



## *The Book of Jeremiah*

### *Discussion/Reflection Questions*

#### **Jeremiah 1**

The book of Jeremiah opens with God calling Jeremiah. God assures Jeremiah that he is the one who formed him; he knew him and set him apart before he was ever born to be a prophet to the nations. Jeremiah responds, *"Ah, Lord God! Behold I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth."* Much like Moses, Jeremiah felt incapable of fulfilling such a call, but God gave Jeremiah assurance.

Not only did God call Jeremiah, but he also gave him everything he needed to fulfill that call. He cautions Jeremiah, *"Do not say, 'I am only a youth...do not be afraid of them.'"*

God would give him the words he needed to speak.

Consider, before God ever formed you, he knew you and set you apart for a special purpose that only you can fulfill. But not only that, he has already equipped you and has given you everything you need to do it. You do not need to be afraid or allow your feelings of inadequacy to hold you back. He will be with you every step of the way. Step out and allow him to use you in this special way - fulfill the purpose for which he created you!

**Have you felt like the Lord was leading you to do something for which you felt incapable and inadequate? Have you allowed those feelings of inadequacy to stop you from stepping out and doing the thing you felt God has led you to do?**

#### **Jeremiah 2**

Here we read Jeremiah's first prophecy to the nation of Judah. God addresses the sin of the nation, reminding them of his deliverance from Egypt and how he led them into the Promised Land. Yet nearly immediately they began to defile the land. Their prophets did not prophesy God's words, but instead prophesied by Baal. The fear of God was no longer in them.

He goes on to mention how their idols were innumerable and their shame and immorality great. Instead of seeking God, the spring of true living waters, they dug out their own

cisterns. These cisterns were broken cisterns that would hold no water at all. There was nothing to quench their soul-thirst, not even old, stagnant water.

The only thing that can satisfy our soul-thirst is an abiding relationship with Jesus Christ. As Jesus said to the woman at the well (John 4), those who drink of the water that he offers will never thirst again. When we drink from the living well – we will be *Women Living Well!*

**It is so easy to be tempted to quench our soul-thirst with the things of this world. Have you ever gone after the wrong things only to discover that it left you more parched than before? In what ways have you been tempted to follow the world rather than the Word?**

### **Jeremiah 3 & 4**

God compared his relationship with his people to that of a husband and wife. Judah had committed spiritual adultery against God with her repeated idolatry. He urged her to find a place where she had *not* committed adultery and found that her backsliding was worse than Israel's. Judah had the benefit of watching God's judgment against Israel, as Assyria came and took the people captive. It should have been a warning to Judah to repent and turn from her ways. Instead, Judah continued in her idolatry and sin.

But God in his great mercy called for his people to repent and turn back to him. If they would just acknowledge their sin of idolatry and disobedience, and return to the Lord, He would renew his covenant with her.

As God called the men of Judah and Jerusalem to full repentance, he urged her to break up the untilled ground of her heart and not plant among thorns. Their hearts had grown hard with their continual idolatry, immorality, and rebellion against him. They had dulled their conscience by repeatedly ignoring the pangs of conviction. Now their hearts were hard and unable to receive the seed of his words.

In Jeremiah 4:4, God told them how to break up the hard places of their hearts; by circumcising their hearts. He wanted them to remove everything from their hearts that was not of him so that his word could bear abundant fruit in their heart.

**How is the soil of your heart? Has it been hardened by worldly philosophies? Perhaps the thorns of anxiety, worry, and feeling constantly driven for more have crept in. Is there anything in your life that is coming between you and God? How can you get rid of it today?**

## **Jeremiah 5 & 6**

In Jeremiah 5:1, God instructs Jeremiah to go throughout the city of Jerusalem to search for just one man who seeks truth and justice. If he can find such a man, God would pardon the people. It seems he doesn't find such a man, because God's judgement came with the fall of Judah to Babylon.

And so, Jeremiah's second message is coming to an end as he continues to call God's people to repentance and restoration. However, the people refuse to listen. They have closed their ears to the words of the Lord and no longer delight in his word. While they are busy delighting in immorality, idolatry, and other sinful behavior, a powerful nation is preparing to come against God's people, destroy their land, and take them captive.

God knows there is no longer hope that his people will return to him. Jeremiah chapter six ends with his solemn statement that he has, in fact, rejected them. Yet, even in this his eternal grace shows through as earlier in the chapter he continues to call out to them. Knowing that they have chosen to no longer listen to his call; knowing that they have no delight in his words, he still urges them to ask for the old paths, for the good way, and to walk in it because it will offer rest for their souls.

Oh friend, that is the rest that he offers to us still today. We are reminded of Jesus' words in Matthew 11:28-29, where he instructs us to come to him, take his yoke, and learn from him; for when we do, we will find rest for our souls. It is only in accepting the gift of salvation through Jesus' death on the cross that we will find true rest.

**Have you ever gone astray? What brought you back to the Lord? If your heart has felt far from the Lord lately, this is your invitation to return to the "good way." Walk in it and find rest for your soul today.**

## **Jeremiah 7 & 8**

Jeremiah begins his third message to the land of Judah and repeats God's promise to them that if they listen to his voice and keep his commands they would prosper. However, God knew their hearts and he saw that although he spoke, they did not listen. He called out to them, but they did not respond.

God had given his people every opportunity to repent and turn from their ways, but they continued to turn a deaf ear and ignore his voice. Now, judgement had become inevitable; they had pushed God's hand too far.

Jeremiah mourned, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.”

One of the hardest things to watch is a person who is self-destructing when help is ready and waiting for them. This is the sorrow Jeremiah felt as the prophet of God. He knew God’s promise of restoration and redemption was waiting if only his people would turn from their sin and repent. But they refused to turn and acknowledge their sin.

**Have you ever felt like Jeremiah? Perhaps someone you love has rejected God and they are self-destructing. There is still hope for your loved one! Continue to hold out truth to them. Write a prayer for them below that they would return to the Lord.**

## Week 2

### Jeremiah 9 & 10

God instructed his people not to boast in wisdom, might, or riches, but in the fact that they knew and understood God and his ways. The word “boast” in the Hebrew is “halal” and means to praise or worship. What we identify with becomes our object of worship.

In Jeremiah 9, we see that an idol is any object of our worship other than God. While we may not bow down and pray to physical idols of gold and silver, like in the ancient times, we often find that we value people, things, or activities more than God.

In Jeremiah 10, he compares idols made by human hands with the Lord God, creator of heaven and earth. He describes these idols as ones who must be carried by the person worshiping them because they do not have the power to move themselves. How different these idols are from our almighty God who created all we see and can’t see by the power of his word!

Jeremiah goes on to emphasize that in contrast to the inanimate and helpless idols of wood, gold, silver, -- the almighty God is the only true God who is living and eternal. He is the only one who can save, protect, and heal.

Jesus said in Matthew 6:21 that whatever we value becomes the seat of our affections and spiritual life. Putting our trust and hope in anyone or anything else is futile, because there is none that can save, heal, or deliver but God. He is for you!

**Is there something in your life you value more than God? What gets in the way of you spending time with him in his word and prayer?**

## Jeremiah 11 & 12

In Jeremiah 12, we see Jeremiah struggling with the age-old question: *"Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all who are treacherous thrive?"* It is a question many still battle with today. Why would a just God allow the wicked to have success while godly people suffer?

While we find the answer to this puzzling question in other portions of God's Word, God chooses not to answer it in this chapter. Instead, he answers Jeremiah's question with a question.

God turns to Jeremiah and asks him, *"If you have raced with men on foot, and they have wearied you, how will you compete with horses?"*

If Jeremiah thought it was tough now, he had no idea what was about to come. Jehoahaz is king, Babylon is about to plunder Judah, and Jerusalem is about to be burned to the ground. Jeremiah could not afford to run this race in his own strength. He would need the strength of God to keep going.

It is easy to look at our culture today and allow ourselves to grow cynical and hard. We can grow weary constantly swimming against the current of ungodly and unbiblical philosophies. But we must learn to be strong now because we do not know what is in our future. Bigger challenges could be ahead. We cannot afford to stand in our own strength. We must be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

**Is something discouraging you? What is making you feel weary today? How does remembering that we must be strong now, so we are prepared for the future, encourage you today?**

## Jeremiah 13 & 14

God led Jeremiah to give the people of Judah two object lessons. The first was a sash that had once stood for nobility and status but was now ruined. The second was wine bottles. These bottles had a purpose, and it was to hold wine. In the same way, God had a purpose for his people but from the kings and priests, to all those who inhabited Jerusalem, all had lost their dignity, their moral clarity, and had grown corrupt in their thinking.

Jeremiah asks the rhetorical question, *"Can a leopard change his spots?"* The people of Judah could no more change their evil nature than a leopard could change who he is. They needed a change of heart.

So, in Jeremiah 14, a severe drought that led to a famine came to the land of Judah that affected everyone. No one was left untouched, man or beast, old or young, rich or poor. The famine was not just limited to a physical famine, there was also a famine of truth. God warned Jeremiah that the prophets were prophesying false visions, divinations, worthless things, and the deceit of their own heart, and they, too, would be affected by the sword and famine.

In the New Testament, in 2 Timothy 4:3-4, Paul warned Timothy that in the last days, people will not tolerate sound teaching, but instead turn their ears from truth. Jesus said of himself in John 14:5, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life."* In a world where truth is so often twisted, may we say with Jeremiah, *"We set our hope on you"*.

**In what ways do you see truth being distorted in our world now? Sometimes truth is hard to hear, and yet it is necessary for our spiritual growth and maturity. Do you struggle with this?**

## **Jeremiah 15 & 16**

Jeremiah stood alone in the midst of the corrupt culture of his day. He said to the Lord, *"Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and delight of my heart."* (Jeremiah 15:16).

Psalms 34:8 says, *"Oh taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the man who trusts in him."* Like Jeremiah, when we purpose to stand for the truth of God's word, in the face of a culture that rebels against God, we will find every word of God a joy and delight.

From the very beginning, God had warned his people that great suffering would come if they failed to keep his commandments. In Deuteronomy 28, we read the lists of blessings and curses God gave Moses as a promise and a warning to the people regarding his Law. God is now telling Jeremiah that when he shows the people the words of this prophecy, the people will not recognize how their own sin has brought God's judgment on them.

And so once again, God assured Jeremiah that one day he will redeem his people from captivity. He said, *"I will make them know my power and my might, and they shall know that my name is the Lord."* They will finally recognize the futility of their idols and turn back to God.

**Do you remember the moment when you realized that your attempts to rescue yourself were futile? When was that moment you first turned to the Lord? Take a moment to reflect on all the Lord has done in your life since that moment. How have you experienced God's power and might in your life?**

## Jeremiah 17 & 18

In Jeremiah 17, the Lord warned that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick. The Hebrew word for “desperately” means incurable. There is no cure for our heart. It cannot be fixed or mended. It can only be recreated.

The world often tells us to follow our hearts, but this is the most dangerous thing we can do as children of God. Our heart is incurably sick and deceitful to the point that we don't understand it. Because sin has been irreversibly engraved upon it, we need a completely new heart. That is why David said in Psalm 51, *“Create in me a clean heart, O God”*.

In Jeremiah 18, God directed Jeremiah to go to the potter's house and observe his work. While Jeremiah watched, he observed that the vessel the potter was making was, for whatever reason, spoiled. The potter, then, took the spoiled vessel, crumpled it back into a ball and began again.

This object lesson illustrated the state of Israel. God had formed them into a nation, but they had become spoiled by their disobedience and idolatry. In an attempt to shape them, God had sent many prophets to warn them of judgment if they failed to turn to him, but they were hardened and would not listen. Now God was going to have to, in his judgement, take them, crumple them back in a ball and start over.

The illustration of God as the potter and man as the clay is seen repeatedly throughout Scripture. In every instance, the potter is forming the clay according to its purpose and design. God has a purpose and design for you, but problems arise when we allow sin and disobedience to spoil his plan and purpose, preventing God from shaping us into the person he wants us to be.

**Consider, in what ways do you tend to follow your heart? Has it led you astray at times? How can you live your life more surrendered to the potter (God) so you (the clay) can be shaped into the woman God wants you to be?**

## Jeremiah 19 & 20

God instructed Jeremiah to take a flask of pottery, and along with the civic and religious leaders go to the Valley of the Son of Hinnom. Standing at this historic site of pagan idolatry and ritual sacrifices, Jeremiah declared the words God gave him to speak. Words that would result in his persecution, but would also trigger the irreversible judgement of God upon the nation

Pashhur, the lead priest, angered by Jeremiah's prophecy as he smashed the clay flask, had Jeremiah beaten and put into stocks for a day. But Jeremiah would not be hindered. He turned to Pashhur and prophesied his captivity and demise and the demise of his family and friends.

Publicly, Jeremiah boldly proclaimed the word of the Lord, but privately he felt the tremendous burden of delivering such devastating prophecies. His role of prophet not only didn't make him popular, it made him a public mockery.

After a moment of worship, Jeremiah once again fell into a depression, thinking that his struggle would cease had he not been born. Yet, in Jeremiah 1:5, we see that God called him from *before* his birth.

Like Jeremiah, God called you from *before* your birth (Psalm 139:16) He sees you. He knows you, even the very deepest and most hidden parts of you, and he loves you deeply. He accepts you (Ephesians 1:4-6) and his thoughts and plans for you are good and filled with hope (Jeremiah 29:11).

**Have you ever felt mocked, rejected, misunderstood or not seen? If you are experiencing pain and sorrow today, meditate on these verses and let the Lord fill you with his love, hope, and healing. Also, reach out to a trusted sister in Christ and let the Lord surround you with the strength and protection of a spiritual family.**

## **Jeremiah 21 & 22**

Nebuchadnezzar had already taken some of the people of Judah captive as well as treasures from Jerusalem. Now he was about to come and destroy what was left of the once great and holy city.

King Zedekiah sent the priest to Jeremiah asking if the Lord was going to do a great miracle to spare his people from utter destruction. But the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah that not only would God *not* spare his people, but he would also fight against them himself. Those left in Judah would not only have to fight against the Babylonian army, but against God Almighty.

In Jeremiah 22, even though the nation of Judah was on the cusp of being completely defeated by Babylon, God was still extending His opportunity for restoration and grace. He sent a message to the king that if he would turn and begin ruling in righteousness and justice, the throne of David would continue.

After all the ways the kings of Judah had rejected God and defiled His temple with idolatry and perversion; after all the ways they had abused the poor, needy, orphans, and



widows, God was still holding out His offer for repentance and restoration. Sadly, God's final offer was rejected, and King Jehoiachin was taken captive. He was the last king of Judah, and the throne of David would be void of a king until Jesus' birth.

God's mercy and grace are eternal; but when we refuse to heed his voice and follow his ways, we build a barrier between us and God, which leaves us vulnerable to defeat. Defeat is never God's plan, but when we choose to step out of his will and walk according to our own sinful desires, he will allow the plans of the enemy to prevail, not as punishment but so that in our despair we turn back to him in repentance.

**Are there any areas of your life where you have stepped out of God's will and are walking according to your own sinful desires? Do you feel defeated in any are of your life today? Turn to God, ask for his forgiveness, and begin a renewed walk with him today.**

## **Jeremiah 23 & 24**

Jeremiah was mourning because the shepherds were scattering the flocks, and the priests and prophets were profane. The prophets were prophesying false prophecies. They were comforting the people in their sin, saying God would not judge them. But God **was** coming to judge them, and he said to the prophets that he would forget them, but their shame would not be forgotten.

There are those in our day, who call evil good and good evil, to comfort those living in sin. God compares his word to fire, that both purifies and consumes.

In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul talks about our works being tried in the fire, and either proven to be wood, hay, and stubble or gold, silver, and precious stones. Either our works will be consumed, or they will be purified.

With what have you been building your foundation? Are you building with lasting materials based on the principles of God's word or are you building with your own personal ambitions and worldly philosophies?

These priests and prophets were prophesying what people wanted to hear. They were working for their own benefit. When God's word goes forth to test our works, anything done for our own benefit will prove to be of wood, hay, and stubble. Only what has been done to the glory of God and his kingdom will last.

**What changes in your life do you need to make to be sure that the work you do for the Lord will come forth as gold rather than be burned up as wood, hay and stubble?**

## Jeremiah 25 & 26

Jeremiah had been prophesying for 23 years along with other prophets sent by God, and yet the people refused to listen. They continued to do evil. God's promise to them was that if they would turn away from their evil deeds and idolatry, they would continue to dwell in the land he'd given them and they would prosper, but they refused to take him seriously.

So, God used Nebuchadnezzar as his servant to destroy the land and take the people captive. Babylon would come in like a "great whirlwind" and conquer Judah, but although Babylon was a rising world power, after 70 years God would retaliate.

When Jeremiah spoke the prophecy, the priests, prophets, and people grabbed him and in anger wanted to sentence him to death. Their anger was that he dared to speak against Jerusalem but failed to understand that the message wasn't about Jerusalem, but about their sin. Officials went from the king's house to the house of the Lord to hear the matter, they intervened, recalling previous times when other prophets had prophesied that God would destroy Jerusalem and Jeremiah was saved.

Jeremiah answered the people by saying, *"Do with me as seems right and good to you."* Jeremiah trusted God, even though his future was uncertain. He'd been faithful to deliver God's word and look at where it had taken him – to a possible death sentence. Yet, he stood firm, trusting God no matter the outcome.

When we choose to follow God, sometimes it leads us to unexpected places, even to the valley of the shadow of death.

**Are you facing an uncertain situation? Are you finding it hard to trust God's plan? Take some extra time today to quiet your heart in God's presence. Let him fill you with assurance that he is with you and will not forsake you.**

## Jeremiah 27 & 28

God spoke to Jeremiah, telling him to make yokes and not only wear one, but to send them to various kings who were forming a coalition to overthrow Nebuchadnezzar. God's message to them was that he is Almighty God, and he gives power to those whom he chooses, and if they try to overthrow Nebuchadnezzar it will not go well for them.

The prophet Hananiah stood up before all the people and broke off the yoke Jeremiah had made for himself. He prophesied that in two years God would break off the yoke of

the king of Babylon and bring back the king of Judah and all the vessels Nebuchadnezzar had stolen from the temple. This was the prophesy everyone wanted to hear, but it was not a prophesy from God. Jeremiah exposed Hananiah as a false prophet and later that year Hananiah died.

In Jeremiah 27:6, God called Nebuchadnezzar "*my servant*". Even though Nebuchadnezzar had raided God's temple and would later come under God's heavy judgement, God still chose to use him to bring about his divine purpose. As you read Scripture, you will find many instances where God used ungodly people and unpleasant circumstances to bring about his perfect plan.

When we look at our world today, we can feel like things are out of control. While they may be out of *our* control, they are not out of God's control. What we cannot see is how God has orchestrated every event to bring about his divine purpose. When we fully trust in God and his sovereignty, we have great peace because we know that there is no situation or moment in time that is ever outside of God's control.

**Is there a situation in your life right now that feels out of control? How does our reading today reassure you that God is in control, and you can trust him?**

## **Jeremiah 29 & 30**

God made it clear that Judah's wounds were grievous. There was no medicine or healing that would help. All her allies had abandoned her. She was alone, her sin was great, and it was God who had punished her in this way. If this was the end of the story, it would be tragic, but it's not. God's promise to Judah was one of restoration and healing.

Jeremiah wrote a letter of prophesy to the exiles in Babylon. In this letter, God refutes Hananiah's false prophesy in chapter 28 that the exiles would return to Jerusalem in two years. Instead, God encouraged them to settle down, build houses, marry, and have children because they were going to be there for seventy years.

The Lord comforts those in exile by letting them know that his thoughts toward them are not for evil and that he has a future and a hope for them. They would call upon him and pray, and he would answer them; they would seek him, and he would be found by them, and would restore them to their homeland.

For those in Christ, God never allows anything into our lives without a purpose. When bad things happen, we're prone to think that God is against us, or has forgotten us. Jeremiah 29 reminds us that while God sometimes allows negative things into our lives, it is for a purpose. He is not against us. He is for us. If we will seek him, pray to him, and call upon his name, he will hear us. His plans for us are good plans for a hopeful future.

**Are you going through a difficult time right now? Is it hard to understand God's plans for you? How does Jeremiah 29:11 encourage you today?**

### **Jeremiah 31 & 32**

From the days when the children of Israel wandered in the desert, and God gave them the Law, he warned them that if they didn't obey his commands, they would experience his judgement. Despite the many prophets God sent them, warning them of their sin and calling them to repentance, they continued in their stubborn and sinful ways.

We have seen from chapter one until now that while God's plan was for Babylon to defeat Judah and carry her people into captivity, he still offered his people a way of escape. If they would simply turn from their sin and repent, God would forgive them, and they would not have been defeated.

Yet, despite the coming judgement, God already had a plan for their restoration. His love for them is everlasting and his covenant is never-ending. God led Jeremiah to buy his cousin's field as an object lesson. The deed was drawn up, sealed, placed in a clay jar, and buried to preserve it for the day when God would restore Israel. It would prove the land belonged to Jeremiah and his descendants.

God was going to allow the Babylonians to conquer Judah. Yet, his promise was that he would gather them back to their land and they would belong to him once again. While Jeremiah watches the Babylonian siege grow, knowing that very soon Judah will fall and the people will be carried away, he proclaims that nothing is too hard for God.

**What circumstances in your life appear impossible? Is the enemy whispering to you that it's pointless to trust God? Don't give up. Less than 100 years later, God used Ezra and Nehemiah to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. He brought his people back to their homeland. Nothing is too hard for him! Share some ways God has done the impossible in your life or in the lives of those around you.**

### **Jeremiah 33 & 34**

While Jeremiah is still imprisoned, God comes to Jeremiah again and gives him a further promise for his people. He is not only going to bring them back to Jerusalem, but he will heal them and forgive their sins. He ends Jeremiah 33 by describing an eternal covenant that cannot be broken, a covenant of mercy.

While God did bring the children of Israel back to their homeland in the times of Ezra and Nehemiah, this promise and prophecy was not just describing that fulfillment, but a later fulfillment as well. He describes the Messiah who will come and will cleanse and forgive their sins, bringing them a new covenant of salvation and freedom.

While God planned to physically heal and restore the Israelites to their homeland, he also revealed his plan to spiritually heal and restore them for eternity. I love seeing Christ show up in the Old Testament!

In their time of crisis, God was still telling them that they could call to him, and he would answer them and show them great and mighty things. It is very easy to view life through this physical world, but God wants to improve our spiritual vision, so we see the unseen world as well.

**Is there something in your life you do not understand? Ask the Lord to help you see with your spiritual eyes more clearly and understand the things that you do not understand.**

### **Jeremiah 35 & 36**

Once again, God, through Jeremiah, uses an object lesson to show the Israelites their rebellion against him. This time, Jeremiah brings the Rechabites to the temple and serves them wine. The Rechabites were a nomadic group of Israelites who did not drink wine or live the modern life of the rest of their people. Even though Jeremiah the prophet offered them wine, they refused to drink it.

God used the Rechabites' obedience to their father Jonadab as a lesson to the children of Israel. For decades the Rechabites had remained obedient to their earthly father's command to not drink wine, yet the children of Israel have not remained faithful to almighty God.

Then in Jeremiah 36, God spoke to Jeremiah to write down all the prophecies he had received and put them in a scroll. His scribe took the scroll to the king in place of Jeremiah, because it seems that Jeremiah was likely excommunicated from the temple, due to the prophecies he had delivered. God's desire was that perhaps as the scroll was read, the people would repent of their sins.

Instead, as the scroll was read, the king cut it up, threw it into the fire, and burned it. All throughout history, men have tried to destroy God's word. They have burned it, banned it, or convinced ordinary people that they were not intelligent enough to understand it. However, just as God simply instructed Jeremiah to rewrite the prophecies, he will not be deterred. His word is everlasting!

God asked the children of Israel, *"Will you receive instruction and listen to my words?"* Let's ask ourselves this same question today.

**What is one thing in your life that you know God has been telling you to do that you have not yet done? Make a commitment today to be like the Rechabites, unwaveringly obedient to God and his instruction.**

## **Jeremiah 37 & 38**

The book of Jeremiah is not written in chronological order, so now we're fast-forwarding several years, to when Zedekiah was made king of Judah by Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar. An Egyptian army arrived to fight alongside of Judah against Babylon. God warned the king of Judah, through Jeremiah, not to trust in their Egyptian allies, because although it seemed that Babylon had withdrawn, they would be back and would conquer Jerusalem and burn it.

Jeremiah left for the land of Benjamin to claim the property he purchased in chapter 32. As he approached the gate, he was seized, accused of defecting to Babylon, and thrown in prison. After a few days, King Zedekiah got him out and secretly asked if God had a word for him. The word from God was not what he was hoping for, and so he threw Jeremiah back in prison.

In Jeremiah 38, Jeremiah went from prison to being thrown into a cistern. This cistern had deep mud into which Jeremiah sank as they lowered him down. There was no bread left in the city, so he was left there to die, all because he spoke the truth.

Doing God's will does not always mean that we will be loved, accepted, and popular; but God does not abandon us. God sent some royal officials to rescue him from the pit. Then, King Zedekiah called Jeremiah to a secret meeting where he asked Jeremiah to tell him the truth. Jeremiah, risking his life, spoke the truth to the king.

God's word is not always what people want to hear, but God wants us to be bold, like Jeremiah, and speak his word anyway. As we draw closer to Jesus' return, it will become less and less acceptable to speak God's word, and persecution will rise.

**Has doing the right thing cost you more than you expected? What has it cost you? God promises us that he will never leave us nor forsake us. He is with you, even when you are suffering for his sake. Hold tight to his promise that he is with you.**

## **Jeremiah 39 & 40**

All that Jeremiah prophesied came true. What God had warned, finally happened. Babylon invaded Jerusalem, captured the people, and burned the city to the ground. Although Jeremiah warned King Zedekiah that if he refused to surrender, he would not escape and the city would be burned with fire, Zedekiah fled. In the end, he was captured, his sons were slaughtered before his eyes, and then his eyes were gouged out.

God had warned him repeatedly about what would happen if he disobeyed God's command; and he continued in his disobedience until the very moment he was captured.

In Jeremiah 40, during the third and final siege, Nebuchadnezzar appointed Nebuzaradan, his official, to begin leading the Israelites out of Judah and into Babylon, leaving the poorest of the people to stay in the land. Nebuzaradan gave Jeremiah a choice to either go with him to Babylon where he would be taken care of and provided for, or to stay behind in Judah with those who Babylon chose not to take captive. Living in Babylon would have been the easier and more desirable choice. He would have lived a more comfortable life, but instead he chose to stay behind in Judah.

Disobedience is so costly; we cannot afford the price. It may seem like a small matter to us, but it is a great matter to God. In this chapter, we see a stark contrast between King Zedekiah who was disobedient to God and Jeremiah who was obedient. Zedekiah experienced the horror of Babylonian captivity while Jeremiah was set free. There is freedom and reward when we obey God.

**Last week we reflected on the cost of obedience but today I want us to consider the greater cost of disobedience. Is there an area of your life you have failed to surrender to God? What steps do you need to take today to begin walking in obedience to God in that area?**

## **Jeremiah 41 & 42**

Following the massacre of Gedaliah and his men, the remnant left in Judah was small and they were frightened. They came to Jeremiah asking him to go to the Lord and seek direction for them. They promised to do everything the Lord said whether good or bad. The problem is that deep in their heart they'd already decided what they wanted to do and were hoping that God would sanction their plans.

Jeremiah went to the Lord, and finally heard from him 10 days later. The word was not what the remnant wanted to hear. He directed them to stay in the land where they were

destitute, afraid, and unprotected. The Lord would be their protection. However, if they followed through with what they really wanted, which was to flee to Egypt where they thought they'd have an easier life, trouble would follow them.

The Lord knew they had already set their heart to flee to Egypt, and that is why at the end of this chapter he reveals the secrets of their heart; that they came to him hypocritically.

**Has there been a time when you sought God for an answer secretly hoping that he would sanction the plan you'd already made in your heart? Did you follow your plan or God's? What was the outcome of that? It is not easy to sincerely pray what Jesus prayed, "*Not my will, but yours be done.*" In what way can you follow Christ in greater surrender today?**

## **Jeremiah 43 & 44**

Just as God had said, the remnant set their hearts on fleeing to Egypt for protection. They had promised Jeremiah they would obey the voice of the Lord, whether good or bad. Rather than following through on that promise, they accused him of lying to them; then they fled to Egypt, forcing all those left in Judah to go with them – including Jeremiah.

Once in Egypt, God spoke to Jeremiah to bury stones in the clay in front of Pharaoh's court. He was to declare to the remnant that it was only a matter of time before Nebuchadnezzar would invade and conquer Egypt and set up his throne above the very place where the stones were buried.

As Jeremiah delivered this final warning to his people in Jeremiah 44, their response is astonishing. They said to him, "We will not listen to you". Instead, they stubbornly intended to do everything they had vowed to do, and that was to follow their evil ways and idolatry. They had chosen their path, and they would not consider Jeremiah's words at all.

The consequence for their actions was that they would die in Egypt and the very thing they were fleeing from -- would come upon them. This is why it is so important that God's people cultivate a love for the truth and God's word, even when that truth goes against everything our current culture stands for and it seems that we are standing alone.

God's will all along was for the remnant to look to him for their protection and provision. Instead of trusting him, they turned to ungodly and pagan Egypt to give what only God could truly give.



**Has there been a time in your life when you knew you needed to trust God for something big, but out of fear you turned to someone else? Is there an area of your life right now that you need to trust God more in? Pray and ask the Lord to help you trust him more today.**

## **Jeremiah 45-50**

Today's reading assignment in Jeremiah is a bit different. As we come to the end of this book of the Bible, I encourage you to simply skim the next 5 chapters. I will leave a brief summary here below for each chapter. Since we are reading so much scripture, we will not use the SOAK method for our study today.

### **Chapter 45**

As we get nearer to the end of this book, we will read various prophecies given to nations surrounding the land of Israel.

In this short chapter, God speaks directly to Baruch who is discouraged and grieved at the state of Judah and all that God has warned is going to come. God begins by encouraging him not to seek great things for himself because even greater ruin is coming to Judah. Soon Nebuchadnezzar will carry off the remaining people of Judah and burn the land. There is no point in chasing after material things. But lest Baruch be completely overcome in his grief, God promises to care for him wherever he would go.

Baruch had been a faithful servant to Jeremiah, and God would reward his faithfulness.

### **Chapter 46**

In this chapter of Jeremiah, we read a series of prophecies given to the nations surrounding Israel. God begins these prophecies by addressing Egypt and will end with Babylon. In this stunning prophecy, we learn about the upcoming Babylonian attack on Egypt and that the Egyptian army would flee before the Babylonian army. Her end would be in humiliation and defeat.

God ends this prophecy with yet another word of comfort to his people. While he would utterly humble the land of Egypt, he assures the Israelites that he will restore them once again and bring them back to their homeland. He is correcting them for a time. Because of their rebellion toward him, he cannot leave them unpunished, but after a season they will return and rebuild.

## **Chapter 47**

Jeremiah continues his prophecies against the enemies of God's people, and now turns to the Philistines. He warns them that Pharaoh will come and attack them, but a flood of armies would come from the north – Babylonians armies - and bring such terror that the courage of the fathers would cause them to forget their own children as they fled from the attack.

The difference between these prophecies against the enemies of God and the earlier prophecy against the Israelites is that while God warned the Israelites of destruction and captivity, he always ended by promising their deliverance and restoration. We don't see that promise in these prophecies against his enemies.

## **Chapter 48**

God turns to Moab with a solemn warning of judgment for their pride and arrogance. Moab was a more isolated people, not on the usual trade routes, so they had largely been left alone in relative peace and ease. God used the illustration of wine that had never been purified to describe Moab.

God was about to use the Babylonian army to tip over the proverbial vessels of wine in Moab. His purpose, though, would not be to cleanse and purify Moab but to destroy. He said he would crush the vessels and bring shame to them for their pride and arrogance. While in the final verse, God promises to bring back a remnant of Moab in the latter days, he promises in verse 42 that they will be destroyed as a people. Their life of isolation, ease, and comfort is coming to an end.

## **Chapter 49**

God now proclaims judgement on six more Gentile nations surrounding Judah: Ammon, Edom, Damascus, Kedar, Hazor, and Elam. These nations had trusted in their own wit and gods to save them, but God proved himself to be almighty and brought judgement and destruction on each of them. While God promised Edom, Ammon, and Elam that he would bring back their captives, there isn't the same love and assurance that we see in his words to the children of Israel.

## **Chapter 50**

God now turns to the final nation for judgement – Babylon. Over these next two chapters, he will declare harsh judgement on the nation he had used to discipline his chosen people. Babylon, in her arrogance, had supposed she was greater than God because she had defeated God's chosen people. She had rejoiced in the destruction of Judah. Yet now God will defeat the greatest nation on earth at that time.

Surely it must have seemed inconceivable that such a powerful nation would be destroyed in such a dramatic way. Jeremiah prophesied Babylon's destruction 65 years before Cyrus and the army of the Medes and Persians defeated Babylon. It is out of the Persian empire that first Ezra, will return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple and then Nehemiah, will return to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

A remnant will remain in Persia and be threatened with utter destruction, but God will raise up a young woman who will become queen and risk her life to save her people – Esther. God's promise to protect and restore his people will play out just as he said. His promises are sure.

## **Jeremiah 51 & 52**

While God used Babylon as his instrument to bring about the judgement he had ordained on the children of Israel, Babylon did not acknowledge him as God, nor did she reverence him, but instead assumed that her gods had defeated Yahweh. Now God is going to judge her for her pride and covetousness.

In all the prophecies that Jeremiah proclaimed to the children of Israel, Jeremiah urged them to surrender to Babylon and not flee or fight. Because of this Nebuchadnezzar gave him special favor. Yet, Jeremiah could not be bought, and his allegiance was not to man, but to God. He wrote this judgement and coming destruction against Babylon and gave the book to Seriah to read to Nebuchadnezzar.

The final chapter of Jeremiah is a review of the fall of Jerusalem. What is most disturbing is that the Babylonian army raided and burned the house of the Lord, the temple built by Solomon. It is clear they had no reverence for God and his house. Why would they? The Israelites themselves had ceased revering God. He had sent prophet after prophet to warn them of their wickedness, calling them to repentance, and not only had they rejected God's voice, but they also even killed some of their prophets.

Had the Israelites honored and revered God alone, obeying his commands, and following his ways, the nations around them would have seen his power and might and feared him. But their unfaithfulness to him caused the nations around them to despise God and burn his house.

**David said in Psalm 30 that God's anger is only for a moment, but his favor is for a lifetime. Has there been a time in your life when God had to discipline you? Looking back, are you able to see his hand, like a loving father, using a momentary trial to help restore your relationship with him?**