

24 - Jeremiah

Jeremiah

Key Verse:

INTRODUCTION TO JEREMIAH

Jeremiah lived about 100 years after Isaiah. He began his ministry in the 13th year of Josiah king of Judah (626 BC), and he continued until the people of Judah were taken to Babylon in captivity (586 BC). The lost Bible was found in the 18th year of Josiah's reign, and the king tried to reform the country according to God's word. He could not stem the tide of corruption, however. He was killed in an attempt to stop an Egyptian invasion. During Jeremiah's lifetime, the Babylonian Empire conquered Assyria, then Egypt, to become the leading world power.

Jeremiah was the son of a country priest. He was very young when he was called by God. Because of the nation's impending doom, he was commanded not to marry and have children. He is known as the weeping prophet. He had much to weep about because he prophesied about and lived to witness the death throes of his nation Judah. He loved his countrymen, so he rebuked their idolatry and called them to repent.

He opposed collaboration with Egypt and advised the leaders of Judah to surrender to Babylon. Because of this unpopular stand he was called a traitor and put in prison. After the Babylonian invasion, he followed a group of Jews into exile in Egypt and probably died there.

OUTLINE OF JEREMIAH

1 Jeremiah's call

2-24 Messages calling God's people to repent

25-33 Prophecies about exile and restoration

34-35 Warnings to Judah's kings

36-38 The suffering prophet

39-44 The sorrow and shame of Judah's kings

45 Personal confession to Baruch

46-51 God's judgment on the nations

52 The burning of Jerusalem; exiles and temple furnishing taken to Babylon

THE CALL OF JEREMIAH

Jeremiah 1:1-19 (Tue.) May 12

Key Verse: 1:7

1. A prophet to the nations (1-10)

Jeremiah was the son of a priest. He lived to see the Babylonian conquest of his country. He was chosen by God before he was born to be a prophet and Bible teacher for the world. When God called him, Jeremiah thought he was too young. But God said, "Don't say, 'I am only a child.'" He was called to go wherever God sent him and say whatever God told him to say. His message would be unpopular, but God would stand by him. Then God touched his mouth and gave him his word. God's word uproots and tears down so that he can build and plant. God's word calls men to repent and turn to God.

2. The almond branch and the boiling pot (11-19)

As the almond branch awakens the spring, God is awake and watching. The boiling pot is the Babylonian Empire, which would soon be poured out to invade Jerusalem. God pours out his wrath because of the wickedness of the people. Jeremiah must stand alone against kings and priests. But God would be with him.

Prayer: Lord, give me courage to obey your call and teach your word without compromise.

One Word: Say whatever I command you

ISRAEL FORSAKES GOD

Jeremiah 2:1-37 (Wed.) May 13

Key Verse: 2:13

1. I remember your first love (1-13)

Israel was God's holy bride. She loved God and followed him through the desert; he fed, cared for and protected her. Then Israel exchanged the glory of God for worthless idols. People who follow worthless things become worthless. Israel committed two sins: She forsook God, the spring of living water, and she dug her own cisterns--cisterns which held no water. In the time of distress she did not seek help from God, but looked to foreign nations.

2. Freed slaves, again enslaved (14-37)

Instead of seeking help from God, Israel sought help from the superpowers of their time, Egypt and Assyria. They did not like the moral demands of the Holy God, so they followed the permissive religions of their neighbors and lived by the dictates of sinful human nature. They had no sense of sin. As a result, they became candidates for God's judgment.

Prayer: Lord, renew my love for you that I may not follow worthless things. Help me to drink deeply from the spring of living water every day.

One Word: God himself is the spring of living water

RETURN, FAITHLESS PEOPLE

Jeremiah 3:1-25 (Thur.) May 14

Key Verse: 3:14,15

1. You have defiled the land (1-5)

Unfaithfulness is a serious character flaw and a sin in God's sight. Immorality and idolatry are expressions of unfaithfulness. Israel had become a spiritual prostitute, unfaithful to her true husband, God. The people worshipped idols and lived immoral lives. Now they were suffering for their sins, and they asked God to save them. Even though they called God "Father," there was no evidence of real repentance.

2. Faithless Israel; unfaithful Judah (6-25)

In the 18th year of Josiah's reign, nearly 100 years after the fall of Israel, the lost Bible was found (2Ki 22). Josiah discovered how far Judah had gotten from God's law. Judah should have seen what had happened to Israel and repented with all her heart, but she did not. God invited both Judah and Israel to return to him. He would heal their broken land and bless them with real shepherds. He would heal their backsliding. Salvation is only in God.

Prayer: Lord, forgive our sins and raise up shepherds after your own heart.

One Word: Repent and follow the true Shepherd

RETURN TO ME

Jeremiah 4:1-31 (Fri.) May 15

Key Verse: 4:4

1. Circumcise your hearts (1-4)

God's people had gone astray. He called them to return to him, to put away idols, and live in a truthful, just and righteous way. This is the way of blessing. Refusing to return is to invite God's burning wrath and disaster.

2. Disaster from the north (5-18)

Babylon, like a lion coming out of his lair, was bent on conquest and destruction. He was like the desert wind; his chariots like the whirlwind and his horses swifter than eagles. The prophet pleads with Jerusalem to "wash the evil from her heart and be saved."

3. The prophet's anguish (19-31)

The invading army was God's instrument of judgment. The weeping prophet feels the anguish of God's heart.

Prayer: Lord, circumcise my heart. Turn America to you in true repentance.

One Word: Return to the Lord

FIND ONE PERSON WHO SEEKS TRUTH

Jeremiah 5:1-31 (Sat.) May 16

Key Verse: 5:1

1. Find one person (1-11)

The Lord promised to forgive the city if one person who deals honestly and seeks the truth could be found. Jeremiah looked among the poor who had suffered because of their sins (3,4), but found no one with a repentant heart. Then he looked among the leaders; they were rebellious and unfaithful. Even though God supplied all their needs, they were full of greed and lust (7,8). There was no one who sought to live by truth.

2. I will make my words a fire (12-31)

The real problem lay with the prophets--the religious leaders: They only spoke lies (12-13,30). So God put his word in Jeremiah's mouth. God's word is like a fire, for his word is truth. He tells them about the coming judgment and calls on them to repent. Fear of God and true repentance mark the way of truth and life.

Prayer: Lord, help me not to follow my own ideas, but to speak your word truthfully.

One Word: One person who seeks truth

THE LORD HAS REJECTED THEM

Jeremiah 6:1-30 (Sun.) May 17

Key Verse: 6:16

1. Jerusalem under siege (1-15)

Jerusalem, the holy city, had become a well which poured out wickedness (7). God would punish her by the sword of Babylon. But when the prophet proclaimed this message from the Lord, people did not repent. They closed their ears to the word of God. They considered God's word offensive. People did not want to repent because, from the least to the greatest, including priest and prophet, they were greedy for gain.

2. Ask for the ancient paths (16-30)

The ancient paths are found in the Bible (Ps 119:105). If people turn to God and let his word shine on their paths, they will find salvation and rest for their souls. But the people of Jerusalem decided not to listen to God's word or walk in his ways. As ore is put in a furnace to refine it, God put them in the furnace fire of suffering to purify them. But they did not repent. They became rejected silver, because the Lord rejected them.

Prayer: Lord, give me a humble and repentant heart before your word.

One Word: Walk in the ancient paths

OBEY ME AND I WILL BE YOUR GOD

Jeremiah 7:1-34 (Mon.) May 18

Key Verse 7:23

1. God hates a double life (1-20)

The people of Jerusalem were complacent because they lived near God's temple. They were sure that God would protect them because of this. But Jeremiah warned them that unless they changed their ways--began to deal with each other justly, stopped oppressing the weak and helpless, stopped worshiping idols and stopped committing adultery--God would remove them from the land. The temple had become a den of robbers, and no one could continue his evil practices and claim its protection.

2. Obey me and I will be your God (21-34)

God did not want formal religious ceremonies; he wanted his people to obey his word. But they followed the stubborn inclinations of their hearts. Truth had perished. God's people would not listen to him. The day of God's wrath was upon them.

Prayer: Lord, help me to follow your word, not my own feelings. Help me to love you and care for weak people.

One Word: Obey God's word and live

IS THERE NO BALM IN GILEAD?

Jeremiah 8:1-22 (Tue.) May 19

Key Verse: 8:22

1. No one repents (1-12)

A time of great shame was coming to God's people and God's city because the people did not repent. Even the stork knows her appointed seasons, but God's people rejected God's word. So-called spiritual leaders did not teach God's word; they taught their own ideas. Priest and prophet alike were greedy for personal gain. They wanted to be popular and rich, so they told the people only what they wanted to hear: "Peace, peace; don't worry. Everything is okay." Without God's word, people have no wisdom (9). So people did not repent and come back to God to be healed.

2. Is there no balm in Gilead? (13-22)

Invasion by foreign armies, destruction of the city, shame and death were just a matter of time. When Jeremiah thought about the judgment of God soon to come, he fell into a great agony of spirit (18,19). Only God can comfort and heal wounded and sick people. Jesus is the Balm in Gilead.

Prayer: Lord, call the people, especially the young people of this land to study your word and repent and welcome Jesus, the Healer.

One Word: There is a Balm in Gilead

DON'T BOAST ABOUT WORLDLY WISDOM

Jeremiah 9:1-26 (Wed.) May 20

Key Verse: 9:23,24

1. My eyes are a fountain of tears (1-22)

Why did Jeremiah weep day and night? It was because no one cared about truth; no one acknowledged God. Everyone told lies, so no one could trust anyone else. Jeremiah just wanted to get away--to go out in the desert and live by himself. God hates lies and deceit. He would punish unfaithful and deceitful people (7-11). How did things get that way? It was because people forsook the law of God and stubbornly followed their feelings. They followed their fathers in idolatry (13,14). God's punishment would produce wailing and death.

2. Boast only that you know the Lord (23-26)

Worldly wisdom, riches and physical strength cannot save us from God's judgment. We must know God. We must love him and understand his heart. We must know his kind, just, and righteous character, and delight in him. So our hearts must be circumcised by repentance.

Prayer: Lord, cleanse my heart of falsehood and give me your word of truth. Circumcise my heart so that I can love you.

One Word: Boast only of knowing the Lord

OUR GOD IS THE MAKER OF ALL THINGS

Jeremiah 10:1-25 (Thur.) May 21

Key Verse: 10:16b

1. Worthless customs and the living God (1-16)

Social pressure or fear sometimes pushes people to follow worthless customs. How foolish it is to worship an idol made with one's own hands, an idol which must be propped up to keep it from falling! People who follow the popular consensus and measure their worth by money or houses or cars or computers are just as foolish. All of these things will perish on the day of God's judgment. But the true and living God is the Maker of all things. He made the earth by his word of power. He sends the lightning and rain. He is my God and my Portion forever.

2. Jeremiah's prayer (17-25)

The Babylonian invasion was coming and the tent of Israel would be destroyed. Jeremiah put his life in God's hands and asked God to show him what to do. He asked God to pour out his wrath on godless nations.

Prayer: Lord, direct my steps and correct my ways. Be my Portion forever.

One Word: My Maker is my Portion forever

A BROKEN COVENANT

Jeremiah 11:1-23 (Fri.) May 22

Key Verse: 11:4

1. Obey the terms of the covenant (1-17)

God saved Israel from the furnace fires of Egypt and made a covenant with her. The covenant was like a marriage contract. They promised to obey his commands and be his people; he promised to be their God and bless them. Now, God told Jeremiah to remind the people of the other side of the covenant: "Cursed is the man who does not obey the terms of this covenant." The people had broken the covenant. They had committed spiritual adultery with Baal. But they discovered that Baal could not help them in times of disaster. Now, God would not listen to them, for they had forfeited their privilege of prayer.

2. A plot against Jeremiah (18-23)

Because the prophet spoke the word of God truthfully, and the people did not want to repent, they plotted his death. He committed his cause to God.

Prayer: Lord, help me to be faithful to the covenant sealed in Jesus' blood. Help me to pray and speak the truth and repent before your word.

One Word: Keep the covenant

JEREMIAH'S COMPLAINT; GOD'S ANSWER

Jeremiah 12:1-17 (Sat.) May 23

Key Verse 12:5

1. Why do the wicked prosper? (1-4)

Jeremiah asks the timeless question which good men who suffer ask: "Why do the wicked prosper and the faithless live at ease?" These wicked and faithless people talked about God with their mouths, but they did not have God in their hearts. Still, it seemed as though God had planted them in the land, and they had taken root and were living fruitful lives. How could a just God permit such injustice?

2. God's answer (5-17)

God asked Jeremiah, "If you have raced with men on foot and they have worn you out, how can you compete with horses...?" Things were going to get worse, not better. God would lay waste to the whole land. He would uproot Judah and all her neighbors. But God is just. In his compassion, he would restore all who repent and learn his ways. He would even bless and establish former enemies if they repented.

Prayer: Lord, give me a repentant heart and patience to trust you and wait on you.

One Word: Repent and wait on God

THE USELESS LINEN BELT

Jeremiah 13:1-27 (Sun.) May 24

Key Verse: 13:11

1. A living parable (1-14)

God gave Jeremiah a strange errand. He was to buy an expensive linen belt, wear it for a while, then put it under a rock, and leave it there until it was ruined. It was a vivid parable of God's

relationship to his people. He had chosen them and bound them to himself as closely as a linen belt is bound around a man's waist. But they became proud and ignored his word. They worshiped idols and became useless. God would let them destroy themselves with wine (12-14).

2. Judah will be carried into exile (15-27)

The people were arrogant, and their idolatry was blatant. If they did not repent and give glory to God, he would bring darkness. Their pride would turn to shame, for they would be stripped and abused and carried as slaves into captivity. This would happen because of their many sins. They must repent.

Prayer: Lord, you created and redeemed me to live for your glory. Give me a humble and obedient heart. Forgive my sins.

One Word: Be useful to God, not useless

DROUGHT, FAMINE, SWORD

Jeremiah 14:1-22 (Mon.) May 25

Key Verse: 14:22

1. O Lord, do something! (1-16)

A terrible drought devastated the land, just as Jeremiah had prophesied. God himself is the Hope and Savior of his people (8), but the people had turned from God to worship idols. God's hand of judgment had struck, and even the prayers of God's servant would be of no avail. Famine would follow drought, and then the sword of Babylon would lay waste to Jerusalem. False prophets had spoken lies, promising peace and relief. But they would be first to perish. God was calling his people to repent.

2. Let my eyes overflow with tears (17-22)

Jeremiah pleads for his people with a repentant heart, for only God is their hope. He alone can save them from the drought, the famine and the sword. Worthless idols cannot send rain; God alone can do this. Our hope is in him. He is ready to forgive those who come to him in repentance.

Prayer: Lord, forgive my sins and cleanse me from unrighteousness. Turn the hearts of our people to you and heal our land.

One Word: Our hope is in God alone

A MAN WITH WHOM THE WHOLE WORLD CONTENDS

Jeremiah 15:1-21 (Tue.) May 26

Key Verse: 15:19

1. God's judgment on Jerusalem (1-9)

God gave Jeremiah a hard message to proclaim. God's decision to punish Jerusalem for her sins was irrevocable. Even Moses could not change his mind. Manasseh had led Judah to follow the corrupt practices of the Canaanite religions--including human sacrifice and consultation with mediums and spiritists. God would visit unrepentant Jerusalem with terrible destruction--famine, plague, the sword and captivity.

2. I will make you a bronze wall (10-21)

Jeremiah became very unpopular--one man against the whole nation. He was cursed by everyone. Why? It was because he spoke God's word without compromise. God's word had been his joy and his heart's delight. But when he spoke the truth, everyone hated him. He never joined the party-going pleasure-seekers; he sat alone, because God's hand was on him. When he questioned God's faithfulness, God challenged him to repent; then he could be useful, not worthless. He must not give in to the people--they must give in to him. God would rescue him.

Prayer: Lord, help me to stand firm on your word. Give me a repentant heart.

One Word: Stand like a bronze wall

HOPE IN THE MIDST OF DISASTER

Jeremiah 16:1-21 (Wed.) May 27

Key Verse: 16:19

1. I have withdrawn my blessing (1-13)

God withdrew his blessing, his love and his pity from Judah. Why? Because the people ignored God's word and followed the evilness of their stubborn hearts. So a terrible disaster was impending. God told Jeremiah not to marry or have children, for children and their parents would all perish. It was pointless to go to funerals or sympathize with mourners, for if people do not have God's comfort there is no comfort. There would be no more joyful wedding feasts, for they would all end in sorrow. God would throw his people out of the land. The exile to Babylon fulfilled his words.

2. The nations will come to God (14-21)

God's hand of judgment was on his people so that he might lead them to repent of their vile idolatry. If God's people repented, he would restore them and use them as Bible teachers for the nations of the world (19).

Prayer: Lord, forgive my stubborn ways and help me to obey your word, so that you may bless me and make me a blessing to others.

One Word: Obey God's word; be a blessing

A CURE OF THE DECEITFUL HEART

Jeremiah 17:1-27 (Thur.) May 28

Key Verse: 17:14

1. Blessed is the man who trusts the Lord (1-8)

Israel lost her inheritance because of her unfaithfulness to God. Their sin is indelibly engraved on their hearts, and cannot be washed away even by sacrifices on the altar. One who trusts in man, who depends on himself or on someone else and not on God, will become like a dried-up bush in the desert. But the man who trusts in God will be like a tree planted by a stream of water. He is alive and growing and fruitful, even in the time of drought.

2. The deceitful heart, its cause and cure (9-27)

When we trust in ourselves or in people or material things, we become fearful and our hearts become deceitful. We don't even know ourselves--but God knows us. Only God can heal and save. When he does so, we are truly healed and saved. Then we can't run away from being shepherds (14-16). Keeping the Sabbath (19-27) is a way to combat the cancer of materialism and teach people to depend on God.

Prayer: Cure my deceitful heart, O Lord. Heal me and I will be healed.

One Word: Only God can heal the heart

THE POTTER AND GOD'S SERVANT

Jeremiah 18:1-23 (Fri.) May 29

Key Verse: 18:6

1. The potter's power (1-17)

The Lord sent Jeremiah to the potter's house to learn a lesson about God's sovereignty. The potter has absolute power over the clay. If the vessel he is molding is marred, he can reshape the clay into another pot. Israel is like clay in the Potter's hands. If Israel is ruined by her sins, the Lord can destroy her and mold another nation for his use. He can also decide not to destroy any nation.

2. The plot against Jeremiah (18-23)

When Jeremiah warned the people of God's judgment (13-17), the religious leaders did not like it. They did not want to repent of their idolatry and double lives. They insisted that their preaching and teaching would not be lost. So they decided not to listen to Jeremiah, and they attacked him with their tongues. Jeremiah did not back down; he prayed.

Prayer: Lord, help me to teach the Bible faithfully and not be swayed by praise or rejection or gossip.

One Word: God is sovereign

GOD'S HARD MESSAGE--A PROPHET'S COURAGE

Jeremiah 19:1-20:6 (Sat.) May 30

Key Verse: 19:15

1. A taste of hell (19:1-15)

The Lord sent Jeremiah to the Valley of Ben Hinnom, just outside Jerusalem. This was the city garbage dump. The word, "Hinnom" is another word for "hell." Topeth was a fire pit used for sacrificing children--a common practice in the Canaanite religions. Child sacrifice was forbidden by God, but some of the kings of Israel had practiced it. Jeremiah smashed a clay pot in the presence of the elders to announce God's judgment on a city that allowed such horrible practices. The whole city would become like Topeth--the fire pit of hell.

2. Jeremiah is beaten (20:1-6)

Pashhur the priest did not like Jeremiah's rebuke; he did not want to think about hell. So he had Jeremiah beaten and put in stocks. When Jeremiah was released, he confronted Pashhur and gave him a new name, "Terror On Every Side." The priest who preached an easy-going religion would be punished.

Prayer: Lord, help me to speak your word of truth honestly, no matter what the cost.

One Word: God will punish evil

HIS WORD A FIRE IN MY HEART

Jeremiah 20:7-18 (Sun.) May 31

Key Verse: 20:9

1. The word has brought me insult (7-10)

Jeremiah complained to God. He had spoken God's word clearly, without compromise; because of this, he was insulted and beaten. People did not want to hear the truth. But he could not be silent because God's word was like a burning fire in his heart.

2. To you I committed my cause (11-13)

When even his friends turned against him, he turned to the Lord. He proclaimed, "The Lord is with me like a mighty warrior." He praised God who rescues the life of the needy from the hands of the wicked. He did not seek revenge on his enemies; he committed his cause to God.

3. Why was I born? (14-18)

When he thought about the words of warning which he must continue to proclaim, he could not but be sorrowful. But Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, spoke God's word to the people of his time and to us.

Prayer: Lord, let your word be a burning fire in me. Help me to teach it truthfully.

One Word: God's word is a burning fire

I AM AGAINST YOU, JERUSALEM

Jeremiah 21:1-14 (Mon.) June 1

Key Verse 21:8

1. Perhaps the Lord will spare us (1-7)

Babylon was attacking Jerusalem. King Zedekiah hoped for a miracle and he sent two priests to Jeremiah to ask him to pray for the city. These men hated Jeremiah, but they knew that he was God's servant. God's answer was bad news. God himself was fighting against the city. He would strike them with a plague, then hand them over to the Babylonians.

2. A way of life and a way of death (8-14)

Jerusalem was perched on a high plateau and regarded herself as an impregnable fortress (13). But God himself would punish her for her sins. Jeremiah advised the people of the city to choose the way of life and surrender to the Babylonians, for to stay in the city was the way of death. The way of life for any city is to administer justice and protect the innocent (12). But it was too late for Jerusalem.

Prayer: Lord, give me courage to point to the way of life, no matter how unpopular it may be.

One Word: God's way is the way of life

GOD'S JUDGMENT ON EVIL KINGS

Jeremiah 22:1-30 (Tue.) June 2

Key Verse: 22:15,16

1. Because they have forsaken the covenant (1-23)

If the kings of Judah, all descendants of King David, had ruled with justice and kept their covenant with God, they would have continued ruling. Josiah had been a just king, but his sons, Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim were evil men. They oppressed the people, making them work for no pay, while they themselves lived in luxury. Their corrupt lives sprang from ignoring God's word. Why did the Lord punish the great city? Because the kings forsook the covenant of the Lord and served other gods. To know God means to serve him and be shepherds of his people.

2. You said, "I will not listen." (24-30)

From his youth Jehoiachin, son of Jehoiakim, had been rebellious and disobedient. He was a proud, spoiled prince. Now, he would reap the fruit of his self-indulgent life.

Prayer: Lord, help me to listen to your word and live according to your laws. Help us not to raise disobedient and self-indulgent children.

One Word: Keep God's covenant

THE RIGHTEOUS BRANCH

Jeremiah 23:1-8 (Wed.) June 3

Key Verse: 23:6

1. Woe to false shepherds (1-2)

The false shepherds--kings, priests, prophets--did not care for God's sheep. Rather, they scattered and destroyed them. They did not lead the people in the true way of faith and obedience to God, but encouraged them to follow the idols and culture of the pagan people around them. Godless people become morally corrupt. God would punish his people by the hand of a cruel invader, and they would be taken into captivity in a foreign land and be scattered.

2. The Lord our Righteousness (3-8)

God promised to personally come to gather the remnant of his people. He would put shepherds over them who would care for them so that they could serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness. Jeremiah looks forward to Jesus, the Righteous Branch, the descendant of David who would save his people. His name is "The Lord our Righteousness." We need the Good Shepherd Jesus; we need to be clothed with his righteousness.

Prayer: Lord, cleanse my sins and lead me in the way of righteousness and peace.

One Word: Jesus is my Shepherd

GOD'S WORD IS LIKE A HAMMER THAT BREAKS A ROCK

Jeremiah 23:9-40 (Thur.) June 4

Key Verse: 23:29

1. Proclaim God's word to the people (9-24)

The responsibility for the corruption of the land lay with godless prophets and priests. The prophets of Israel let all kinds of despicable idol worship go unchallenged. The prophets of Judah committed adultery and lived a lie. These religious leaders only strengthened the hands of evildoers. A Bible teacher must stand before God and listen to his council. He cannot use God's word as a springboard to talk about his own ideas. When prophets and priests speak God's word truthfully, the people will turn from their evil ways (22).

2. God's word is like a fire, like a hammer (25-40)

False prophets talk about their dreams; God's servants preach and teach God's words. People who tell others about their dreams and teach the delusion of their own minds can only lead people astray. But God's word is a hammer that breaks hard hearts; it is a fire that purifies. Let one who has God's word speak it faithfully. We must not distort the words of the living God with our own ideas (36).

Prayer: Lord, help me to listen to your word and teach it faithfully.

One Word: God's word is like a hammer

TWO BASKETS OF FIGS

Jeremiah 24:1-10 (Fri.) June 5

Key Verse: 24:7

1. The good figs (1-7)

God himself sent the Babylonians to invade Jerusalem and take the people into captivity. It was his punishment for sin. But the purpose of the punishment was to lead people to repentance. Those who were taken away as exiles were the good figs. God would go with them; he would watch over them and bring them back. He would give them a heart to know him. They would repent and turn to God with all their heart.

2. The bad figs (8-12)

The people who rebelled against Babylon were rebelling against the sovereign purpose of God. They were the bad figs. Many would remain in the land after the invasion; some would flee to Egypt, seeking to escape God's hand of judgment. But true repentance is the only way to escape God's hand of judgment. Those who do not repent become like worthless figs, only fit for the garbage can.

Prayer: Lord, help me to turn to you with all my heart. Be my God and let me be one of your people. Let me be good fruit.

One Word: Repent and be like good figs

SEVENTY YEARS OF CAPTIVITY

Jeremiah 25:1-38 (Wed.) July 1

Key Verse 25:7

1. Because you have not listened (1-14)

For twenty-three years Jeremiah preached the word of God to the people of Judah, but they would not listen. They did not repent, but continued in idolatry and in all kinds of immoral practices. They brought harm on themselves by refusing to accept the word of God and refusing to repent. God sent the Babylonians to invade Judah and take her people as captives into exile. God promised that after 70 years he would punish Babylon and send the exiles home to Jerusalem. God's punishment is redemptive; he wants his people to repent and return and be blessed.

2. The cup of God's wrath (15-38)

The Babylonian Empire would execute God's judgment on many nations--including Judah. Then the cup of God's wrath would be poured out on Babylon. This is a preview of the final judgement. God sent his Son to die to save sinful mankind. But those who do not repent and drink the cup of forgiveness and blessing with Jesus must drink the cup of God's wrath.

Prayer: Lord, help me and my people to listen to your word and repent.

One Word: Listen and repent

PERHAPS EACH WILL TURN TO GOD

Jeremiah 26:1-24 (Thur.) July 2

Key Verse: 26:3

1. Do not omit a word (1-6)

God sent Jeremiah to teach his word in the courtyard of the temple. He was commanded to declare the whole message of God to the people, even though it was a message which no one wanted to hear. God wanted each man to receive God's word and repent for himself, for repentance alone would lead to life.

2. If you put me to death, you are guilty (7-24)

The people who heard his message mobbed Jeremiah. They did not repent. The priests and prophets wanted to put Jeremiah to death for preaching about God's judgment. Jeremiah did not compromise. Some of the officials realized that his message was from God. They protected Jeremiah from the priests, prophets and ignorant people. The elders gave examples from history of great kings who had feared God and repented. King Jehoiakim, however, had one faithful prophet executed.

Prayer: Lord, raise up Bible teachers and preachers who will declare the whole word of God. Grant us spirit of repentance.

One Word: Hear God's word and repent

GOD GIVES THE EARTH TO WHOMEVER HE PLEASES

Jeremiah 27:1-22 (Fri.) July 3

Key Verse: 27:5

1. A yoke for the nations (1-11)

The Lord commanded Jeremiah to teach God's word in a vivid manner. He was to make a yoke out of straps and crossbars and put it on his own neck. Then, wearing the yoke, he was to speak to the envoys of Judah's neighboring nations and tell them that I) God is their Sovereign Owner and Ruler; ii) God was handing them all over to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; iii) in order to survive, they must submit to the yoke of Babylon until the Lord removed it.

2. Remain in exile until God restores (12-22)

The message to Judah was the same: They must submit to and serve the king of Babylon, then they would live. They would be taken into Babylonian captivity and they must remain there until the Lord brought them home. This message sounded like treason, but it was God's message to the peoples and it was the only way of survival. God wanted to bring his people to repentance.

Prayer: Lord, help me to acknowledge your sovereignty in every area of my life. Help me to speak your word faithfully, even though it is unpopular.

One Word: God owns the world

A FALSE PROPHET AND A TRUE PROPHET

Jeremiah 28:1-17 (Sat.) July 4

Key Verse: 28:15

1. Hananiah proclaims good news (1-11)

Hananiah claimed to speak God's word. He prophesied that God would break the yoke of Babylon and restore Jerusalem in two years. This was good news, and everyone, including Jeremiah, said "Amen." Then Hananiah dramatically illustrated his message by breaking the wooden yoke that Jeremiah was wearing as a symbol of captivity (27:2). The problem was, Hananiah was lying!

2. A nation persuaded to trust lies (12-17)

Jeremiah wanted peace, too. At first he remained silent because he had no clear word from God. Then God revealed to him the tragic events that lay in Judah's future: The yoke of wood would become a yoke of iron and Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, would rule with absolute sovereignty. The false prophet would die, for he had preached lies to the people and rebellion against the Lord. Anyone who teaches what people want to hear instead of what God has said is a false prophet.

Prayer: Lord, help me to declare your word truthfully--whether people like it or not.

One Word: Teach God's word truthfully

A LETTER TO THE EXILES

Jeremiah 29:1-32 (Sun.) July 5

Key Verse: 29:13

1. When you seek me with all your heart (1-14)

Jeremiah wrote a letter to the exiles in Babylon. He told them two things: First, settle down in Babylon, marry, have many children, increase in number; do not decrease. Be a blessing to the city of your exile. Second, after 70 years, God's time would come. He would bring them home when they sought the Lord with all their hearts. God had a purpose and a plan for his people; their exile was a time of his discipline.

2. Don't listen to false prophets (15-32)

Jeremiah's words sounded like treason, and there were some prophets who opposed him. They had urged resistance to Babylon, and now they urged the exiles to be rebellious during their exile. Jeremiah told the exiles that God would punish these false prophets, for they were preaching rebellion against God. God's people must listen to God's word and not to words that stir up rebellion.

Prayer: Lord, help me to seek you with all my heart, and trust you, not others or myself.

One Word: Seek God with all your heart

A PROMISE OF RESTORATION

Jeremiah 30:1-24 (Mon.) July 6

Key Verse: 30:11

1. I will break the yoke (1-11)

God commanded Jeremiah to write down the words of the Lord in a book. God promised Judah days of pain too great to imagine, for the Babylonian armies would march in and occupy Jerusalem. But God also planted hope. God would break the yoke of oppression; someday God's people would serve, not foreign enemies, but God. The Messiah, a descendant of David, would rule over them in righteousness and peace (9). When people put hope in God, they will not be disappointed.

2. He will accomplish his purposes (12-24)

The wound inflicted by the invasion would seem too great for healing (12). But God who wounds also heals (17). God's purpose in allowing suffering is redemptive. He wants his people to repent of sin and turn back to him. He wants them to love and worship him from the heart.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your wounds and your healing. Thank you for sending Jesus.

One Word: God will accomplish his purposes

LOVED WITH EVERLASTING LOVE

Jeremiah 31:1-22 (Tue.) July 7

Key Verse: 31:3b

1. God loves with everlasting love (1-6)

Jeremiah lived some 200 years after the demise of Northern Israel (Ephraim, Samaria). But he knows that God's love for all his scattered people has not changed. God's love is everlasting. He longs for the people of Israel to return to Samaria, rebuild and be united with the people of Judah to worship God together in Zion. God still longs for all people to repent and come to him through Christ to live in true unity under his sovereign rule.

2. Lord, save the remnant (7-14)

God promised to bring back to himself a remnant of his wounded and broken people. He would be their shepherd. He would heal them and restore their joy.

3. Hope for the future (15-22)

God has hope for his people. So he disciplines them to lead them to repentance. It is an expression of his compassionate, loving father's heart.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your loving discipline. Hasten the day when all your people may unite to praise your name.

One Word: Loved with everlasting love

A NEW COVENANT

Jeremiah 31:23-40 (Wed.) July 8

Key Verse: 31:31

1. When I bring them back (23-32)

God's people broke their covenant with God. They were like an unfaithful wife who broke her marriage vows. So God allowed them to be taken into captivity. But Jeremiah dreamed of the time when they would return to rebuild and plant. At that time, each person would be responsible for his own sins. God would make a new covenant and call each person to a personal relationship with himself.

2. The new covenant (33-40)

The new covenant would not be written on stone tablets but on each person's heart. Each individual person must come to God, repent of his sins and be forgiven. Each person would know the Lord. The covenant relationship is based on God's mercy and grace--not on man's ability and will power. The Creator God who makes the sun shine by day and the moon and stars by night stooped to be the Savior and true Friend of man. And he is faithful.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for forgiving my sins through the covenant blood of Jesus.

One Word: A personal covenant with God

JEREMIAH BUYS A FIELD

Jeremiah 32:1-44 (Thur.) July 9

Key Verse: 32:39

1. Buy the field at Anathoth (1-15)

Jerusalem was under siege. Jeremiah had prophesied that the Lord would hand the city over to the Babylonians and send King Zedekiah into exile. He had warned the people not to fight. But, strangely, God told Jeremiah to buy a field and have the transaction properly witnessed.

2. Jeremiah's prayer (16-25)

Jeremiah bought the land. But he couldn't understand why. He prayed, confessing his faith in God's almighty power and unchanging love. Would the imminent Babylonian conquest be averted? No. But buying the land planted hope in people's hearts, for it meant that someday property in this city under siege would again be worth owning.

3. I will punish and I will restore (26-44)

God would carry out his judgment on Jerusalem. Through God's discipline his people would learn to fear and love God with singleness of heart and action.

Prayer: Lord, help me to act in singleness of heart, so that my life may be pleasing to you.

One Word: God disciplines those he loves

THE RIGHTEOUS BRANCH

Jeremiah 33:1-26 (Fri.) July 10

Key Verse: 33:15

1. I will forgive all their sins (1-11)

While Jeremiah was in prison, God's word came to him. God's hand of judgment would fall on his rebellious and sinful people. But when they repented and called on God, he would forgive and heal and restore them. He would bring them back from captivity.

2. The Righteous Branch (12-26)

God promised to make a righteous branch sprout from David's line. Through him, God's people would be saved. This promise is based on an older one: One from David's line would sit on David's throne forever; and the Levites--the priests--would be as countless as the stars in the sky (22). Jesus is the Righteous Branch, the descendant of David who sits on his throne forever; his people are the true Israel, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, appointed to bring the world back to worship its Creator (Ex 19:6; 1Pe 2:9; Rev 1:5b,6).

Prayer: Lord, thank you for keeping your covenant with the day and the night, and your covenant with Abraham and David--and your covenant with me.

One Word: The Righteous Branch and a kingdom of priests

FREE THE SLAVES

Jeremiah 34:1-22 (Sat.) July 11

Key Verse: 34:15

1. God's mercy for the king (1-7)

The city would be destroyed and King Zedekiah captured. But God promised him that he would die in peace and be buried in honor--if he had faith.

2. A covenant to free the slaves (8-11)

The king and people made a covenant to free all the Hebrew slaves in Jerusalem. According to God's law, slaves should be set free. But rich, lazy people depended on slave labor. This time, however, with God's sword of judgment hanging over the city, they set all slaves free. But as soon as they had done so, they changed their minds and enslaved them again.

3. Freedom to fall by the sword (12-22)

God gave the disobedient king and his people freedom--freedom to fall by the sword, by plague and by famine. Zedekiah would be shown no mercy. The price of a broken promise was high.

Prayer: Lord, teach me your respect for people, and help me keep my promises.

One Word: Keep your promises to God

THE EXAMPLE OF THE REBABITES

Jeremiah 35:1-19 (Sun.) July 12

Key Verse: 35:13

1. We do not drink wine (1-11)

The Recabites were the descendants of Jethro, Moses' father-in-law. We know little about them. The Lord sent Jeremiah to test them by tempting them to drink wine. Because their forefather Jonadab son of Recab had commanded them not to drink, they refused. They had tried to follow the lifestyle commanded by their forefather rather than following their own desires or the customs of the people around them.

2. Learn a lesson and obey my words (12-19)

The Lord wanted his people to learn a lesson in obedience and faithfulness from the Recabites. God's people should obey God's word. God had spoken to his people through the prophets,

commanding them not to follow other gods. But the people did not obey. God is faithful. The Recabites would be blessed for their faithfulness. But God would punish Israel severely.

Prayer: Lord, help me to obey your word simply and follow the lifestyle which you teach.

One Word: Obey God's word

JEREMIAH'S SCROLL

Jeremiah 36:1-32 (Mon.) July 13

Key Verse: 36:3

1. Perhaps people will repent (1-26)

The Lord commanded Jeremiah to write down all the messages which God had given him since the time of Josiah's rule. God wanted each person to repent personally before God's word. Then they could be forgiven and escape his wrath. Jeremiah dictated God's words to Baruch, who wrote them down on a scroll. Then he sent Baruch into the temple to teach the people. He prayed that the people would repent. They all listened, and the fear of God came to their hearts. But when they brought the scroll to the king, he did not repent. This godless king cut up the scroll-Bible and burned it. He had no fear of God. He tried to arrest Jeremiah and Baruch, but God protected them.

2. Write it again (27-32)

God told Jeremiah to write it again on another scroll, and rebuke the king. God's word cannot be destroyed by evil men, nor can unrepentant men avoid the consequences of sin by burning the Bible.

Prayer: Lord, give me a humble and repentant heart before your word.

One Word: Hear God's word and repent

JEREMIAH IN PRISON

Jeremiah 37:1-21 (Tue.) July 14

Key Verse: 37:9

1. This is what the Lord says...(1-10)

The word God spoke through Jeremiah was very unpopular. No one wanted to hear that Babylon was going to conquer Jerusalem. Egypt was on the march, but Jeremiah knew that Egypt could not save them. King Zedekiah closed his ears to God's word. In his heart he knew that Jeremiah

was right. He asked his prayer, and he asked about future prospects. In spite of pressure, Jeremiah did not change his message. Only repentance and faith in God could save them.

2. Jeremiah arrested (11-21)

When the Babylonians temporarily retreated in the face of an advancing Egyptian army, it looked as if Jeremiah were wrong. But he continued to insist that surrender to Babylon was God's way and their hope. This was God's word. He was arrested and accused of deserting to the Babylonians. Those who do not accept God's word as God's word cannot understand it. But the man of God must continue to speak God's word, regardless of the consequences.

Prayer: Lord, help me to be faithful to accept your word and teach it truthfully.

One Word: Stand on God's side

COURAGE TO BE UNPOPULAR

Jeremiah 38:1-28 (Wed.) July 15

Key Verse 38:20

1. Two men of courage (1-13)

Jeremiah's preaching sounded seditious. He advocated surrender to the Babylonians. But he was not politically motivated; he was God's servant and his message was God's word for the nation. Because of his unpopular message, he was thrown in a large cistern and left to die. He was saved by a Cushite, Ebed-Melech, a man who feared God. He went to the king and got permission to pull Jeremiah out of the cistern. Because of one man of conscience--a Gentile African--God's servant was saved.

2. A cowardly king (14-28)

The king was scared. He called Jeremiah secretly and asked him what to do. Jeremiah again said, "Surrender, and your life and the city will be spared." The king was afraid of the Babylonians; he was afraid to surrender, and afraid not to surrender. He was afraid that someone would find out about his conversation with Jeremiah. "Cowards die a thousand deaths."

Prayer: Lord, give me courage to speak your word truthfully and faithfully.

One Word: Listen to what God says and obey

THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

Jeremiah 39:1-18 (Thur.) July 16

Key Verse: 39:18

1. The Babylonian siege (1-10)

The Babylonian army's brief retreat was like the eye of the hurricane. When Nebuchadnezzar returned, it was to lay siege to Jerusalem. The siege lasted for over a year, and the people suffered terribly. Finally, the Babylonians broke through the city wall and it was all over. Zedekiah ignored God's word which Jeremiah had given him. He tried to escape, was caught and brought back. He witnessed the slaughter of his sons, then his eyes were put out.

2. God saves a faithful man (11-18)

Jeremiah had gone against the popular consensus to proclaim the word of God, and he had been almost killed. God protected him. And God did not forget Ebed-Melech, the man who had trusted God and saved Jeremiah. Surely it is better to be an ordinary man who trusts God and lives by faith than a cowardly, proud and disobedient king.

Prayer: Lord, help me to trust and obey you even if I must go against the social consensus.

One Word: Trust and obey God

THE BABYLONIAN OCCUPATION BEGINS

Jeremiah 40:1-6 (Fri.) July 17

Jeremiah 40:3,4

1. Jeremiah among the captives (1)

When Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard found Jeremiah in chains among the prisoners being taken back to Babylon, he released him. King Nebuchadnezzar had instructed his imperial commander to take care of Jeremiah. They regarded him as pro-Babylonian. Jeremiah was not on Babylon's side; he was on God's side. He did not seek rewards or favor from Babylon.

2. A decision to stay (2-6)

The imperial commander understood the spiritual implications of the Babylonian conquest (2). The people of Jerusalem had sinned; this was why the Babylonian invasion was successful. He carried many of the nobles and leaders into exile. He gave fields and vineyards to the poor people he left behind. (39:10) He respected Jeremiah and gave him the opportunity either to go to Babylon and live in ease with honor, or stay in Judah with the remnant. Jeremiah chose to stay.

Prayer: Lord, help me not to be a benefit-seeker. Show me your way.

One Word: Choose God's way

GOVERNOR GEDALIAH ASSASSINATED

Jeremiah 40:7-41:15 (Sat.) July 18

Key Verse: 40:15b

1. The remnant returns (40:7-16)

Gedaliah was appointed governor of the occupied Judah. He lived in Mizpah, near the center of the land, and did his best to be a good shepherd for his scattered people. Jeremiah stayed with him. Jews who had been living in the surrounding countries trusted him and returned to settle down in Judah. They harvested an abundance of wine and summer fruit. Johanan and his officers also joined Gedaliah.

2. Two-faced Ishmael (40:17-41:15)

Johanan warned Gedaliah not to trust Ishmael, an anti-Babylonian relative of King Zedekiah, with suspicious connections in Ammon, Israel's ancient enemy. He offered to secretly kill Ishmael. Gedaliah, however, accepted Ishmael as a brother, and showed him hospitality. Then, while they were eating, Ishmael and his ten men assassinated Gedaliah. A vicious purge followed, until Johanan arrived with his small army. Then Ishmael fled to Ammon.

Prayer: Lord, help me to be a shepherd, not a politician, even though it might be costly.

One Word: A good shepherd was killed

DO NOT GO TO EGYPT

Jeremiah 41:16-42:22 (Sun.) July 19

Key Verse: 42:6

1. Flight in fear (41:16-42:6)

Johanan became the leader of the remnant. He had tried to help Gedaliah, but had failed. But he had also opposed the Babylonians. Now, he feared reprisal because of the assassination of Gedaliah. Some Babylonian soldiers had also been killed. He decided to gather the remnant of people left in Judah and flee to Egypt. They asked Jeremiah to pray to God for direction and wisdom. They said that they would do whatever God told them to do.

2. Do not go to Egypt (42:7-22)

Jeremiah prayed for ten days, and the word of the Lord came to him. The answer he received was not what Johanan and the others wanted. God said, "Don't go to Egypt. Stay in this land; don't fear the Babylonians." He also warned them that if they went to Egypt to escape war and famine,

both war and famine would find them there. If they were not going to obey, it would have been better not to ask.

Prayer: Lord, help me to obey you no matter how much I dislike what you command.

One Word: Seek God's will and obey it

JEREMIAH GOES TO EGYPT

Jeremiah 43:1-13 (Mon.) July 20

Key Verse: 43:7

1. Arrogant men reject God's word (1-7)

When Jeremiah gave God's word to Johanan and Azariah, they said, "You are lying." They blamed Jeremiah's secretary Baruch for plotting to turn them all over to the Babylonians to be killed or exiled. Then Johanan and his army rounded up all people who had come back to Judah to live, and all the men and women whom Nebuzaradan had left with Gedaliah--including Jeremiah and Baruch--and forced them to go to Egypt.

2. God's word in Egypt (8-13)

When they arrived in Tahpanhes in Egypt, God's word came again to Jeremiah. He spoke about the future of Egypt and those who sought refuge there. Johanan thought that he was getting away from the Babylonians, but the hand of Babylon would reach even to Egypt. Jeremiah vividly demonstrated how "God's servant" Nebuchadnezzar would attack Egypt and bring death and captivity to those so destined. No one can run from God.

Prayer: Lord, help me to trust your word and obey you, for you are always right.

One Word: No one can run away from God

DISASTER BECAUSE OF IDOLATRY

Jeremiah 44:1-30 (Tue.) July 21

Key Verse: 44:28

1. The Lord's anger against Judah (1-6)

The people of Judah and Jerusalem had provoked the Lord to anger by worshiping other gods. God's judgment came in the form of the Babylonian invasion. The city was razed and the people taken captive.

2. The remnant who did not repent (7-14)

While most of the able people had been taken to Babylon, a remnant remained in Judah. They were afraid to live under Babylonian occupation, and in spite of Jeremiah's warnings, they decided to flee to Egypt. Jeremiah told them that none of them would survive to return.

3. Don't continue in idolatry (15-30)

In Egypt the people were unrepentant and persisted in burning incense to the Queen of Heaven. The women were the ones who had started this evil practice. It was the fruit of fear. The men did not stand up to their wives. God would surely punish them.

Prayer: Lord, help me to live by faith, not by fear. Help me to obey your word.

One Word: God's word will stand

SEEK NOT GREAT THINGS FOR YOURSELF

Jeremiah 45:1-5 (Wed.) July 22

Key Verse: 45:5

1. Baruch's sorrow (1-3)

Baruch was Jeremiah's co-worker. He shared in the ministry of the word by writing on a scroll the words of the Lord dictated by Jeremiah. It was hard, but very important work. The king burned one scroll, so he had to do the whole thing over again. When Baruch saw the negative response of the people to God's word, he was very sorry and he became tired.

2. Seek not great things for yourself (4-5)

Jeremiah gave God's message to Baruch. His problem was that he expected some reward--at least some recognition or honor for his hard work. But God's message for a rebellious people was one of impending disaster and judgment. It was painful for God to punish his people so severely, for he had loved them so much. How could God's servant seek something for himself at such a time? God would spare his life. That was sufficient grace.

Prayer: Lord, help me to serve you faithfully and seek not great things for myself.

One Word: Seek God's glory

GOD'S WORD TO THE NATIONS

Jeremiah 46:1-28 (Sun.) July 11

Key Verse: 46:28

1. A message concerning Egypt (1-26)

The people of Judah had hope in Egypt. Many thought that Egypt would defeat the Babylonian Empire and save Judah. But this was not to be. Pharaoh Neco of Egypt suffered a devastating defeat by the Babylonians at Carchemish, and Egypt's bid for world power evaporated. Judah could get no help from Egypt; Egypt was a broken reed. All people may find a balm in Gilead (11), for God is the Healer. Babylon's conquest of Egypt was God's hand of judgment on Egypt and her gods and kings, and on those who relied on Pharaoh (25).

2. Do not fear for I am with you (27-28)

God promised to be with his people in their exile. He would destroy the nations in which they lived, but they would be protected and spared. God disciplines his people with justice. His discipline has a redemptive purpose.

Prayer: Lord, help me not to put my hope in the world, but in you alone. Let your peace and assurance rule my heart even in the worst of times.

One Word: Jesus is the Balm in Gilead

MESSAGES ABOUT PHILISTIA AND MOAB

Jeremiah 47:1-48:47 (Mon.) July 12

Key Verse: 48:10

1. Philistia will be destroyed (47:1-7)

Jeremiah predicted that Babylon, not Egypt would be God's instrument of judgment on Philistia. The "waters rising in the north" (2) refer to Babylon. Babylon was the "sword of the Lord." (6) God can use godless people to accomplish his purposes, for he is the Owner of all the world.

2. A message about Moab (48:1-47)

Moab had frequently harassed Israel. They had tried to curse the Israelites in the wilderness (Nu 22-25). Chemosh was the god of Moab (7,13). He would go into exile with the Moabites who worshiped him. The cities of Moab from one end to the other (Heshbon to Zoan) would be destroyed (9), because Moab had defied the Lord (42). Babylon must not be lax in doing the Lord's work--the work of punishing Moab (10). God's hand of judgment has a redemptive purpose. Even Moab could be restored.

Prayer: Lord, help me to put my trust in you, and not in the false gods of the world.

One Word: God wants all nations to repent

GOD'S JUDGMENT ON THE NATIONS

Jeremiah 49:1-39 (Tue.) July 13

Key Verse: 49:16

1. Concerning the Ammonites (1-6)

The Ammonites, descendants of Lot, lived on the east side of Jordan. Their god was the blood-thirsty, passion-ridden Molech. The Ammonites occupied Gilead, a part of the tribal inheritance of Gad. Jeremiah looked forward to the time when Israel would reclaim her territory and drive the Ammonites out. However, God would someday restore the fortunes of Ammon.

2. Concerning Edom (7-22)

The Edomites, descendants of Esau, lived south of the Dead Sea. Once they had been proud and powerful, striking terror in the hearts of neighbors. But God's judgment on Edom by the hand of Babylon would be swift and sure (16).

3. Damascus, Kedar, Hazor and Elam (23-39)

Damascus was the capital of Aram; Kedar and Hazor were neighboring cities. Elam was east of Babylon. God holds the future of all nations in his hands.

Prayer: Lord, teach me not to be deceived by the pride of my own heart, or put my trust in powerful people or nations.

One Word: Don't be deceived by past glory

A STRONG REDEEMER AND A BROKEN HAMMER

Jeremiah 50:1-46 (Wed.) July 14

Key Verse: 50:34

1. Babylon will also fall (1-17)

Jeremiah had prophesied concerning the Babylonian conquest of all the nations around Israel, as well as the invasion of Judah and the fall of Jerusalem and the exile of the Jews. Babylon was God's instrument of judgment. But Babylon was evil. Her people worshiped Bel and Marduk. God would punish them in his own time. A nation from the north, the Medo-Persian Empire, would conquer Babylon. Then those living in Babylonian captivity would go home with tears of repentance (5).

2. The strong Redeemer (18-46)

The Lord Almighty, the strong Redeemer of Israel, would forgive and restore the remnant of his people (20). He would give them rest (34). The arrogant Babylonians would be crushed (31,32).

Prayer: Lord, your ways are hard to understand until the whole story has been told. Teach my eyes to see your hand in history and teach my heart to trust only in you, my strong Redeemer.

One Word: A strong Redeemer who forgives.

THE LORD IS THE MAKER OF ALL THINGS

Jeremiah 51:1-64 (Thur.) July 15

Key Verse: 51:19

1. The Lord, Maker of all things (1-35)

When the Babylonians conquered and ruled the world, they thought that they were invincible. The Israelites thought so too. But this was not so. God made the earth by his power and founded the world by his wisdom. He is the Maker of all things. The images that men make are fraudulent and worthless. The Lord Almighty used Babylon for a time as his war club. But soon he would punish that arrogant nation for all the wrong they had done.

2. Jeremiah's last word (36-64)

Jeremiah had once been accused of being pro-Babylonian. At the time of the exile, he made it clear that he spoke God's word faithfully; he did not support any political alignment. His final word was a prediction of the fall of Babylon. Babylon would sink like the scroll tied to a stone thrown in the Euphrates River. It would never rise again. The scroll was sent to Babylon.

Prayer: Lord, help me to be faithful to you, regardless of the ebb and flow of history.

One Word: God made all things

HISTORICAL UPDATE

Jeremiah 52:1-34

Key Verse: 52:27b

1. The fall of Jerusalem (1-30)

Just as Jeremiah had predicted, Jerusalem fell. (See 2 Ki 24,25 & Jer 39 for a full account.) King Zedekiah ignored God's servant's warning and acted in his own way. He brought down the wrath of the Babylonians on his people and on himself. The temple of the Lord was desecrated and robbed, Zedekiah's sons were killed before his eyes, then his eyes were put out; Judah went into captivity away from her land (27b).

2. Jehoiachin released (31-34)

Jehoiachin had been taken to Babylon in an earlier invasion. Zedekiah had been appointed king in his place. After the fall of Jerusalem, Jehoiachin was released from prison. He was treated kindly, like a pet dog. Free meals may seem like a good thing, but they made a king into a beggar. The Babylonian captivity lasted 70 years (Da 9:2; Jer 29:10).

Prayer: Lord, help me to stand on the side of truth as your servant Jeremiah did.

One Word: Corrupted people are shameless