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Resource Guide

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Resource Guide

UNDERSTANDING, PROCLAIMING, AND EMBODYING THE MESSAGE OF JEREMIAH

PAUL M. WATSON

As the preceding articles show, the book of Jeremiah is a rich resource for ministry. Yet we often approach this expansive, complex book with the Ethiopian's question: "How can I [understand it] unless someone explains it to me?" What follows is a highly select list of resources, together with comments by one or more of the authors and editor of this issue, which can assist us as we seek to grasp the message of this pivotal prophetic book.

Commentaries

Walter Brueggemann, *A Commentary on Jeremiah: Exile and Homecoming* (Eerdmans, 1998). A master of language himself, Brueggemann brings to life Jeremiah's words and world in this volume. See also Brueggemann's recently published *The Theology of the Book of Jeremiah* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), which takes the sovereignty of God as the integrating theme of the book.

John A. Thompson, *Jeremiah* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament; Eerdmans, 1980). A standard, go-to commentary for interpreting Jeremiah. This commentary is thorough in its coverage of critical questions, but it consistently gives cogent and compelling arguments for the more conservative interpretation. It is concise and helpful at almost every turn.

Tim Willis, *Jeremiah & Lamentations* (The College Press NIV Commentary; College Press, 2002). Written by the expositor for Pepperdine's 64th Annual Bible Lectures (2007), and the author of the lead article in this issue of *Leaven*, this commentary also takes the sovereignty of God to be the dominant theme of Jeremiah. Another soon-to-appear commentary in the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement tradition—*The Transforming Word: A One Volume Commentary on the Bible* (ACU Press, 2008)—will include a treatment of Jeremiah by Keith Schoville.

Other Studies on Jeremiah and the Prophetic Literature of the Old Testament

Elizabeth Achtemeier, *Jeremiah* (Knox Preaching Guides; John Knox, 1987). A still valuable resource for teaching/preaching specific passages from Jeremiah. Achtemeier's Introduction (pp. 1-7) is especially helpful in this regard.

Walter Brueggemann, *Like Fire in the Bones: Listening for the Prophetic Word in Jeremiah* (Fortress, 2006). This book deals with visions of the alternative community that we see in the prophets and how contemporary faith communities might also offer an alternative voice. It is helpful in that it tries to connect prophetic texts with contemporary, real-life situations. See also Brueggemann's *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2nd edition (Fortress, 2001)—a "creative and heuristic work," as one of our authors puts it—and Brueggemann's *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Westminster John Knox, 2003).

Ronald Clements, *Old Testament Prophecy: From Oracles to Canon* (Westminster John Knox, 1996). Clements is good at surveying what we know about prophecy in ancient Israel. He accurately and lucidly explains the structure and themes of the Major Prophets, their place in the biblical canon, and how they connect to other biblical traditions.

Martin Kessler, ed. *Reading the Book of Jeremiah: A Search for Coherence* (Eisenbrauns, 2004). This collection is written for those who are not critical experts, but who want to know about recent thinking about the book. There is a good spectrum of essays here that touch on helpful reading strategies to employ with the book of Jeremiah.

Thom Lemmons, *He Who Wept* (Questar, 1990). An historical novel that brings Jeremiah's story to life in a wonderful way. The reader will get a great sense of what Jeremiah faced in his ministry and the struggles that he endured.

Louis Stulman, *Order Amid Chaos: Jeremiah as Symbolic Tapestry* (Sheffield Academic Press, 1998). Demonstrates the intercontextual dimensions of prophecy—how Jeremiah's text relates to other texts. Stulman shows how the final editors of Jeremiah organized his words and stories about him so that they could speak to a new situation. Even words of doom become words of hope as Israel remembers that God punished them, but then rescued them.

Tim Willis, *Hear the Word of the Lord: Jeremiah's Call to Renewal* (Covenant Publishing, 2007). An excellent introduction and study-guide for adult Bible classes. Willis reminds us that the message from God in Jeremiah's book is for *us* (Christians) and not just for *them* (the Israelites).

Other Relevant Resources

Bruce Birch, *Let Justice Roll Down: The Old Testament, Ethics, and Christian Life* (Westminster John Knox, 1991). A minor classic; one of the first books in recent years to explore the Old Testament as a moral resource. Birch shows how all the major traditions of the Old Testament offer resources for a moral life.

William Brown, *Character and Scripture: Moral Formation, Community, and Biblical Interpretation* (Eerdmans, 2002). This collection of articles on moral formation offers new and deep insights into how the Bible tries to make better people through a range of approaches (wisdom, narrative, prophecy, moral reflection, etc.).

Enrique Nardoni, *Rise Up, O Judge: A Study of Justice in the Biblical World* (Hendrickson, 2004). This study of approaches to justice in the ancient Near East and the biblical canon of Old and New Testaments offers the best comprehensive study of justice in the Bible available in English today.

Hugh Sanborn, ed. *The Prophetic Call: Celebrating Community, Earth, Justice, and Peace* (Chalice, 2004). The contributors to this volume of essays try to think through how the church could contribute to economic, social, political, and ecological justice in the world. The authors thoughtfully call us all to pay attention to these issues. This book would well serve ministers and ministry students.



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