



## Baruch

(sometimes called 1 Baruch)

The book of Baruch falls into two parts. In the first part (1.1–3.8) Baruch, who is mentioned in the book of Jeremiah as being Jeremiah’s secretary, read out a letter to the people who were in exile with King Jehoiakin in Babylon. As a result of hearing the letter the people wept, fasted, prayed and made a collection for the Temple to be sent back to Jerusalem. The gift for the Temple was sent with the request that the people prayed for King Nebuchadnezzar and his son Belshazzar so that the exiles might live in peace under them. The second part of the book (3.9–5.9) changes tone dramatically and consists of two poems, one which exhorts God’s people to learn wisdom and the other which encourages them to wait for God’s salvation.

Connected to the book of Baruch is the Letter of Jeremiah, sometimes included as chapter 6 of Baruch and sometimes as a stand-alone book.



### How long will it take?

**Reading time:** About 30 mins  
**Short of time?** Just read 1.1-7; 1.15–2.6;  
 3.9-14



### Anything tricky?

The book doesn’t really hang together. So the trickiest part of it is holding all its different parts together in your mind.



### Genre

Mixed – historical story and poetry



### Inspiring quotes

<sup>21</sup>Take courage, my children, cry to God, and he will deliver you from the power and hand of the enemy. <sup>22</sup>For I have put my hope in the Everlasting to save you, and joy has come to me from the Holy One, because of the mercy that will soon come to you from your everlasting saviour. <sup>23</sup>For I sent you out with sorrow and weeping, but God will give you back to me with joy and gladness forever.

(Baruch 4.21-23)



## About the Author

The book is attributed to Baruch son of Neriah, Jeremiah's secretary but its verbal differences from the rest of Jeremiah have made scholars doubt whether, in fact, he was the author. The very different tone of the two parts of the book also raises questions about whether the same person wrote 1.1–3.8 and 3.9–5.9.

### *What do we know about him?*

Jeremiah 36 talks about Baruch writing down the words of Jeremiah and editing them. He then read them out while Jeremiah was in hiding from the King. He remained with Jeremiah after the fall of Jerusalem and was taken with him into Egypt. The early Christian theologian Jerome recorded that Baruch died soon afterwards but the book of Baruch implies that he later travelled to Babylon where he delivered Jeremiah's letter.

The scroll that we have is probably not by Baruch but is an example of a later editor using the name to reinterpret Jeremiah for a new situation, in which they felt the exile was still going on. The book was probably written sometime between 586 BC and AD 70, originally in Hebrew.

The existing manuscripts of the book of Baruch are only in Greek but 1.1–3.8 is thought to have been translated into Greek from a Semitic language (either Hebrew or Aramaic) because of its sentence structure and style.



## About the times

The book is set during the Babylonian exile (the early sixth century BC)

### *What were people feeling?*

The exiles were feeling dislocated, anxious and alone.



## How is it structured?

1.1-14	Introduction set in Babylon
1.15–2.10	A confession of sins
2.11–3.8	Prayer for mercy
3.9–4.4	A poem in praise of wisdom
4.5–5.9	The reason why the people are in exile
6.1-73	Letter of Jeremiah



## What kind of Book is it?

Baruch is partially historical story, partially letter and partially poetry.



## Look out for...

Baruch seems to be telling God's people that they were to blame for the calamity that had befallen them. Trace this theme through the book.

There is a change of tone, especially between 3.8 and 3.9 – reflect on why you think it changes so much here.

Verses 3.9–4.14 talk extensively about wisdom, look out for the theme as you read.



## What could this mean for me?

Baruch is a message to a people in the midst of disaster, reflect on whether it has anything to say in our modern world.



## Discussion group questions

- Were there any parts of the book that you particularly liked or which inspired you?
- Were there any parts of the book that you disliked or which troubled you?
- What did *you* think the book was about?
- What do you think Baruch's main point was to the people in exile? Did he get it across effectively?
- Did you find any glimpses of hope in the book?
- What was your overall impression of the book? Did it feel more like a book or more like a collection of interesting snippets?
- Did you read anything in the book that touched you, expanded your faith or made you think more deeply about your life and how you live it?



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