 597 b.c. Jehoiakim had died in 598 b.c., and his son took the throne at 18 years old.

Jehoiachin was taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar who placed Mattaniah as the regent in Judah. He also changed his name to Zedekiah. Feeling pressure to stand in league with Edom, Moab, Ammon, and Phoenicia, Zedekiah rejected the word of God given through Jeremiah (27:1-22) and revolted against Babylon. After a short siege, Jerusalem fell again in 586 b.c. This time Nebuchadnezzar refused to leave a regent, and appointed a governor.

The three distinct periods of Jeremiah's ministry:

First Period: Good times

During Josiah's kingdom Jeremiah had little to no opposition.

Second Period: Hard times

The last three kings of Judah were wicked and allowed rampant sin. This was a season of great opposition to the ministry of God's man.

Third Period: Bitter and Sweet

At the accomplishment of his prophecy, Jeremiah likely enjoyed a season of reprieve until his death in Egypt, being moderately respected as the spokesman of God.