

How did Jeremiah die?

Jeremiah was one of the major prophets of ancient Israel and a key figure in the Old Testament. The Bible contains more information about his life and times than any other prophet. But with regards to how Jeremiah died, the Scriptures leave no record. Church tradition suggests that Jeremiah was stoned to death in Egypt by the Jews.

Jeremiah prophesied in Judah around 626–587 BC, beginning in King Josiah's reign and lasting through the fall of Judah to the Babylonians. Throughout his 40-year ministry, Jeremiah managed to survive many brushes with death. After the death of Josiah, Jeremiah infuriated Israel's priests and made powerful enemies by alienating them. In a sermon delivered in the temple, Jeremiah insisted that the people put away their idols, repent of their sin, and stop being hypocritical in their honor of God in the temple. For this, he was banned from the temple, although he was himself the son of a priest, and the priests sought to kill him. In addition, the prophet regularly warned his fellow countrymen to submit to Babylon, a nation that God had appointed to discipline Israel. As a result, Jeremiah was despised as a traitor, and his life was often endangered. Once, when the people decided that Jeremiah must die, God interceded, declaring that they would die instead (Jeremiah 11:21-23).

Jeremiah frequently opposed the king's favored prophets, gaining more adversaries in high places. During a lull in the final days of the siege on Jerusalem, Jeremiah left the city presumably to visit his family at Anathoth. He was apprehended and arrested in Benjamin, accused of desertion, beaten, and imprisoned (Jeremiah 37:11-16). After appealing to King Zedekiah, Jeremiah was placed under house arrest. While there, Jeremiah's enemies had him cast into an abandoned cistern to die, but he was rescued by an Ethiopian named Ebed-Melech (Jeremiah 38).

Soon after, the Babylonians captured Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar gave orders not to harm Jeremiah. The prophet was released and allowed to go to Mizpah. Our last glimpse of Jeremiah in Scripture is when he was forcibly taken by a band of Jewish rebels who left Judah to live in Egypt around 585–582 BC (Jeremiah 43–45).

According to the early church father Tertullian, the Jews stoned Jeremiah to death in Daphne (Tahpanhes in Hebrew), Egypt. Jeremiah's "crime" was telling them truths they did not want to hear [Scorpiace, Chapter VIII]. The tradition of Jeremiah's martyrdom is backed by other first-century, extrabiblical writings (Lives of the Prophets), and invoked in the works of Jerome, Isidore of Seville's *De Ortu Et Obitu Patrum*, and Peter Comestor's twelfth-century *Historia Scholastica*. However, one Jewish tradition claims that, when Nebuchadnezzar invaded Egypt around 569 BC, he took Jeremiah from Egypt to Babylon, where Jeremiah died.

The words "some died by stoning" in Hebrews 11:37 are quite possibly an allusion to Jeremiah's death. This New Testament chapter, which some refer to as the "Hall of Faith," introduces a long list of Old Testament heroes of faith, including anonymous martyrs and tortured saints. Although we cannot know with certainty, Jeremiah likely died by stoning in Egypt.