



THE PROPHETS

Date: 8.25.24 | Title: Life in Judah Before Exile | Scripture: Jeremiah 1-10

LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING

Middle School Students

The Bible is God's message about Himself and His salvation plan through Jesus.

God deserves respect, obedience, and honor.

God wants us to live for His glory.

God sent Jesus to be the atonement for our sins.

Jesus fulfills Old Testament prophecies and promises.

High School Students

The Bible is God's message about Himself and His salvation plan through Jesus.

God deserves respect, obedience, and honor.

God wants us to live for His glory.

God is a righteous judge.

God sent Jesus to be the atonement for our sins.

Jesus fulfills Old Testament prophecies and promises.

Jesus gave His life for us on the cross and He is the only way for salvation.



MEMORY VERSE

"The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." 1 Peter 3:9



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BACKGROUND INFO FOR LEADERS

Jeremiah began serving God as a prophet when he was young, though God's plans for him preceded Jeremiah's birth: "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you; and before you were born, I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations" (Jeremiah 1:5). Given that Jeremiah would later encourage God's people with God's promise of good thoughts and plans for them (Jeremiah 29:11), it's fitting that God began by encouraging this young prophet in all the work He had set aside for him even in his feelings of overwhelm, "Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth" (Jeremiah 1:6). Jeremiah was like Moses, Gideon, Isaiah, and Paul in thinking he couldn't handle his God given assignment. God encouraged Jeremiah: "Do not say, 'I am only a youth,' for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you" (1:7-8).

Jeremiah's forty-year ministry spanned the reign of the last several kings of Judah before it was conquered by Babylon. He became "the warning prophet" during Josiah's reign (640-609 B.C.). Josiah was the last faithful king in Judah's history (2 Kings 22:1-23:27) and his death was a pivotal turning point for Judah as they entered more troubling times. Political, social, financial, moral, and spiritual decay led to the country's demise within two short decades. Other prophets such as Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah also ministered to Judah during this time. Jeremiah and his scribe wanted to leave behind a record of the tumultuous times in which they lived, God's message for those times, and God's message for the future of Israel and the surrounding nations. Jeremiah's ministry is summarized in 1:10, "I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant."

God told Jeremiah how hard being a prophet in Judah at this time was going to be. Jeremiah would speak truth to kings, princes, and priests of Judah as well as to the common people. God said this would not be easy. "They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you. For I am with you, says the Lord, 'to deliver you'" (1:19). God touched Jeremiah's mouth, imprinting His message on the young prophet's lips as He had also done with Isaiah.

The book of Jeremiah is a book of judgment and restoration. The wicked are assured that they will be punished and at the same time the people of God are promised future salvation. From the first chapter, Jeremiah prophesies that enemies will come from the north (4:6; 6:1, 22-26; 10:22; 13:20; 25:9) and bring destruction on Judah and the capitol, Jerusalem (1:13-15). Jeremiah predicts that Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon will raid the city and its temple and send the people into exile (5:14-17; 6:1-9). This prophecy will eventually be fulfilled in 586 B.C., just as the Lord said (Chapters 39 and 52), and the exile in Babylon will last seventy years (25:11, 12; 29:10). After exile, Israel would be restored to the land.

BACKGROUND INFO FOR LEADERS

Judah will suffer this fate because they didn't keep the stipulations of the covenant that were handed down to Moses on Mount Sinai. God nurtured and cared for His people, and yet still they despised His rule (Chapter 2). One of the words used repeatedly to describe Judah's behavior is "forsake" (1:16; 2:17, 19; 5:7). Israel's forsaking of the Lord manifested itself in serving and worshipping other gods (5:19) in violation of Exodus 20:3. They brought offerings to Baal and Molech with the hope that these gods would provide their needs (7:9; 11:13). "They have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God and worshiped other gods and served them" (22:9). They have failed to see Yahweh as incomparable, the true God, the living God, and the everlasting King (10:10).

Jeremiah 9:13 teaches that Israel did not "obey" Yahweh's "voice" or "walk in it". "But this command I gave them: 'Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people. And walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you'" (7:23; Exodus 19:5-6; Lev. 26:3; Deut. 5:29, 33). Israel, however, traveled in the opposite direction, stubbornly following their own way from the very beginning and refusing to listen to the words of the prophets (7:24-26). Israel trapped themselves in religion, devoting themselves to temple worship (Chapter 7) and to the offering of sacrifices (6:21; 7:21-22). They believed the temple's presence would shield them from judgment (7:4). God sent Jeremiah to the temple gates with a tough message, even if you are in the temple to attend Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles every year, being there won't save you if worship falsely and live selfishly. (Jeremiah 7:8). They oppressed the poor, stole, murdered, swore falsely, burned incense to idols, and then came to the temple and said, "We are delivered to do all these abominations" (7:10). The temple had become a "den of thieves" (7:11). It got so bad that God told Jeremiah not to bother praying for them anymore (7:16). This is the only time in the Bible this happens. Judah had chosen to devote themselves to worshipping a ritual and so worsened their relationship with the only one worthy of worship- and God was fed up with it.

Israel's rejection of Yahweh was deeply personal and treacherous (3:8, 11; 5:11). The people of Judah had become accustomed to their sins (6:15; 8:12). Israel was judged because they did not fear Yahweh (3:8; 5:22, 24; 26:19). They were stubborn and rebellious like the wilderness generation (5:23). They refused to care for the poor, sojourners, widows, and orphans (5:28; 7:6; 22:3). They were greedy for financial profits and their own interests instead of doing what was honorable before God and what was right before others (6:13; 8:10). They found no delight in God's word, scorning it instead (6:10), and so they pursued evil and were guilty of stealing, murder, adultery, lying and idolatry (7:9). Adultery, lying and deceit were pandemic in the land (9:2-9). They poured out the blood of the innocent (7:6) and even offered their children in sacrifices (7:31).

BACKGROUND INFO FOR LEADERS

God's broken heart broke Jeremiah's heart. "Thus says the Lord: 'I will remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your betrothal, when you went after Me in the wilderness'" (Jeremiah 2:2). Though the exodus from Egypt was centuries prior, for God it was like looking back on the early days of a beautiful new relationship. God brought His people out of slavery and into the desert, and they had only Him to trust in. God provided all they needed- bread from heaven and water from rocks. They followed Him, walking under His protection and trusting Him daily. Israel had fallen into the mess that would lead them into captivity because they had complicated their relationship with God, doing what they felt was right rather than obeying Him. Israel left the simplicity of walking with God.

Jeremiah described Judah and Israel's faithlessness in many ways- a broken cistern, an unfaithful wife, and a backsliding child. They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns- broken cisterns that can hold no water" (Jeremiah 2:13). Israel and Judah had left His living water- His constant, reliable source of refreshment and rest- and replaced it with broken man-made cisterns- their alliances with other nations like Egypt and Syria. As Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again" (John 4:13). As a result of refusing true refreshment, Israel's strength drained away. Judah is adulterous (2:20; 3:1-3, 6, 8-9) which manifests in worshipping other gods (3:1-9, 5:7). Jeremiah described Judah's wayward behavior using the term "backsliding"- mentioned seven times in Jeremiah 3 alone. "Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings" (Jeremiah 3:22).

One of the big problems God had with both Judah and Israel during this time was the preaching of false prophets (Jeremiah 5:12-14). Prophets preached feel-good messages, not offering any challenge to return to Yahweh. They preached peace when there was none (6:14). God told them to "ask for the old paths, where the good way is and walk in it" (6:16). He sent them watchmen to sound warnings, but they wouldn't listen. They continued to obviously eat, drink and be merry, while ignoring God's warnings and setting themselves up for catastrophe. Politicians made alliances with other nations instead of trusting God to defend them against the coming threat.

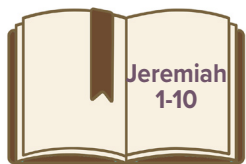
Jeremiah responded with tears- both for the doom coming on his people and the pain of knowing how badly they had messed up (9:1). Again, God pointed the way back (9:23-24), but Israel and Judah had forgotten their divine provider. Jeremiah, once "the warning prophet"; now became "the weeping prophet", lamenting both the condition of and the consequences for his people.

BACKGROUND INFO FOR LEADERS

Jeremiah often calls upon people to repent, for repentance would save them from judgment, though he also predicts that they will not repent and because of their hardness of heart. Yahweh calls for people to return to him with all their hearts (3:10; 3:12, 14). Judgement did not come upon Israel immediately for their sins, for the Lord is patient, but judgment will come because “they have refused to repent” (5:3). Their stubbornness hardens them from returning to the Lord (8:5). Judgment will not be permanent, ultimately Israel will be saved and restored from exile. Promises of salvation and restoration are sprinkled throughout the book. During exhortations to repent, which Judah did not heed at the time, Jeremiah contemplates what will happen when repentance becomes a reality. Israel will have leaders, “shepherds”, who will feed them faithfully (3:15). Jerusalem will be the place where Yahweh reigns, and his reign will not be limited to Israel, for all the nations will come to Jerusalem and evil shall be a thing of the past (3:17). Judah and Israel will be harmonious and united (3:18). Israel will return to the land again (12:15), and the nations that swear allegiance to Yahweh’s name will share the blessings of belonging to the Lord (12:16).

In four decades of preaching, Jeremiah didn’t see conversion or transformation. He wasn’t celebrated, but persecuted. Despite his efforts, Jeremiah’s preaching did not stop the nation’s slide into exile. No one took Jeremiah’s words to heart until it was too late. Jeremiah witnessed multiple deportations of Judeans to Babylon and the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. Later his words comforted God’s conquered people, as they would for generations to come. Jeremiah was eventually taken to Egypt along with other exiles, and we do not hear from him thereafter.

LOCATE THE SCRIPTURE & TELL THE STORY



Tell the story: Use the Background Info for Leaders or The Message Bible summary of scripture to help tell today's story. The Biggest Story Storybook Bible has a summary of Jeremiah's calling as a prophet in Jeremiah Chapter One- Jeremiah Against Everyone.

Re-tell the Bible Story: Have students re-tell the story as best they can.

Attributes of God: Determine the characteristics of God that we see in today's story. How can knowing these characteristics of God to be true, change the way we live in Christ?

TELL THE STORY



Share the GOSPEL:

The horrifying disaster of exile was not the end for God's people: Jeremiah foretold a return from exile, an everlasting covenant, and a new covenant in which God's people would at last embrace the covenant in their hearts. Israel and Judah would be reunited and finally fulfill their calling to bring light to the world.

Read directly from Scripture, use the message, or the summary provided in the lesson


The OT promises made to Adam (Genesis 3:15), Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3), and David (2 Samuel 7) will be kept. Yahweh chose the Israelites to be his people and to represent Yahweh to the world, but everything went horribly wrong. Instead of worshipping and obeying the Lord, Israel abandoned Him and turned to other gods. They violated the stipulations of the covenant repeatedly. Therefore, the Lord threatened the nation with captivity and exiled them to Babylon for their transgressions. Yahweh's covenant promises were never repealed! Jeremiah teaches that a new covenant is coming, a covenant that is irrevocable, a covenant by which sins will be fully and finally forgiven.

Re-Tell

The Bible Story

Put the events in order, draw a comic strip, build it with blocks or playdough, act it out, etc...

Jesus and Jeremiah share a lot of character traits. When Jesus asked His disciples who people were saying He was, they mentioned Jeremiah as a possibility (Matthew 16:14). Both confronted their enemies over and over again for their hypocrisy. Both were also tenderhearted and deeply loved Israel, weeping over her sin. Jesus wept over Jerusalem with compassion when He saw it for the last time before his crucifixion (Matthew 23:37; Luke 19:41-44). Both hearts broke for sins's cost, but Jeremiah pointed to a day when God would fully restore His people.



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“Storying” Questions: As you ask these questions, have your students find the answers in the actual verses of scripture instead of recalling them from your re-telling of the story. We always want to encourage all of our students to go directly to God’s Word over a commentary on or summary of scripture. Use the Bible Study Bookmark Questions as well as these questions to help students understand the text:

1. Is Jeremiah a major prophet or a minor prophet? How do you know?
2. When did Jeremiah live and serve?
3. What is Jeremiah’s nickname? How did he get this name?
4. What were some of the sins that led Judah into exile? Ultimately, these all broke what?
5. How did the Israelites use the temple?
6. What are the three comparisons God makes for the Israelites? (collecting water in broken vessels instead of living water, committing adultery, and backsliding children)
7. What are some ways Jeremiah and Jesus were alike?
8. How is the exile for Israel different from the exile for Judah? How long will they be in exile?
9. What hope does the book of Jeremiah offer?
10. What does this story teach us about God?
11. What does this story show us about ourselves?

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

ATTENTIVE - God hears and responds to the needs of his children.

COMPASSIONATE - God cares for his children and acts on their behalf.

CREATOR - God made everything. He is uncreated.

DELIVERER - God rescues and saves his children.

ETERNAL - God is not limited by time. He exists outside of time.

FAITHFUL - God always keeps his promises.

GENEROUS - God gives what is best and beyond what is deserved.

GLORIOUS - God displays His greatness and worth.

GOOD - God is what is best and gives what is best. He is incapable of doing harm.

HOLY - God is perfect, pure, and without sin.

IMMUTABLE/UNCHANGING - God never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

INCOMPREHENSIBLE - God is beyond our understanding. We can comprehend Him in part but not in whole.

INFINITE - God has not limits in His person or on His power.

JEALOUS - God will not share his glory with another. all glory rightfully belongs to him.

JUST - god is fair in all his actions and judgements. He cannot over-punish or under-punish.

LOVING - God feels and displays infinite, unconditional affection toward his children. His love for them does not depend on their worth, response, or merit.

MERCIFUL - God does not give his children the punishment they deserve.

OMNIPOTENT/ALMIGHTY - God holds all power. nothing is too hard for God. What He wills He can accomplish.

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

OMNIPRESENT - God is fully present everywhere.

OMNISCIENT - God knows everything, past, present, and future - all potential and real outcomes, all things micro and macro.

PATIENT/LONG-SUFFERING - God is untiring and bears with His children.

PROVIDER - God meets the needs of his children.

REFUGE - God is a place of safety and protection for his children.

RIGHTEOUS - God is always good and right.

SELF-EXISTENT - God depends on nothing and no one to give him life or existence.

SELF-SUFFICIENT - God is not vulnerable. He has no needs.

SOVEREIGN - God does everything according to His plan and pleasure.

TRANSCENDENT - God is not like humans. He is infinitely higher in being and action.

TRUTHFUL - Whatever God speaks or does is truth and reality.

WISE - God knows what is best and acts accordingly. He cannot choose wrongly.

WORTHY - God deserves all glory and honor and praise.

WRATHFUL - God hates all unrighteousness.



THE PROPHETS

PRAYER PROMPTS

God, You are just and merciful. Thank You for sending Jesus to take the punishment for our sin. Help us to be quick to repent! We love You!

IF TIME ALLOWS:

Help the students in your group practice memorizing the books of the Bible:

- Torah: Genesis-Deuteronomy
- History: Joshua-Esther
- Poetry: Job-Song of Solomon
- Major Prophets: Isaiah-Daniel
- Minor Prophets: Hosea-Malachi
- Gospels: Matthew-John
- Paul's Letters: Romans-Philemon
- General Letters: Hebrews-Revelation

MISSIONS EMPHASIS:

For the months of August, September and October we will be collecting money for the Connie Maxwell Children's Home. Please visit their website for pictures and descriptions of some of the services they offer that you can share with your group. A generous donor will match all of our donations. Encourage your class to collect money and donate it in the giving funnel in the upstairs lobby. Students can donate with their families as they arrive, or you can go together as a class on the way back to the Worship Center at the end of SS.

REVIEW UNIT VERSE:

Work on memorizing this weeks verse with the students in your group. You can use the first letter of each word in the verse to help with this. For example, the unit verse would look like this:



Application Questions

LOOK UPWARD

- How does this story apply to your relationship with God?
- What does it teach you about Him- His will and His heart?
- What aspect of His character is He inviting you to experience and enjoy?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story in your relationship with God?
- What practical steps can you take to live out these truths in your relationship with God?

LOOK INWARD

- How does this story apply to your heart and your own spiritual growth?
- What does it teach you about yourself, your needs, or your goals in life?
- In what aspects of your personal life is God inviting you to grow and mature?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story inwardly?
- How will those around you benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to allow these truths to help you grow spiritually?

LOOK AROUND

- How does this story apply to your relationship with others?
- What does it teach you about how to see others and relate to them?
- What is god inviting you to do differently in your relationships?



Application Questions

LOOK OUTWARD

- How does this story apply to your ministry and mission in life- to your role in God's kingdom, in society, and in the world?
- What does it teach you about God's purposes for the world?
- What part of His mission is He inviting you to participate in?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story in your ministry?
- How will the world benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to live out these truths in the world?

LOOK FORWARD

- How does this story apply to your future, both in this age and in eternity?
- What does it teach you about God's plan for your life, now and forever?
- What aspects of eternity is God inviting you to participate in?
- How will you benefit in the future by applying these truths now?
- How will God's kingdom benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to impact eternity now with these truths?