

640 B.C.	ZEPHANIAH BECOMES A PROPHET
627	JEREMIAH BECOMES A PROPHET
612	HABAKKUK BECOMES A PROPHET
609	KING JOSIAH KILLED IN BATTLE
605	DANIEL TAKEN CAPTIVE
597	EZEKIEL TAKEN CAPTIVE
593	EZEKIEL BEGINS TO PROPHECY IN BABYLON
586	JUDAH FALLS; JERUSALEM DESTROYED; JEREMIAH'S MINISTRY ENDS
538	FIRST EXILES RETURN TO JUDAH

Jeremiah

WHAT'S THIS BOOK ABOUT? The highly unpopular, but still true, words of a man God used in troubled times.

WHO WROTE IT? The book identifies the prophet Jeremiah as the author, assisted by Baruch.

WHEN DID IT HAPPEN? Jeremiah lived and carried out his ministry in the late 600s and early 500s B.C.

WHERE DOES THIS BOOK FIT? The end of the period of the divided kingdom of Israel.

THE BREAKDOWN

- Chapter 1: Jeremiah's call
- Chapters 2-35: God's accusations against his people
- Chapters 36-38: Jeremiah is persecuted
- Chapters 39-45: Judah is captured
- Chapters 46-51: Judgments against specific nations
- Chapter 52: Recap of the fall of Jerusalem

KEY CONCEPTS

- Judgment
- Repentance

SCORECARD

- Jeremiah:** The prophet
- Baruch:** His secretary
- Hananiah:** A false prophet
- Jehoiakim:** The king who burned Jeremiah's book
- Zedekiah:** The last king of Judah

READING TIME



WORTH MEMORIZING

• 9:23-24

This is what the Lord says:

"Don't let the wise boast in their wisdom,

or the powerful boast in their power, or the rich boast in their riches.

But those who wish to boast should boast in this alone:

that they truly know me and understand that I am the Lord

who demonstrates unfailing love and who brings justice and righteousness to the earth,

and that I delight in these things. I, the Lord, have spoken!"

• 17:9

"The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked.

Who really knows how bad it is?"

• 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord, "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope."

• 32:17 "O Sovereign Lord! You made the heavens and earth by your strong hand and powerful arm. Nothing is too hard for you!"

THE MASCULINE PERSPECTIVE

• **GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY:** The plots and conspiracies in the Jerusalem palace

make fascinating reading, as Jeremiah and Baruch try to fulfill their mission in

spite of the king and his advisers. Their story shows us that no matter what we're

facing, God is ultimately in control.

WHAT'S THE POINT OF Jeremiah?

+++

When nothing goes right, keep doing right.



The old Spiritual, "There Is a Balm in Gilead" says, "Sometimes I feel discouraged and think my work's in vain, but then the Holy Spirit revives my soul again." Discouragement is an occupational hazard of ministry; but whenever we're downcast, we can turn to Jeremiah—the Weeping Prophet—and regain our perspective.

When Jeremiah was commissioned, the Lord said to him, "Prepare yourself and arise, and speak to them all that I command you. Do not be dismayed . . . I have made you this day a fortified city and an iron pillar . . . They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you for I am with you" (Jeremiah 1:17-19).

Jeremiah's forty-year ministry was centered in Judah during the reigns of the final five kings of Judah, right up until the time Babylon destroyed the city. Jeremiah didn't have an easy task. He was beaten and imprisoned. He was thrown into a muddy cistern. His writings were cut up and burned. In the end, he was forcibly taken to Egypt, where he apparently died. But he was faithful at every point—sometimes weeping and struggling to understand—but faithful. And through him God gave the promise of establishing a "new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah" — a covenant fulfilled by the shed blood of Jesus.

When we do our best for the Lord and have little to show for it, we're companions with Jeremiah. Just as the Lord was with him, He will be with you. God will bless your efforts for His glory.

KEY THOUGHT:

God expects us to persevere in His work, even when our heart is broken, our message is rejected, and our labor appears vain.

KEY VERSE:

"Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know."

Jeremiah 33:3

KEY ACTION:

We must go to all to whom He sends us and speak whatever He tells us (see Jeremiah 1:7).



KEY PRAYER:

Almighty Lord, remind me that You are the potter and I am the clay.

Parents Give Birth, God Gives Life

Jeremiah 1:4-5

ON THE OPENING PAGE OF THIS BOOK, God gave his prophet a message: "I knew you before I formed you in your mother's womb. Before you were born I set you apart and appointed you as my prophet to the nations" (Jeremiah 1:5).

One important message in this passage is that the creation of life is glorious and mysterious. Humans have been blessed as participants in God's design for the furthering of the human race. We give physical birth to children—but God gives life.

This passage also informs us that God sets certain people apart for his work in the world. Jeremiah became a great prophet to the people of Israel. His work was not easy. People often didn't want to hear his messages. But he persevered and obeyed God.

Each of us is also called by God for specific work here on earth. We may not be recipients of proclamations the way Jeremiah was, but we have other assignments to fulfill.

One of our greatest blessings is the ability to understand our callings. We can go to the Bible and read God's words for us. We can ascertain our spiritual gifts. We can talk and pray with our spouses and bring the blending of two lives into the work that God has called us to do.

We know that some assignments are not grand or glorious. Some are difficult. Some are painstakingly slow in producing fruit. But when we endeavor to live out these callings, we find God's blessing on all aspects of our lives.

BASIC SURVEY

JEREMIAH

AUTHOR: Jeremiah (1:1), with the assistance of Baruch, a scribe (36:4).

DATE: Approximately 585 BC.

IN TEN WORDS OR LESS

After years of sinful behavior, Judah will be punished.

DETAILS, PLEASE

Called to the ministry as a youth (1:6), Jeremiah prophesied bad news to Judah: “Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith the LORD” (5:15 KJV). Jeremiah was mocked for his prophecies, occasionally beaten, and imprisoned in a muddy well (chapter 38). But his words came true with the Babylonian invasion of chapter 52.

QUOTABLE

> “Look, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel!” (18:6 NKJV).

UNIQUE AND UNUSUAL

The book of Jeremiah that we read is an expanded, second version of a destroyed first draft. King Jehoiakim, angry with Jeremiah for his dire prophecies, cut the scroll with a penknife “and cast it into the fire” (36:23 KJV). At God’s command, Jeremiah produced a second scroll with additional material (36:32).

SO WHAT?

Through Jeremiah, God gave Judah some forty years to repent. God is “patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9 NASB).

READ JEREMIAH 1-2.

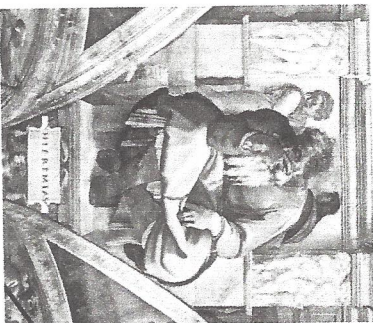
- One-Month Course: your next reading is on page 130. →
- Three-Month Course: your next reading is on page 130. →
- Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 125. →

CLOSER LOOK

JEREMIAH—THE PROPHET OF DOOM

Jeremiah was only a youth when God called him to be a prophet to the people of Judah. When Jeremiah protested that he was too young, the Lord told him, “Do not say, ‘I am too young.’ You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you” (Jeremiah 1:7 NIV).

At that time, the Assyrian Empire had just fallen. Good King Josiah ruled (Jeremiah 1:1-2) and was on an ambitious program of destroying idol worship throughout Judah and Israel. Unfortunately, however, the Israelites were deeply entrenched in Baal worship, and only halfheartedly went along with Josiah’s sweeping reforms.



The prophet Jeremiah warned the people of Judah about Jerusalem’s destruction.

through the years Jeremiah was repeatedly reproached, locked up in stocks, and threatened.

In the end, King Zedekiah rebelled, so the Babylonians besieged Jerusalem. Then Pharaoh led an army out of Egypt, and the Babylonians broke off their siege. But Jeremiah warned Zedekiah that God was still determined to judge them for their sins (Jeremiah 37:9-10). Sure enough, the Babylonians returned. Jeremiah was arrested, flogged, then imprisoned in a dungeon cell where he remained for many days. He survived the famine and the fall of Jerusalem, and was released and allowed to live in Judah.

READ JEREMIAH 4-5.

- Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 126. →

CLOSER LOOK

BABYLON CREATES AN EMPIRE

For two hundred years the Assyrians had ruled Babylon. Then around 630 BC, Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, revolted. He began to build an empire and by 610 BC had advanced north and conquered Nineveh itself. In 609 BC, Pharaoh Neco led an Egyptian army to help the Assyrians fight the Babylonians. But the Babylonian army, under Prince Nebuchadnezzar, defeated them.



Nebuchadnezzar took the people of Judah into captivity, which is portrayed in this lithograph titled *The Captivity of Judah*.

To the south in Judah, the Egyptians set up Jehoiakim as a puppet king. Then in 606 BC, Pharaoh Neco again attacked the Babylonians. At the Battle of Carchemish in 605 BC, his army was badly mauled (Jeremiah 46:2). That same year, Nabopolassar died and Nebuchadnezzar became king of Babylon. Following this battle, Pharaoh Neco lost control of all Syria, Phoenicia, and Judah (2 Kings 24:7). When Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah in 605 BC, he took several members of the royal house and noble families back to Babylon—among them Daniel and his friends (Daniel 1:1–2).

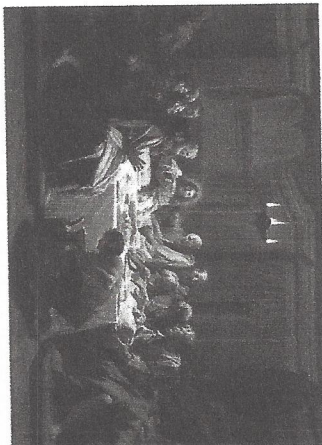
King Jehoiakim later rebelled against the Babylonians, so Nebuchadnezzar took him to Babylon. His son Jehoiachin then reigned. But only three months later, in 597 BC, Jehoiachin was also taken to Babylon. Several Jews went with him—among them Ezekiel. Zedekiah then became king, but after nine years he, too, rebelled, so Nebuchadnezzar sent an army to besiege Jerusalem. They conquered the city in 586 BC and burned the temple, the palace, and all the houses of Jerusalem. They broke down the city's walls and took most of the survivors as prisoners to Babylon.

READ 2 KINGS 24 AND JEREMIAH 52.

● Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 127. →

CLOSER LOOK

THE NEW COVENANT



Jean-Baptiste Jouvenet (1644–1717) painted *The Last Supper*. During Jesus' last supper with his disciples, He established God's new covenant with His people.

remember no more^a) (Jeremiah 31:31, 33–34 NASB).

After the last Passover meal, Jesus broke the bread and gave it to His disciples, saying, "Take, eat; this is My body." Then He passed the cup, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:26–28 NKJV). The following day, Jesus' body was broken with scourging and crucifixion, and His blood was poured out so that our sins could be forgiven.

God *has* now written his law on our hearts. As Paul tells us, "You are a letter from Christ . . . written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts" (2 Corinthians 3:3 NIV). We are now His people. He promised, "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (2 Corinthians 6:16 NKJV). And He *has* completely forgiven our sins. "In Him [Jesus] we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Ephesians 1:7 NKJV).

READ JEREMIAH 31 AND HEBREWS 8.

● Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 130. →

HIDDEN TREASURE

BURNING JEREMIAH'S SCROLL

One day, God told Jeremiah to record all the prophecies he'd received, so Jeremiah dictated them to the scribe Baruch, who wrote them in a scroll. Jeremiah then sent Baruch to the temple to read his warnings. Jehudi and other noblemen heard Baruch, took the scroll to Jehoiakim's palace, and began reading it to him. It was wintertime, so the king had a fire burning, and every time Jehudi read three or four columns, Jehoiakim cut that section off and tossed it in the fire. He did this until the entire scroll was burned. If Jehoiakim had repented at the warnings, God would've had mercy. But because he rejected God's word, his judgment was certain. Jeremiah then gave Baruch another scroll and had him write the words again.

READ JEREMIAH 36.

HIDDEN TREASURE

CAST INTO DEEP MUD

As the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem continued and famine racked the city, Jeremiah prophesied: "Whoever stays in this city will die by the sword, famine or plague, but whoever goes over to the Babylonians will live" (Jeremiah 38:2 NIV). Finally, the enraged Jewish officials insisted that Jeremiah be put to death, so King Zedekiah handed him over. They dropped him into a large cistern (reservoir). All the water was gone and there was only deep mud there, so Jeremiah sank in it and couldn't get free. This looked like the end. But an Ethiopian named Ebed-melech heard what they'd done, went to the king, and got permission to rescue Jeremiah. With the help of several men, Ebed-melech lowered a rope then pulled him up.

READ JEREMIAH 37-38.

HIDDEN TREASURE

JEREMIAH IS VINDICATED

Finally the besieging army broke through the walls. Zedekiah fled the city, but the Babylonians pursued, scattered his army, killed his sons, blinded him, and took him to Babylon. The conquerors also took many other Jews with him. Jeremiah was still in prison, so the Babylonians released him. They knew that Jeremiah had warned the Jews to surrender to them, so they let him live wherever he wished to. It was harvesttime, and the land was overflowing with ripe figs, grapes, and dates, so Jeremiah and the survivors had their pick of the best of the land. The Jewish governor, appointed by Babylon, urged everyone to settle down peacefully and serve the Babylonians.

READ JEREMIAH 39-40.

HIDDEN TREASURE

THE BROKEN PROMISE

An Israelite prince named Ishmael had the Jewish governor and his Babylonian guards murdered, but an army officer named Johanan rescued Jeremiah and the other Jews from him. Then Johanan and his officers worried that the Babylonians would retaliate against *them*. So they took the people and headed for Egypt, then stopped and asked Jeremiah if God had a message for them. They vowed, "Whether it is pleasing or displeasing, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God" (Jeremiah 42:6 NKJV). After ten days, God told them to stay in Judah and He would be merciful and bless them. This was *not* the answer Johanan and his fellow officers had wanted or expected, so they broke their promise and continued on to Egypt.

READ JEREMIAH 41-42.

JEREMIAH

THE BIG PICTURE

- A. JEREMIAH'S SPECIAL APPOINTMENT (1:1 – 19)
- B. THE PROPHET DELIVERS GOD'S MESSAGES (2:1 — 45:5)
 - 1. God's Warnings to Judah (2:1 — 29:32)
 - 2. The Coming Exile and Restoration (30:1 — 33:26)
 - 3. The Fall of Jerusalem (34:1 — 45:5)
- C. GOD'S JUDGMENT ON THE NATIONS (46:1 — 51:64)
- D. A PAINFUL REMINDER OF PAINFUL DAYS (52:1 – 34)

When we think of the future, most of us dream that we will be needed, loved, successful and sought after. Rarely do we hope for deep sorrow, thankless service or unwarranted persecution at the hands of the people we care about. When God called him, Jeremiah probably dreamed of people listening and responding to his words. He probably hoped that his ministry would inspire the spiritual renewal of the people of Judah. However, Jeremiah's hopes for success never came to be—at least not in his lifetime.

Jeremiah faithfully warned the Israelites of the punishment that would come because of their sin, but the people ignored his passionate pleas. Instead of admitting their sins and failures, they rejected, imprisoned and abused God's messenger. No one wanted to hear what Jeremiah had to say. King Zedekiah put Jeremiah into an empty cistern where the prophet sank not only into the mud but also into a mire of rejection. Virtually no one respected Jeremiah or the messages he spoke. The consequences of rejecting Jeremiah and his message were great: Judah fell deeper into sin and eventually suffered destruction and exile.

From a human standpoint, Jeremiah was not a successful prophet. But in the eyes of God, he was one of the most successful people in all history. Jeremiah remained faithful despite the opposition he faced. We may also experience opposition and suffering. God will fulfill his purposes for us, just as he did for Jeremiah, if we are faithful to God and his plan.

SPIRITUAL RENEWAL THEMES

FAITHFULNESS OVERCOMES FAILURE

From our human perspective, Jeremiah was a failure. But from God's point of view, Jeremiah was one of the greatest success stories in the Bible. Jeremiah remained faithful to God and God's commands despite the powerful opposition that he faced. When we feel discouraged, we need to remember that God simply calls us to be faithful—to keep on going. We don't have to be a success. We only need to be faithful. God will honor our faithfulness by providing us with strength when we need it.

GOD'S WAY MAY BE PAINFUL

In order to avoid facing their sin, the people of Judah refused to listen to Jeremiah's call for repentance. At times we may be tempted to avoid the truth and necessary changes we must make to our lives, but such avoidance will

only stunt our spiritual growth. When we refuse to hear God's message of truth, we only create suffering that cuts even deeper than the pain we are trying to avoid. We should face the truth of our sin and allow it to redirect our course toward righteous living.

GOD UNDERSTANDS OUR EMOTIONS

Jeremiah has often been called the weeping prophet. But he did more than weep—at times Jeremiah was bitter, angry, discouraged, depressed and lonely. We have all experienced those feelings. Jeremiah even complained to God, "Why is my pain unending and my wound grievous and incurable? You are to me like a deceptive brook, like a spring that fails" (Jeremiah 15:18). God accepted Jeremiah's emotional tirades. His understanding of Jeremiah's emotions frees us to bring all of our strong feelings straight to God. God accepts us just as we are, and he is ready to heal our pain. We simply need to be honest with him.

HOPE DESPITE DISASTER

Jeremiah's warnings of impending judgment are punctuated by promises of ultimate deliverance. Jeremiah told the people about a new covenant that God had in store for them (see Jeremiah 31:1–40). Despite their impending doom, Jeremiah also reminded the people that God loved them and had a wonderful future planned for them: "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future'" (Jeremiah 29:11). When God confronts us with the truth about our sin, he also desires to give us a message of hope. He truly is the God of hope and restoration.

Essential Facts

PURPOSE:

To warn the people of Judah to turn from their sin and obey God's good plan for them.

AUTHOR:

The prophet Jeremiah.

AUDIENCE:

The people of Judah, before and during the Babylonian exile.

DATE WRITTEN:

The book includes oracles given throughout Jeremiah's ministry (626–585 B.C.).

SETTING:

The land of Judah, from the initial threats of Assyria and Egypt (627 BC) until after Judah's eventual destruction by Babylon (586 BC).

KEY VERSE:

"When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, Lord God Almighty" (15:16).

KEY PEOPLE AND RELATIONSHIPS:

Jeremiah with God and with the people of Judah.

THE BOOK OF

JEREMIAH

THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH IS the prophecy of a man divinely called in his youth from the priest-city of Anathoth. A heartbroken prophet with a heartbreaking message, Jeremiah labors for more than forty years proclaiming a message of doom to the stiff-necked people of Judah. Despised and persecuted by his countrymen, Jeremiah bathes his harsh prophecies in tears of compassion. His broken heart causes him to write a broken book, which is difficult to arrange chronologically or topically. But through his sermons and signs he faithfully declares that surrender to God's will is the only way to escape calamity.

Yirmeyahu or *Yirmeyah* literally means "Yahweh Throws," perhaps in the sense of laying a foundation. It may effectively mean "Yahweh Establishes, Appoints, or Sends." The Greek form of the Hebrew name in the Septuagint is *Hieremias*, and the Latin form is *Jeremias*.

WATCH WORDS

- understanding (comprehending, having insight, or being prudent)—3:15
- incline (pay attention, listen closely)—7:26
- wailing (a loud expression of grief)—9:19 (also 31:15)
- forsaken (left, abandoned)—12:7 (also 2:13; 22:9)
- rebellion (revolt, rejection of God)—28:16 (also 29:32)

SPOTLIGHT IN SYNC

When you study the book of Jeremiah, you quickly notice that it wasn't assembled in chronological order. (Some scholars think that during these chaotic times, Jeremiah's "secretary" Baruch simply filled up every inch of whatever scarce scroll material he could get. Chapter 36, for example, tells about one time when a sadistic king burned a bunch of his work, forcing him to rewrite it.)

If you want to read the book in a straight line according to the calendar, here's the sequence:

a	1:1-7:15	h	36:9-32	o	37:11-38:13
b	chapter 26	i	chapter 35	p	39:15-18
c	7:16-end of chapter 20	j	chapters 21-24	q	chapters 32-33
d	chapter 25	k	chapters 27-31	r	38:14-39:14
e	chapters 46-51	l	34:1-7	s	52:1-30
f	36:1-8	m	37:1-10	t	chapters 40-44
g	chapter 45	n	34:8-22	u	52:31-34

She-Camels in Heat and Lusty Stallions

Jeremiah 2:23-24 and 5:8

AUTHOR FREDERICK BUECHNER once described lust as "the craving for salt of a man who is dying of thirst."

Jeremiah, in describing the spiritual lusts of his day, thought things were so bad he could no longer speak in human terms. Instead, he compared people to animals. "You are like a restless female camel desperately searching for a mate" (Jeremiah 2:23). And referring to people's uncontrollable sexual appetites, he thundered, "They are well-fed, lusty stallions, each neighing for his neighbor's wife" (5:8).

God loves all his creatures, but when people act like animals, something is out of balance. Both animals and people eat, sleep, seek shelter from the elements, and reproduce through sex. But God created humans different from animals. Psalm 8:5-7 captures this difference:

You made [human beings] only a little lower than God

and crowned them with glory and honor,

You gave them charge of everything you

made,

putting all things under their authority—

the flocks and the herds

and all the wild animals.

Men and women were created to be higher and holier than the beasts of the field. God designed us to transcend our animal instincts so we could be truly human and worship him with all our hearts.

Don't let your animal nature overcome your God-given glory. Let your spiritual and sexual appetites serve your higher nature, not your lower instincts.

Personal Gold

from CHUCK SMITH JR.

THE BIBLE: DEAD OR ALIVE?

If the Bible is full of inspiring truth, spiritual revelation, penetrating insights, and even splashes of humor, why do many Christians complain that Bible reading is boring? Why do many believers skip it altogether or read only short passages before falling asleep at night?

We become bored when we get stuck for a long time in one place or when we're engaged in a repetitive activity. Long exposure to an environment where the setting is dreary (think doctor's office) and monotonous activities deprive our brains of the stimulation they need to stay engaged. As a result, boredom sets in.

This happens with Bible study. Imagine opening your Bible (yawn). You look at the same scenery once again, read the same stories and records of ancient history you've read dozens of times before, and you see them the same way you've always seen them. The problem is repetition: We read the same words and draw from them the same meaning and emphasis every time. Our familiar, assumed interpretations obscure any new insights that God might want to unveil. We assume we already know what a passage means, so when we read it again it sounds like the same old stuff.

Our understanding of the Bible is formed more than we know by Bible teachers who have impressed us with their authoritarian style. It's easy to assume that we don't need to hear the Bible's message for ourselves because someone has already told us all we need to know. But the result is a secondhand knowledge. When we read the Bible, the thoughts that spring into our mind are not always inspired by the Holy Spirit's speaking through the text; they are simply the lessons inherited from our favorite Bible teachers. When we study the Scriptures, we ought to be looking for something we missed in prior readings, something that was hidden from us but now is coming to light.

If we refuse to push ourselves to new understandings, we fail to hear a fresh and specific message from God. If we assume there is only one way to interpret a passage, then our real focus is on a human's interpretation rather than the biblical text itself. Sometimes listening to God in the Scripture means calling into question an earlier interpretation and looking for one that goes deeper.

When we read the Bible, the thoughts that spring into our mind are not always inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Someone you should know:

Jeremiah

Whose Word Will Stand?

THE PROPHET JEREMIAH had one of the toughest careers ever. From the very beginning, God declared, in essence, "You must repeat to these hard-hearted people everything I say, but they will not listen to a single word. Everyone who hears you will hate you and try to harm you, but I'll keep you alive—just so you can go on speaking and getting rejected in return" (see Jeremiah 1:17-19; 7:27).

The Lord told Jeremiah not to marry (16:1-2). Several times the Lord barred him from praying for the welfare of his countrymen (7:16; 11:1-4; 14:1-11), and he frequently brought the prophet to the point where he said things like, "My grief is beyond healing; my heart is broken. . . . I mourn and am overcome with grief" (8:18, 21). It's not difficult to understand why Jeremiah is often referred to as "the weeping prophet."

Jeremiah tried to resign from his calling but found it impossible to do so: "If I say 'I'll never mention the LORD or speak in his name, his word burns in my heart like a fire. It's like a fire in my bones! I am worn out trying to hold it in!' (20:9).

It isn't easy to read Jeremiah's book in a single sitting, and its 52-chapter length isn't the main problem. It's unrelenting predictions of doom on an unrepentant people come down to this: *You're going to die in horrible and ugly ways!* While bright promises of a

better future dot the book (for example, 30:1-11; 31:1-40; 33:3-26), Jeremiah spends most of his time declaring God's imminent judgment.

It's not that either God or Jeremiah delighted in gloom. Rather, the people of Judah had slipped into such spiritual rebellion that their attitude had become, "We will not listen to your messages from the Lord! We will do whatever we want. We will burn incense and pour out liquid offerings to the Queen of Heaven just as much as we like" (44:16-17).

What do you say to such hard hearts? How do you respond to such insolence? The Lord replied with a challenge: "You and your wives have said, 'We will keep our promises to burn incense and pour out liquid offerings to the Queen of Heaven,' and you have proved by your actions that you meant it. So go ahead and carry out your promises and vows to her! . . . 'I will watch over you to bring you disaster and not good. . . . Only a small number will escape death and return to Judah from Egypt. Then all those who came to Egypt will find out whose words are true—mine or theirs!' (44:25-28).

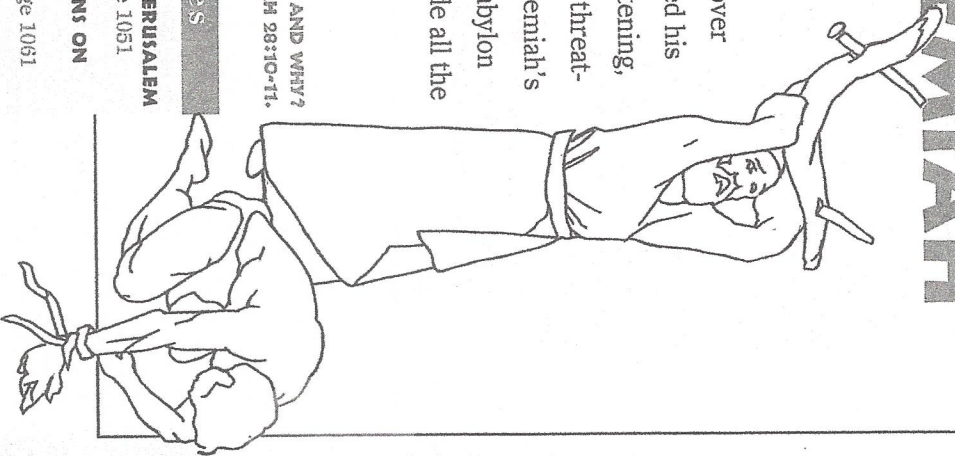
Sometimes the only way to respond to determined rebellion is with a promise of judgment. God was finished pleading with his people to change. Speaking through Jeremiah, he simply repeated for the record their sinful decisions, and then reminded them that he would certainly do what he had promised—judgment was on its way. Yet even in the midst of destruction, God was planning a means of redemption. God's judgment wouldn't last forever; after his punishment would come a time of reconciliation, first through restoration to the Promised Land, and ultimately through the person of Jesus Christ.

THE POINT: Determined rebellion calls for a tough response.

AN INTRODUCTION TO

JEREMIAH

Jeremiah's mission was to warn the people of Judah that God would punish them. For over 40 years, Jeremiah warned his people. But instead of listening, the people got angry and threatened Jeremiah. Later, Jeremiah's prophecies came true. Babylon conquered Judah and made all the Jews captives.



WHO'S BREAKING THIS YOKE AND WHY?
SEE JEREMIAH 28:30-11.

Headlines

GOD MUST PUNISH JERUSALEM

Jeremiah 6:6, page 1051

HOMETOWN TURNS ON JEREMIAH

Jeremiah 11:21, page 1061

PROPHETS' DREAMS BECOME NIGHTMARES

Jeremiah 23:25-40, page 1080

PROPHET GOES INTO REAL ESTATE

Jeremiah 32, page 1092

JEREMIAH JAILED

Jeremiah 38, page 1099

God Has a Plan for Your Life

Jeremiah was shocked when God told him he had a mission for the prophet. "I'm too young!" twenty-year-old Jeremiah thought. "God couldn't have plans for me at this age!"

But God had made plans for Jeremiah before he was born (Jeremiah 1:5). Don't think just because you're young that God doesn't have plans for you. He knew you even before you were born, too.

God probably won't tell you those plans ahead of time. But if you follow Jesus faithfully, someday you'll be able to look back on your life and say, "Wow! God had it planned all along!"

For a special promise, see Jeremiah 29:11.

In It For Me?

IT IS WORTH OBEYING GOD . . .
EVEN WHEN OTHERS
TO ME.
EVEN WHEN I AM
OF SOMEONE ELSE'S FUN.
EVEN WHEN I
WHAT I WANT.
BECAUSE GOD
TO CARE FOR
ME ALWAYS.

WHY WAS THE TEMPLE DESTROYED?

JEREMIAH WARNED THE PEOPLE OF JERUSALEM THAT THEIR SINS WOULD LEAD TO THE DESTRUCTION OF GOD'S TEMPLE. WHAT DID THEY DO WRONG? THEY . . .

1. WERE UNFAIR AND OPPRESSED THE POOR (JEREMIAH 7:5-6).
2. CONTINUED TO SIN AND BREAK GOD'S LAW (JEREMIAH 7:9).
3. REFUSED TO STOP WORSHIPING OTHER GODS (JEREMIAH 7:9).
4. MADE THE TEMPLE "A GATHERING PLACE FOR THIEVES" (JEREMIAH 7:11).
5. WOULD NOT LISTEN TO GOD'S MESSAGE THROUGH THE PROPHETS AND WOULD NOT CHANGE THEIR WAYS (JEREMIAH 7:13).

What's in a Name?

The name Jeremiah means "The Lord exalts." He has become known as "the weeping prophet" because of his deep sadness and heartbreak for the nation of Israel.

JEREMIAH

Can You Hear Me Now?

Jeremiah was called to serve God as a prophet before he was born (1:5).

A ROUGH ROAD AHEAD

Jeremiah prophesied that the people of Judah would be taken captive by Babylon and that they would be held for 70 years. The name Babylon (or Babylonia or Babylonian) is mentioned 207 times in the book of Jeremiah.

A PERSEVERING PROPHET

Jeremiah was persecuted heavily throughout his life. He was threatened, put on trial, beaten, put in stocks, put in neck-tions, left to die in the mud at the bottom of a cistern and locked in a prison dungeon. Yet he didn't waver from his obedient service to God in proclaiming the word of the Lord to the people.

BY THE NUMBERS

52 CHAPTERS
1,364 VERSES
38,430 WORDS

KEY VERSE

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (29:11).

LIFE LESSONS: God will allow you to experience trials to get your attention (9:7).

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW JEREMIAH AND LAMENTATIONS?

JEREMIAH IN REVIEW

✘ WHO DUNNIT?
1. Which king of Judah had Jeremiah thrown into a cistern?

🕒 TIME TRAVELER
2. You are Jeremiah, and in your vision of a boiling pot tilted toward the nation of Israel, which direction are you looking?

↔ THEN VS. NOW
3. Jeremiah bought a field from his cousin for 17 shekels of silver. About how much is that in today's measurements?

A. 7 ounces
B. 10 ounces
C. 10 pounds
D. 30 pounds

🔥 HOT SEAT
4. God says I am "deceitful above all things and beyond cure." What am I?

🔥 HOT SEAT
5. I went around with Jeremiah, writing his prophecies on scrolls as he dictated them to me. Who am I?

★ MINUTIAE & MISCELLANY
6. God instructed Jeremiah to buy something but then had him hide it in rocks. What was it?

✘ WHO DUNNIT?
7. When the Babylonians carried the people of Judah into exile, they left some of them in Judah with Gedaliah as governor until he was assassinated. Who assassinated him?

🔥 HOT SEAT
8. That insolent Jeremiah sent a scroll he claimed was the Word of God warning us to repent, but as king of Judah, I defied the message and had the scroll burned, piece by piece. Who am I?

✘ WHO DUNNIT?
9. Who was the lying prophet who falsely claimed God would break the yoke of the king of Babylon and return the artifacts Nebuchadnezzar had stolen?

LAMENTATIONS IN REVIEW

★ MINUTIAE & MISCELLANY
1. Which of the following is not listed as a symptom of the suffering in Jerusalem?
A. Our dancing has turned to mourning.
B. The crown has fallen from our head.
C. Our feet have failed on our paths.
D. Joy is gone from our hearts.

🕒 TIME TRAVELER
2. "After affliction and harsh labor," you have "gone into exile." Who are you?

🕒 WHO SAID IT?
3. Who said about Jerusalem, "We have swallowed her up. This is the day we have waited for; we have lived to see it?"
A. Prophets
B. Priests
C. Enemies
D. Jericho

LIFE LESSONS: God's plan for your life is perfect and unique (1:5). Trust God to guide you to a successful life (29:11).

ANSWERS:
1. C (2:16)
2. D (29:14)
3. A (2:16)
4. The heart (1:7-9)
5. B (2:16)
6. B (2:16)
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