Prophet Margins Week 8: Jeremiah

**Overview**

Isaiah and Jeremiah are often compared as they are two of the three ‘major prophets’. This makes sense as both prophets served in the Kingdom of Judah. However, the two prophets’ timeframes are very different, as Isaiah began his ministry in 740 BC, and Jeremiah began his ministry in 627 BC. Judah is also a much different place under Jeremiah than Isaiah. Since the start of Isaiah’s ministry, Assyria had taken over the northern kingdom of Israel, and then set its sights south to Judah. And, while Assyria had not conquered Judah, they did have an extended war with them that left the Judahites battered, bruised, and barely hanging on. The Lord, during King Hezekiah’s reign, kept Jerusalem and the surrounding area independent. However, economically, they were devastated because they had to pay a yearly sum to Assyria to maintain their independence. As Jeremiah has his call to be a prophet, Hezekiah’s great-grandson, King Josiah, now reigns over Judah. And while Josiah brings religious reforms to Judah, the country will remain economically poor and will try to stay afloat in any way possible.

Another difference between the two prophets is that Isaiah had been an insider, while Jeremiah would be an outsider. Isaiah had lived in Jerusalem, while Jeremiah lived in Anathoth, a village 5 miles northeast of Jerusalem. Like Ezekiel, the 3rd of the ‘major prophets’, Jeremiah is a priest as well as a prophet. Being a priest and prophet, Jeremiah had much to do during the 40 years he prophesied. As a priest, he would bring sacrifices to God on behalf of the people, as a prophet, he would have to tell the people that the sacrifices were in place, not so they could feel better about their continuous sinning, but so that they could draw close to God.

**Read Jeremiah 1:1-3**

**Questions:** When did Jeremiah start his time as a prophet? Under what kings did Jeremiah serve as a prophet? When does Jeremiah’s time as a prophet end? What goes on at the end of Jeremiah’s time as a prophet?

(As I said above, Jeremiah starts his time as a prophet during the reign of King Josiah. Specifically, Jeremiah began his time as a prophet in the 13th year of King Josiah’s reign. King Josiah began his reign as the king of Judah in the year 640 BC as an 8-year-old boy. Meaning that, by the time Jeremiah starts being a prophet in the 13th year of King Josiah’s reign, the king is 21. So, while King Josiah is still young, he is at least in his 20s by the time Jeremiah shows up. In terms of year placement, the 13th year of King Josiah’s reign is the same as 627 BC. King Josiah would go on to reign for 31 years in total, reigning until 609 BC. Jeremiah, then, would be a prophet of Judah for the last 18 years of King Josiah’s reign. He would then go for another 22 years as the prophet of Judah under the sons of King Josiah. Before we speak about the other kings during Jeremiah’s time as a prophet, I want to address what happened to King Josiah. In his attempt to help Judah recover economically, Josiah sides with the Babylonians, hoping to get out from under the oppressive Assyrians. This leads to Josiah meeting his end at a place commonly known as Armageddon. Armageddon, in its most basic definition, is the arm or valley of Megiddo, a hilltop village in northern Israel. Many decisive battles have been fought in this valley over time, giving rise to its importance and the name Armageddon becoming synonymous with final, decisive battles or moments. From his death, Josiah’s sons Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah reigned as kings until Judah was taken over by the Babylonians in 586 BC. This date also ends Jeremiah’s time as a prophet.)

**Read Jeremiah 1:4-10**

**Questions:** How does Jeremiah’s call story start? How does Jeremiah respond to his call at first? What does God say to Jeremiah? What does God do for Jeremiah?

(This section is Jeremiah’s call to be a prophet. In his call, we hear about God’s desire to be close to His people. God says, in essence, that even before Jeremiah was a twinkle in his momma’s eye, the Lord knew him and called him by name. Psalm 139 says the same: “You, Lord, are the one who created my inmost parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” What is clear in Jeremiah’s call story and King David’s words from Psalm 139 is that God doesn’t make mistakes. God made each of us intentionally, knows the very hairs on our heads, and loves each one of us deeply. And that is something even Jeremiah needed to hear. Jeremiah needed to know of the Lord’s great love for him. Of how he was wonderfully, purposefully made by God. We hear why this was needed in Jeremiah’s response to God. He tells God that he is too young to be a prophet. God then gives the best answer to Jeremiah when the Lord tells the prophet that his age is no matter because God will be with the prophet every step of the way. In addition to speaking an answer, God also symbolically touches Jeremiah’s mouth to show that the prophet will speak for the Lord to people, kings, and kingdoms. God is saying that Jeremiah would be the Lord’s mouthpiece and bring to many what God had to say to them. From his calling in 627 BC, Jeremiah would faithfully be a prophet for the next 40 years. His time as a prophet only stops when Judah is taken into exile in 586 BC; basically, no nation meant no need for a prophet at that time. More prophets would come in exile, but none who served in Israel or Judah would continue their ministry in exile.)

Prayer Requests\

