

Name: _____

THE HARD WORD

THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

**GROWTH GROUP STUDIES
AND PERSONAL READING GUIDE**

VOLUME I



ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

The Studies

These studies are a little bit different to those previously written for Christ Church Gladesville. They are designed to be completed by your group **after you have heard the passage preached on a Sunday**. Each study consists of roughly six open ended questions for your group to discuss. It may help to think about these questions as “discussion starters” rather than a set of questions to answer one after another. You should allow about 30 to 40 minutes for this discussion.

The studies do not aim to guide your group in detailed exegesis of each passage. Rather, they aim to:

- help your group to revisit the exegesis that was presented in the Sunday sermon,
- help your group address remaining questions that you have about the passage
- provide your group with ample opportunity to consider possible applications of the passage

It is recommended that each group member listens to the relevant sermon before the group meeting. Members may also wish to listen to the corresponding episode of the Sermon Seasonings podcast.

Personal Reading Guide

To get the most out of studying Jeremiah, we have created a personal reading guide. If you follow this nine week guide, you will read the whole book and will keep up with the sermons and studies. The NIV text of Jeremiah has been included in this booklet thanks to the gospel generosity of the publishers, Biblica Inc. Please make use of these pages to highlight important words and make notes on the text. There is also a page for you to write notes or reflection on each reading.

Family Question

A Family Question has been provided the end of each study. Use this question to read and to discuss the Bible passage with your family.

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INTRODUCTION

The Story of Jeremiah

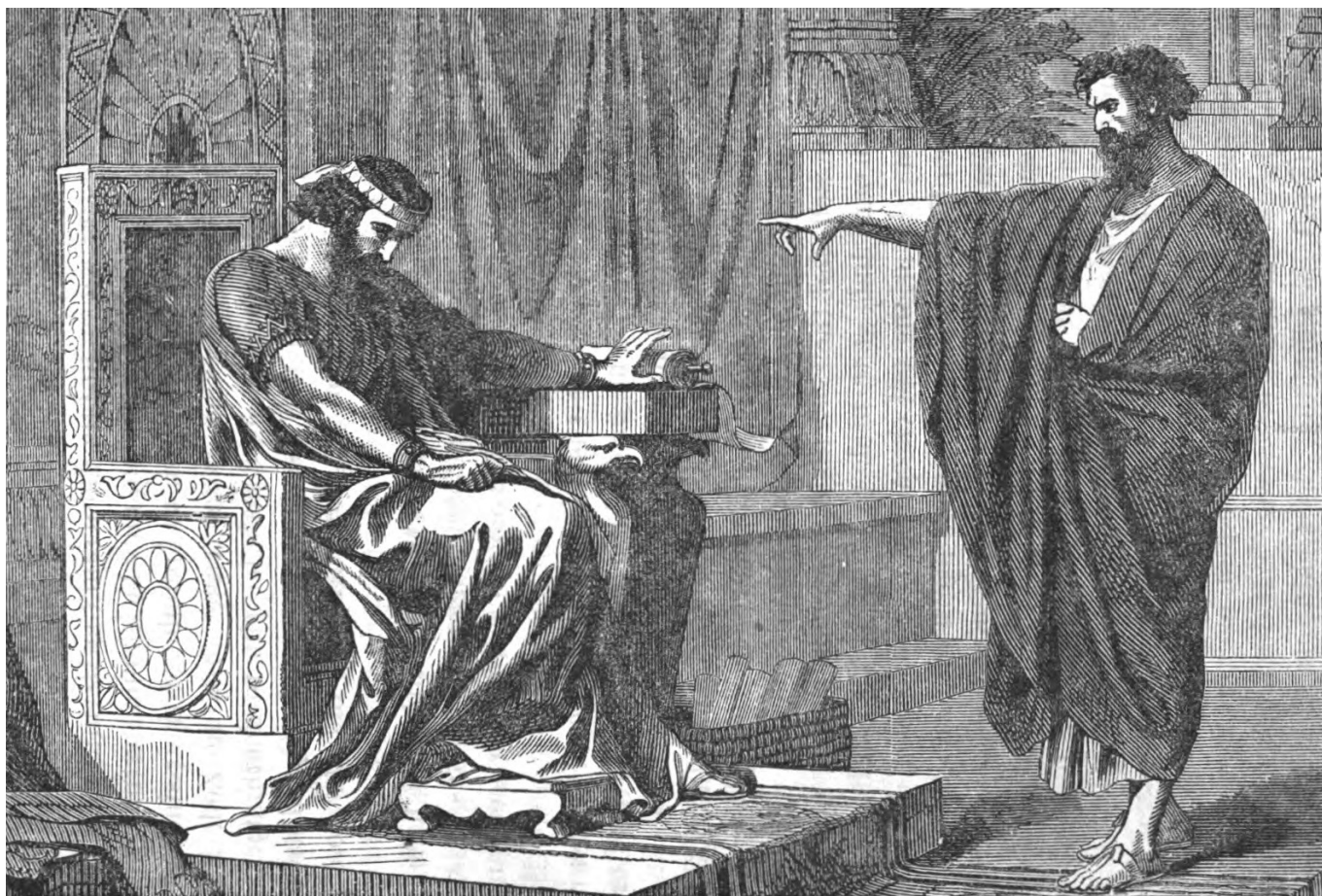
The word of God is the main character in Jeremiah. Throughout the book, God speaks to his people through his prophet Jeremiah, warning them about their coming judgement. God's word finally brings this judgement about. However, there is a twist: God promises that, through this judgement, he will create a hope-filled future for his people.

What is a Prophet?

Prophets were appointed by God. They were to speak God's words to leaders, the people and even other nations, giving:

- warnings and judgements
- messages of hope and deliverance
- commands and instructions
- advice and guidance

Often, prophets foretold what God would do in the future in light of what he had spoken in the past.



The Time of Jeremiah

The time period of Jeremiah's prophecies is given at the very beginning of the book.

¹ The words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiah, one of the priests at Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin. ² The word of the Lord came to him in the **thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah** son of Amon king of Judah, ³ and **through the reign of Jehoiakim** son of Josiah king of Judah, **down to the fifth month of the eleventh year of Zedekiah** son of Josiah king of Judah, when the people of Jerusalem went into exile. (Jeremiah 1:1-3)

a) The reign of Josiah:



Josiah's reign followed a particularly dark period of Israel's history. Judah was a vassal of the Assyrian empire, which had previously destroyed the northern kingdom. Josiah's grandfather, Manasseh had introduced and encouraged much evil in Judah including the recognition of Assyrian gods. Following his death, Amon was king for two years and followed in Manasseh's footsteps.

Josiah was eight years old when he became king. During the eighth year of his reign, he "began to seek the God of this father, David." (2 Chronicles 34:3). In his twelfth year, he brought about sweeping reforms including the removal of foreign worship practices, repairs to the temple and the re-establishment of worship only in Jerusalem. During these reforms, he found the "book of the law". Josiah was anti-Assyrian in policy and was killed in battle when he tried to prevent the Egyptian army from helping Assyria against the Babylonians.

b) The reign of Jehoiakim:

Following this, Judah became a vassal of Egypt. Josiah's son Jehoahaz was king for a brief time until he taken captive to Egypt. He was replaced by another of Josiah's sons, Jehoiakim. During this time, Jehoiakim reverses Josiah's reforms and reintroduces pagan idolatry and morality. Eventually, Egypt is defeated and Jehoiakim becomes a vassal king for Babylon. After several years, Jehoiakim rebelled against Babylon. Babylon responded by sending an army to Judah. Jehoiakim died (he was possibly assassinated) and his son Jehoiachin becomes king. However, he was soon taken captive to Babylon and his uncle Zedekiah was installed on the throne.

c) The reign of Zedekiah:

Zedekiah reigned in Judah for eleven years until the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC. Zedekiah "did evil in the eyes of the LORD, just as Jehoiakim had done" (2 Kings 24:19). Zedekiah rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Jerusalem was placed under siege and the walls eventually fell under the force of the Babylonian army. Zedekiah tried to escape, however he was captured. Nebuchadnezzar killed Zedekiah's two sons, gouged out his eyes and took him to Babylon as a prisoner.

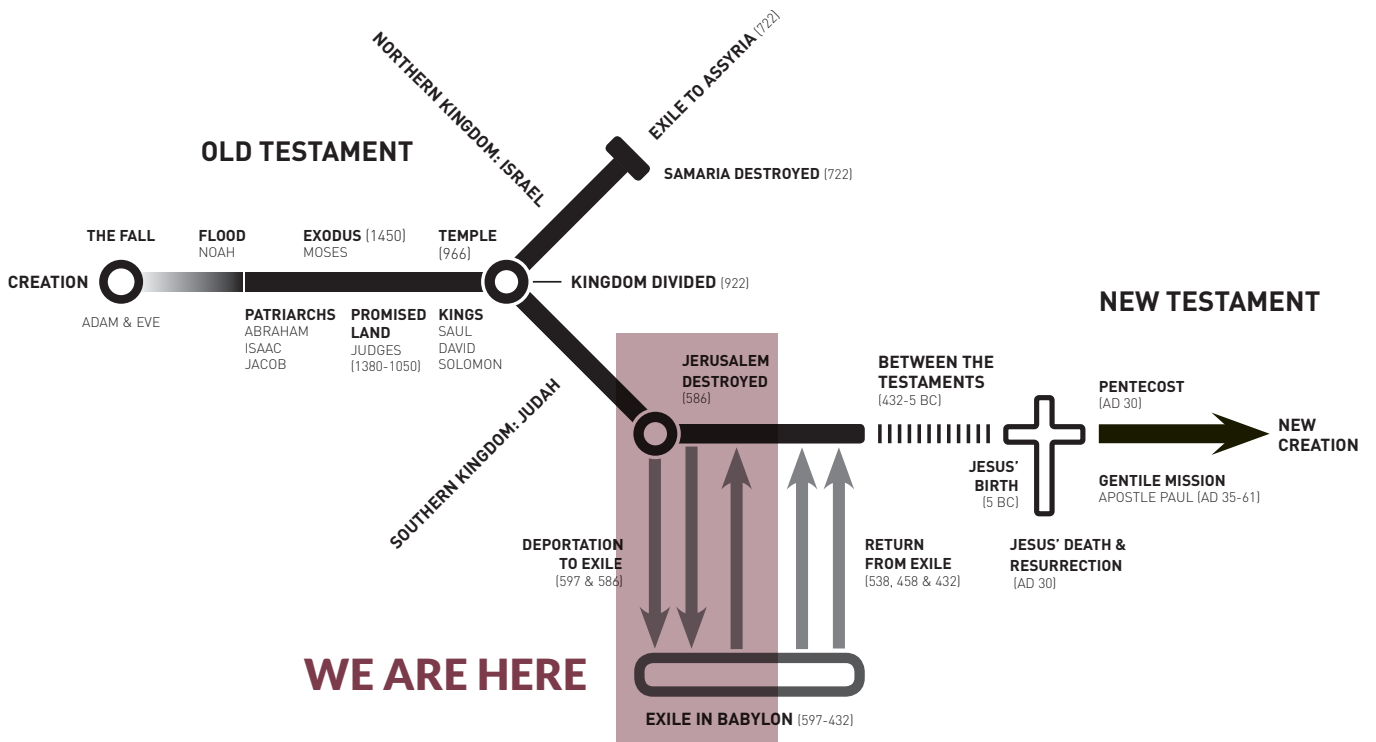


Josiah and his Descendants

Josiah 31 year reign (640-609 BC) "Did what was right in the eyes of the Lord"		
2. Jehoiakim (Eliakim) 11 year reign (609-598 BC) Killed by Babylonians	1. Jehoahaz (Shallum) 3 month reign (609) Exiled to Egypt	4. Zedekiah (Mattaniah) 11 year reign (797-587 BC) Sons killed, eyes gouged Died as prisoner in Babylon
3. Jehoiachin Son of Jehoiakim 3 month reign (597 BC) Exiled to Babylon (Line of David preserved)		

BIBLE TIMELINE

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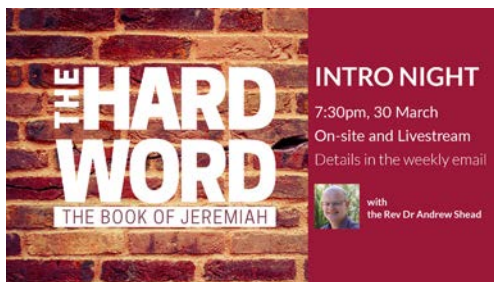


The Structure of Jeremiah

Jeremiah is notoriously famous for being extremely difficult to structure. However, Andrew Shead provides a helpful analysis of the book which takes into account the flow of the story. His structure is represented in the table below.

MOVEMENT 1: Chapters 1-24	MOVEMENT 2: Chapters 25-34	MOVEMENT 3: Chapters 35-44	MOVEMENT 4: Chapters 45-52
The word of the Lord announces Judah's destruction and its speaker is crushed	The word of the Lord vindicates its speaker and offers true hope to deaf hearers	The word of the Lord destroys the nation it created and plants the seeds of new life	The word of the Lord sends a tide of judgement across the world and draws a new nation from the wreckage

Recommended Resources



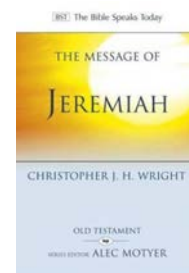
CCG Jeremiah Introduction Night

Available to watch at
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xp1Hxaqs6EI>



Sermon Seasonings Podcast

Available on Spotify and
Apple Podcasts



The Message of Jeremiah (The Bible Speaks Today)

Christopher Wright

**WEEK 1:
19TH TO 25TH APRIL**



2 KINGS 21

21 ¹ Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-five years. His mother's name was Hephzibah. ² He did evil in the eyes of the Lord, following the detestable practices of the nations the Lord had driven out before the Israelites. ³ He rebuilt the high places his father Hezekiah had destroyed; he also erected altars to Baal and made an Asherah pole, as Ahab king of Israel had done. He bowed down to all the starry hosts and worshiped them. ⁴ He built altars in the temple of the Lord, of which the Lord had said, "In Jerusalem I will put my Name." ⁵ In the two courts of the temple of the Lord, he built altars to all the starry hosts. ⁶ He sacrificed his own son in the fire, practiced divination, sought omens, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the eyes of the Lord, arousing his anger.

⁷ He took the carved Asherah pole he had made and put it in the temple, of which the Lord had said to David and to his son Solomon, "In this temple and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my Name forever. ⁸ I will not again make the feet of the Israelites wander from the land I gave their ancestors, if only they will be careful to do everything I commanded them and will keep the whole Law that my servant Moses gave them." ⁹ But the people did not listen. Manasseh led them astray, so that they did more evil than the nations the Lord had destroyed before the Israelites.

¹⁰ The Lord said through his servants the prophets: ¹¹ "Manasseh king of Judah has committed these detestable sins. He has done more evil than the Amorites who preceded him and has led Judah into sin with his idols. ¹² Therefore this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I am going to bring such disaster on Jerusalem and Judah that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle. ¹³ I will stretch out over Jerusalem the measuring line used against Samaria and the plumb line used against the house of Ahab. I will wipe out Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping

it and turning it upside down. ¹⁴ I will forsake the remnant of my inheritance and give them into the hands of enemies. They will be looted and plundered by all their enemies; ¹⁵ they have done evil in my eyes and have aroused my anger from the day their ancestors came out of Egypt until this day."

¹⁶ Moreover, Manasseh also shed so much innocent blood that he filled Jerusalem from end to end—besides the sin that he had caused Judah to commit, so that they did evil in the eyes of the Lord.

¹⁷ As for the other events of Manasseh's reign, and all he did, including the sin he committed, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? ¹⁸ Manasseh rested with his ancestors and was buried in his palace garden, the garden of Uzza. And Amon his son succeeded him as king.

¹⁹ Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem two years. His mother's name was Meshullemeth daughter of Haruz; she was from Jotbah. ²⁰ He did evil in the eyes of the Lord, as his father Manasseh had done. ²¹ He followed completely the ways of his father, worshiping the idols his father had worshiped, and bowing down to them. ²² He forsook the Lord, the God of his ancestors, and did not walk in obedience to him.

²³ Amon's officials conspired against him and assassinated the king in his palace. ²⁴ Then the people of the land killed all who had plotted against King Amon, and they made Josiah his son king in his place.

²⁵ As for the other events of Amon's reign, and what he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? ²⁶ He was buried in his tomb in the garden of Uzza. And Josiah his son succeeded him as king.

2 KINGS 22-23:30

22¹ Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years. His mother's name was Jedidah daughter of Adaiah; she was from Bozkath. ² He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and followed completely the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left.

³ In the eighteenth year of his reign, King Josiah sent the secretary, Shaphan son of Azaliah, the son of Meshullam, to the temple of the Lord. He said: ⁴ "Go up to Hilkiyah the high priest and have him get ready the money that has been brought into the temple of the Lord, which the doorkeepers have collected from the people. ⁵ Have them entrust it to the men appointed to supervise the work on the temple. And have these men pay the workers who repair the temple of the Lord— ⁶ the carpenters, the builders and the masons. Also have them purchase timber and dressed stone to repair the temple. ⁷ But they need not account for the money entrusted to them, because they are honest in their dealings."

⁸ Hilkiyah the high priest said to Shaphan the secretary, "I have found the Book of the Law in the temple of the Lord." He gave it to Shaphan, who read it. ⁹ Then Shaphan the secretary went to the king and reported to him: "Your officials have paid out the money that was in the temple of the Lord and have entrusted it to the workers and supervisors at the temple." ¹⁰ Then Shaphan the secretary informed the king, "Hilkiyah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read from it in the presence of the king.

¹¹ When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his robes. ¹² He gave these orders to Hilkiyah the priest, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Akbor son of Micaiah, Shaphan the secretary and Asaiah the king's attendant: ¹³ "Go and inquire of the Lord for me and for the people and for all Judah about what is written in this book that has been found. Great is the Lord's anger that burns against us because those who have gone before us have not obeyed the words of this book; they have not acted in accordance with all that is written there concerning us."

¹⁴ Hilkiyah the priest, Ahikam, Akbor, Shaphan and Asaiah went to speak to the prophet Huldah, who was the wife of Shallum son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe. She lived in Jerusalem, in the New Quarter.

¹⁵ She said to them, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Tell the man who sent you to me, ¹⁶ 'This is what the Lord says: I am going to bring disaster on this place and its people, according to everything written in the book the king of Judah has read. ¹⁷ Because they have forsaken me and burned incense to other gods and aroused my anger by all the idols their hands have made, my anger will burn against this place and will not be quenched.' ¹⁸ Tell the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the Lord, 'This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says concerning the words you heard: ¹⁹ Because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard what I have spoken against this place and its people—that they would become a curse and be laid waste—and because you tore your robes and wept in my presence, I also have heard you, declares the Lord. ²⁰ Therefore I will gather you to your ancestors, and you will be buried in peace. Your eyes will not see all the disaster I am going to bring on this place.'"

So they took her answer back to the king.

23¹ Then the king called together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. ² He went up to the temple of the Lord with the people of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests and the prophets—all the people from the least to the greatest. He read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant, which had been found in the temple of the Lord. ³ The king stood by the pillar and renewed the covenant in the presence of the Lord—to follow the Lord and keep his commands, statutes and decrees with all his heart and all his soul, thus confirming the words of the covenant written in this book. Then all the people pledged themselves to the covenant.

⁴ The king ordered Hilkiyah the high priest, the priests next in rank and the doorkeepers to remove from the temple of the Lord all the articles made for Baal and Asherah and all the starry hosts. He burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of the Kidron Valley and took the ashes to Bethel. ⁵ He did away with the idolatrous priests appointed by the kings of Judah to burn incense on the high places of the towns of Judah and on those around Jerusalem—those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun and moon, to the constellations and to all the starry hosts. ⁶ He took the Asherah pole from the temple of the Lord to the Kidron Valley outside Jerusalem and burned it

there. He ground it to powder and scattered the dust over the graves of the common people.⁷ He also tore down the quarters of the male shrine prostitutes that were in the temple of the Lord, the quarters where women did weaving for Asherah.

⁸ Josiah brought all the priests from the towns of Judah and desecrated the high places, from Geba to Beersheba, where the priests had burned incense. He broke down the gateway at the entrance of the Gate of Joshua, the city governor, which was on the left of the city gate.⁹ Although the priests of the high places did not serve at the altar of the Lord in Jerusalem, they ate unleavened bread with their fellow priests.

¹⁰ He desecrated Topheth, which was in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, so no one could use it to sacrifice their son or daughter in the fire to Molek.¹¹ He removed from the entrance to the temple of the Lord the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun. They were in the court near the room of an official named Nathan-Melek. Josiah then burned the chariots dedicated to the sun.

¹² He pulled down the altars the kings of Judah had erected on the roof near the upper room of Ahaz, and the altars Manasseh had built in the two courts of the temple of the Lord. He removed them from there, smashed them to pieces and threw the rubble into the Kidron Valley.¹³ The king also desecrated the high places that were east of Jerusalem on the south of the Hill of Corruption—the ones Solomon king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the vile goddess of the Sidonians, for Chemosh the vile god of Moab, and for Molek the detestable god of the people of Ammon.¹⁴ Josiah smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles and covered the sites with human bones.

¹⁵ Even the altar at Bethel, the high place made by Jeroboam son of Nebat, who had caused Israel to sin—even that altar and high place he demolished. He burned the high place and ground it to powder, and burned the Asherah pole also.¹⁶ Then Josiah looked around, and when he saw the tombs that were there on the hillside, he had the bones removed from them and burned on the altar to defile it, in accordance with the word of the Lord proclaimed by the man of God who foretold these things.

¹⁷ The king asked, “What is that tombstone I see?”

The people of the city said, “It marks the tomb of the man of God who came from Judah and pronounced against the altar of Bethel the very

things you have done to it.”

¹⁸ “Leave it alone,” he said. “Don’t let anyone disturb his bones.” So they spared his bones and those of the prophet who had come from Samaria.

¹⁹ Just as he had done at Bethel, Josiah removed all the shrines at the high places that the kings of Israel had built in the towns of Samaria and that had aroused the Lord’s anger.²⁰ Josiah slaughtered all the priests of those high places on the altars and burned human bones on them. Then he went back to Jerusalem.

²¹ The king gave this order to all the people: “Celebrate the Passover to the Lord your God, as it is written in this Book of the Covenant.”²² Neither in the days of the judges who led Israel nor in the days of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah had any such Passover been observed.²³ But in the eighteenth year of King Josiah, this Passover was celebrated to the Lord in Jerusalem.

²⁴ Furthermore, Josiah got rid of the mediums and spiritists, the household gods, the idols and all the other detestable things seen in Judah and Jerusalem. This he did to fulfill the requirements of the law written in the book that Hilkiah the priest had discovered in the temple of the Lord.²⁵ Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the Lord as he did—with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, in accordance with all the Law of Moses.

²⁶ Nevertheless, the Lord did not turn away from the heat of his fierce anger, which burned against Judah because of all that Manasseh had done to arouse his anger.²⁷ So the Lord said, “I will remove Judah from my presence as I removed Israel, and I will reject Jerusalem, the city I chose, and this temple, about which I said, ‘My Name shall be there.’”

²⁸ As for the other events of Josiah’s reign, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah?

²⁹ While Josiah was king, Pharaoh Necho king of Egypt went up to the Euphrates River to help the king of Assyria. King Josiah marched out to meet him in battle, but Necho faced him and killed him at Megiddo.³⁰ Josiah’s servants brought his body in a chariot from Megiddo to Jerusalem and buried him in his own tomb. And the people of the land took Jehoahaz son of Josiah and anointed him and made him king in place of his father.

2 KINGS 23:31-24:20

23 ³¹ Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. His mother's name was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah; she was from Libnah. ³² He did evil in the eyes of the Lord, just as his predecessors had done. ³³ Pharaoh Necho put him in chains at Riblah in the land of Hamath so that he might not reign in Jerusalem, and he imposed on Judah a levy of a hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold. ³⁴ Pharaoh Necho made Eliakim son of Josiah king in place of his father Josiah and changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim. But he took Jehoahaz and carried him off to Egypt, and there he died. ³⁵ Jehoiakim paid Pharaoh Necho the silver and gold he demanded. In order to do so, he taxed the land and exacted the silver and gold from the people of the land according to their assessments.

³⁶ Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. His mother's name was Zebidah daughter of Pedaiah; she was from Rumah. ³⁷ And he did evil in the eyes of the Lord, just as his predecessors had done.

24 ¹ During Jehoiakim's reign, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon invaded the land, and Jehoiakim became his vassal for three years. But then he turned against Nebuchadnezzar and rebelled. ² The Lord sent Babylonian, Aramean, Moabite and Ammonite raiders against him to destroy Judah, in accordance with the word of the Lord proclaimed by his servants the prophets. ³ Surely these things happened to Judah according to the Lord's command, in order to remove them from his presence because of the sins of Manasseh and all he had done, ⁴ including the shedding of innocent blood. For he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the Lord was not willing to forgive.

⁵ As for the other events of Jehoiakim's reign, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? ⁶ Jehoiakim rested with his ancestors. And Jehoiachin his son succeeded him as king.

⁷ The king of Egypt did not march out from his own country again, because the king of Babylon had taken all his territory, from the Wadi of Egypt to the Euphrates River.

⁸ Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. His mother's name was Nehushta daughter of Elnathan; she was from Jerusalem. ⁹ He did evil in the eyes of the Lord, just as his father had done.

¹⁰ At that time the officers of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon advanced on Jerusalem and laid siege to it, ¹¹ and Nebuchadnezzar himself came up to the city while his officers were besieging it. ¹² Jehoiachin king of Judah, his mother, his attendants, his nobles and his officials all surrendered to him.

In the eighth year of the reign of the king of Babylon, he took Jehoiachin prisoner. ¹³ As the Lord had declared, Nebuchadnezzar removed the treasures from the temple of the Lord and from the royal palace, and cut up the gold articles that Solomon king of Israel had made for the temple of the Lord. ¹⁴ He carried all Jerusalem into exile: all the officers and fighting men, and all the skilled workers and artisans—a total of ten thousand. Only the poorest people of the land were left.

¹⁵ Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin captive to Babylon. He also took from Jerusalem to Babylon the king's mother, his wives, his officials and the prominent people of the land. ¹⁶ The king of Babylon also deported to Babylon the entire force of seven thousand fighting men, strong and fit for war, and a thousand skilled workers and artisans. ¹⁷ He made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king in his place and changed his name to Zedekiah.

¹⁸ Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. His mother's name was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah; she was from Libnah. ¹⁹ He did evil in the eyes of the Lord, just as Jehoiakim had done.

²⁰ It was because of the Lord's anger that all this happened to Jerusalem and Judah, and in the end he thrust them from his presence.

Now Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

Week 1 | Reading 4

2 KINGS 25

25 ¹ So in the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, on the tenth day of the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon marched against Jerusalem with his whole army. He encamped outside the city and built siege works all around it. ² The city was kept under siege until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah.

³ By the ninth day of the fourth month the famine in the city had become so severe that there was no food for the people to eat. ⁴ Then the city wall was broken through, and the whole army fled at night through the gate between the two walls near the king's garden, though the Babylonians were surrounding the city. They fled toward the Arabah, ⁵ but the Babylonian army pursued the king and overtook him in the plains of Jericho. All his soldiers were separated from him and scattered, ⁶ and he was captured.

He was taken to the king of Babylon at Riblah, where sentence was pronounced on him. ⁷ They killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes. Then they put out his eyes, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon.

⁸ On the seventh day of the fifth month, in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard, an official of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. ⁹ He set fire to the temple of the Lord, the royal palace and all the houses of Jerusalem. Every important building he burned down. ¹⁰ The whole Babylonian army under the commander of the imperial guard broke down the walls around Jerusalem. ¹¹ Nebuzaradan the commander of the guard carried into exile the people who remained in the city, along with the rest of the populace and those who had deserted to the king of Babylon. ¹² But the commander left behind some of the poorest people of the land to work the vineyards and fields.

¹³ The Babylonians broke up the bronze pillars, the movable stands and the bronze Sea that were at the temple of the Lord and they carried the bronze to Babylon. ¹⁴ They also took away the pots, shovels, wick trimmers, dishes and all the bronze articles used in the temple service. ¹⁵ The commander of the imperial guard took away the censers and sprinkling bowls—all that were made of pure gold or silver.

¹⁶ The bronze from the two pillars, the Sea and the movable stands, which Solomon had made for

the temple of the Lord, was more than could be weighed. ¹⁷ Each pillar was eighteen cubits high. The bronze capital on top of one pillar was three cubits high and was decorated with a network and pomegranates of bronze all around. The other pillar, with its network, was similar.

¹⁸ The commander of the guard took as prisoners Seraiah the chief priest, Zephaniah the priest next in rank and the three doorkeepers. ¹⁹ Of those still in the city, he took the officer in charge of the fighting men, and five royal advisers. He also took the secretary who was chief officer in charge of conscripting the people of the land and sixty of the conscripts who were found in the city. ²⁰ Nebuzaradan the commander took them all and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah. ²¹ There at Riblah, in the land of Hamath, the king had them executed.

So Judah went into captivity, away from her land.

²² Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, to be over the people he had left behind in Judah. ²³ When all the army officers and their men heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah as governor, they came to Gedaliah at Mizpah—Ishmael son of Nethaniah, Johanan son of Kareah, Seraiah son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, Jaazaniah the son of the Maakathite, and their men. ²⁴ Gedaliah took an oath to reassure them and their men. "Do not be afraid of the Babylonian officials," he said. "Settle down in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it will go well with you."

²⁵ In the seventh month, however, Ishmael son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, who was of royal blood, came with ten men and assassinated Gedaliah and also the men of Judah and the Babylonians who were with him at Mizpah. ²⁶ At this, all the people from the least to the greatest, together with the army officers, fled to Egypt for fear of the Babylonians.

²⁷ In the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the year Awel-Marduk became king of Babylon, he released Jehoiachin king of Judah from prison. He did this on the twenty-seventh day of the twelfth month. ²⁸ He spoke kindly to him and gave him a seat of honor higher than those of the other kings who were with him in Babylon. ²⁹ So Jehoiachin put aside his prison clothes and for the rest of his life ate regularly at the king's table. ³⁰ Day by day the king gave Jehoiachin a regular allowance as long as he lived.

JEREMIAH 1

¹ The words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiah, one of the priests at Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin. ² The word of the Lord came to him in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah son of Amon king of Judah, ³ and through the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, down to the fifth month of the eleventh year of Zedekiah son of Josiah king of Judah, when the people of Jerusalem went into exile.

⁴ The word of the Lord came to me, saying,

⁵ “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

⁶ “Alas, Sovereign Lord,” I said, “I do not know how to speak; I am too young.”

⁷ But the Lord said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am too young.’ You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. ⁸ Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,” declares the Lord.

⁹ Then the Lord reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, “I have put my words in your mouth. ¹⁰ See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant.”

¹¹ The word of the Lord came to me: “What do you see, Jeremiah?”

“I see the branch of an almond tree,” I replied.

¹² The Lord said to me, “You have seen correctly, for I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled.”

¹³ The word of the Lord came to me again: “What do you see?”

“I see a pot that is boiling,” I answered. “It is tilting toward us from the north.”

¹⁴ The Lord said to me, “From the north disaster will be poured out on all who live in the land. ¹⁵ I am about to summon all the peoples of the northern kingdoms,” declares the Lord.

“Their kings will come and set up their thrones in the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem; they will come against all her surrounding walls and against all the towns of Judah.

¹⁶ I will pronounce my judgments on my people because of their wickedness in forsaking me, in burning incense to other gods

and in worshiping what their hands have made.

¹⁷ “Get yourself ready! Stand up and say to them whatever I command you. Do not be terrified by them, or I will terrify you before them. ¹⁸ Today I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall to stand against the whole land—against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests and the people of the land. ¹⁹ They will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you,” declares the Lord.

Study One | Jeremiah 1

THE CHOSEN ONE

What was your first job? How did you feel before your first day?

Read Jeremiah 1:1-19

- 1.** Look over the whole passage. How would you break it up into sections? What led you to break it up this way?
- 2.** List all the things that God does in this chapter. What does this show us about God and his activity in the book of Jeremiah?
- 3.** What do we learn about Jeremiah's job description? What does this lead us to expect for the rest of the book?
- 4.** Look at verses 17-19. How would these words from God both challenge and encourage Jeremiah?
- 5.** What are the ways in which Jeremiah's job description foreshadows the ministry of Jesus?
- 6.** How do verses 17-19 challenge and encourage you as you share God's gospel message today?

Glossary:

Josiah: The 17th king of Judah. Son of Amon and grandson of Manasseh. Reigned for 31 years (640-609 BC). Carried out a great religious reform in Judah, returning the nation to God's law.

Jehoiakim: Son of Josiah who reigned 11 years (609-598 BC). He was an oppressive ruler and reintroduced the pagan practices that his father had removed. He opposed Jeremiah and burned the scroll containing his words (Jer 36).

Zedekiah: The 21st and final king of Judah. He was placed on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar and reigned 11 years (597-587 BC). He eventually rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, which led to the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile to Babylon.

FAMILY QUESTION:

Read Jeremiah 1:17-19

What are the ways in which Jeremiah's job is similar to the ministry of Jesus?

**WEEK 2:
26TH APRIL TO 2ND MAY**



Week 2 | Reading 1

JEREMIAH 2-3

2¹ The word of the Lord came to me: 2² “Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem:

“This is what the Lord says:

“I remember the devotion of your youth,
how as a bride you loved me
and followed me through the wilderness,
through a land not sown.

³ Israel was holy to the Lord,
the firstfruits of his harvest;
all who devoured her were held guilty,
and disaster overtook them;”

declares the Lord.

⁴ Hear the word of the Lord, you descendants of Jacob,

all you clans of Israel.

⁵ This is what the Lord says:

“What fault did your ancestors find in me,
that they strayed so far from me?

They followed worthless idols
and became worthless themselves.

⁶ They did not ask, ‘Where is the Lord,
who brought us up out of Egypt
and led us through the barren wilderness,
through a land of deserts and ravines,
a land of drought and utter darkness,
a land where no one travels and no one lives?’

⁷ I brought you into a fertile land
to eat its fruit and rich produce.

But you came and defiled my land
and made my inheritance detestable.

⁸ The priests did not ask,
‘Where is the Lord?’

Those who deal with the law did not know me;

the leaders rebelled against me.

The prophets prophesied by Baal,
following worthless idols.

⁹ “Therefore I bring charges against you again,”
declares the Lord.

“And I will bring charges against your children’s
children.

¹⁰ Cross over to the coasts of Cyprus and look,
send to Kedar and observe closely;
see if there has ever been anything like this:

¹¹ Has a nation ever changed its gods?
(Yet they are not gods at all.)

But my people have exchanged their glorious God
for worthless idols.

¹² Be appalled at this, you heavens,
and shudder with great horror;”

declares the Lord.

¹³ “My people have committed two sins:

They have forsaken me,
the spring of living water,
and have dug their own cisterns,
broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

¹⁴ Is Israel a servant, a slave by birth?
Why then has he become plunder?

¹⁵ Lions have roared;
they have growled at him.

They have laid waste his land;
his towns are burned and deserted.

¹⁶ Also, the men of Memphis and Tahpanhes
have cracked your skull.

¹⁷ Have you not brought this on yourselves
by forsaking the Lord your God
when he led you in the way?

¹⁸ Now why go to Egypt
to drink water from the Nile?
And why go to Assyria
to drink water from the Euphrates?
¹⁹ Your wickedness will punish you;
your backsliding will rebuke you.
Consider then and realize
how evil and bitter it is for you
when you forsake the Lord your God
and have no awe of me,”
declares the Lord, the Lord Almighty.
²⁰ “Long ago you broke off your yoke
and tore off your bonds;
you said, ‘I will not serve you!’
Indeed, on every high hill
and under every spreading tree
you lay down as a prostitute.
²¹ I had planted you like a choice vine
of sound and reliable stock.
How then did you turn against me
into a corrupt, wild vine?
²² Although you wash yourself with soap
and use an abundance of cleansing powder,
the stain of your guilt is still before me,”
declares the Sovereign Lord.
²³ “How can you say, ‘I am not defiled;
I have not run after the Baals’?
See how you behaved in the valley;
consider what you have done.
You are a swift she-camel
running here and there,
²⁴ a wild donkey accustomed to the desert,
sniffing the wind in her craving—
in her heat who can restrain her?

Any males that pursue her need not tire themselves;
at mating time they will find her.
²⁵ Do not run until your feet are bare
and your throat is dry.
But you said, ‘It’s no use!
I love foreign gods,
and I must go after them.’
²⁶ “As a thief is disgraced when he is caught,
so the people of Israel are disgraced—
they, their kings and their officials,
their priests and their prophets.
²⁷ They say to wood, ‘You are my father,’
and to stone, ‘You gave me birth.’
They have turned their backs to me
and not their faces;
yet when they are in trouble, they say,
‘Come and save us!’
²⁸ Where then are the gods you made for yourselves?
Let them come if they can save you
when you are in trouble!
For you, Judah, have as many gods
as you have towns.
²⁹ “Why do you bring charges against me?
You have all rebelled against me,”
declares the Lord.
³⁰ “In vain I punished your people;
they did not respond to correction.
Your sword has devoured your prophets
like a ravenous lion.
³¹ “You of this generation, consider the word of the Lord:
“Have I been a desert to Israel
or a land of great darkness?
Why do my people say, ‘We are free to roam;

we will come to you no more'?

³² Does a young woman forget her jewelry,
a bride her wedding ornaments?
Yet my people have forgotten me,
days without number.

³³ How skilled you are at pursuing love!
Even the worst of women can learn from your
ways.

³⁴ On your clothes is found
the lifeblood of the innocent poor,
though you did not catch them breaking in.
Yet in spite of all this

³⁵ you say, 'I am innocent;
he is not angry with me.'
But I will pass judgment on you
because you say, 'I have not sinned.'

³⁶ Why do you go about so much,
changing your ways?
You will be disappointed by Egypt
as you were by Assyria.

³⁷ You will also leave that place
with your hands on your head,
for the Lord has rejected those you trust;
you will not be helped by them.

3 ¹ "If a man divorces his wife
and she leaves him and marries another man,
should he return to her again?
Would not the land be completely defiled?
But you have lived as a prostitute with many
lovers—
would you now return to me?"
declares the Lord.

² "Look up to the barren heights and see.
Is there any place where you have not been
ravished?
By the roadside you sat waiting for lovers,

sat like a nomad in the desert.
You have defiled the land
with your prostitution and wickedness.

³ Therefore the showers have been withheld,
and no spring rains have fallen.
Yet you have the brazen look of a prostitute;
you refuse to blush with shame.

⁴ Have you not just called to me:
'My Father, my friend from my youth,
⁵ will you always be angry?
Will your wrath continue forever?'
This is how you talk,
but you do all the evil you can."

⁶ During the reign of King Josiah, the Lord said
to me, "Have you seen what faithless Israel has
done? She has gone up on every high hill and un-
der every spreading tree and has committed adul-
tery there. ⁷ I thought that after she had done all
this she would return to me but she did not, and
her unfaithful sister Judah saw it. ⁸ I gave faithless
Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away
because of all her adulteries. Yet I saw that her
unfaithful sister Judah had no fear; she also went
out and committed adultery. ⁹ Because Israel's
immorality mattered so little to her, she defiled
the land and committed adultery with stone and
wood. ¹⁰ In spite of all this, her unfaithful sister
Judah did not return to me with all her heart, but
only in pretense," declares the Lord.

¹¹ The Lord said to me, "Faithless Israel is more
righteous than unfaithful Judah. ¹² Go, proclaim
this message toward the north:
"Return, faithless Israel,' declares the Lord,
'I will frown on you no longer,
for I am faithful,' declares the Lord,
'I will not be angry forever.

¹³ Only acknowledge your guilt—
you have rebelled against the Lord your God,
you have scattered your favors to foreign gods
under every spreading tree,
and have not obeyed me,'"
declares the Lord.

¹⁴ “Return, faithless people,” declares the Lord, “for I am your husband. I will choose you—one from a town and two from a clan—and bring you to Zion. ¹⁵ Then I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding. ¹⁶ In those days, when your numbers have increased greatly in the land,” declares the Lord, “people will no longer say, ‘The ark of the covenant of the Lord.’ It will never enter their minds or be remembered; it will not be missed, nor will another one be made. ¹⁷ At that time they will call Jerusalem The Throne of the Lord, and all nations will gather in Jerusalem to honor the name of the Lord. No longer will they follow the stubbornness of their evil hearts. ¹⁸ In those days the people of Judah will join the people of Israel, and together they will come from a northern land to the land I gave your ancestors as an inheritance.

¹⁹ “I myself said,
“How gladly would I treat you like my children
and give you a pleasant land,
the most beautiful inheritance of any nation.’

I thought you would call me ‘Father’
and not turn away from following me.

²⁰ But like a woman unfaithful to her husband,
so you, Israel, have been unfaithful to me,”
declares the Lord.

²¹ A cry is heard on the barren heights,
the weeping and pleading of the people of
Israel,
because they have perverted their ways
and have forgotten the Lord their God.

²² “Return, faithless people;
I will cure you of backsliding.”

“Yes, we will come to you,
for you are the Lord our God.

²³ Surely the idolatrous commotion on the hills
and mountains is a deception;
surely in the Lord our God
is the salvation of Israel.

²⁴ From our youth shameful gods have consumed
the fruits of our ancestors’ labor—
their flocks and herds,
their sons and daughters.

²⁵ Let us lie down in our shame,
and let our disgrace cover us.
We have sinned against the Lord our God,
both we and our ancestors;
from our youth till this day
we have not obeyed the Lord our God.”

JEREMIAH 4-5

4¹ “If you, Israel, will return,
then return to me,”

declares the Lord.

“If you put your detestable idols out of my sight
and no longer go astray,

² and if in a truthful, just and righteous way
you swear, ‘As surely as the Lord lives,’

then the nations will invoke blessings by him
and in him they will boast.”

³ This is what the Lord says to the people of Judah and to Jerusalem:

“Break up your unplowed ground
and do not sow among thorns.

⁴ Circumcise yourselves to the Lord,
circumcise your hearts,
you people of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem,

or my wrath will flare up and burn like fire
because of the evil you have done—
burn with no one to quench it.

⁵ “Announce in Judah and proclaim in Jerusalem
and say:

‘Sound the trumpet throughout the land!’
Cry aloud and say:

‘Gather together!
Let us flee to the fortified cities!’

⁶ Raise the signal to go to Zion!
Flee for safety without delay!

For I am bringing disaster from the north,
even terrible destruction.”

⁷ A lion has come out of his lair;
a destroyer of nations has set out.

He has left his place
to lay waste your land.

Your towns will lie in ruins
without inhabitant.

⁸ So put on sackcloth,
lament and wail,
for the fierce anger of the Lord
has not turned away from us.

⁹ “In that day,” declares the Lord,
“the king and the officials will lose heart,
the priests will be horrified,
and the prophets will be appalled.”

¹⁰ Then I said, “Alas, Sovereign Lord! How completely you have deceived this people and Jerusalem by saying, ‘You will have peace,’ when the sword is at our throats!”

¹¹ At that time this people and Jerusalem will be told, “A scorching wind from the barren heights in the desert blows toward my people, but not to winnow or cleanse; ¹² a wind too strong for that comes from me. Now I pronounce my judgments against them.”

¹³ Look! He advances like the clouds,
his chariots come like a whirlwind,
his horses are swifter than eagles.

Woe to us! We are ruined!

¹⁴ Jerusalem, wash the evil from your heart and be saved.

How long will you harbor wicked thoughts?

¹⁵ A voice is announcing from Dan,
proclaiming disaster from the hills of Ephraim.

¹⁶ “Tell this to the nations,
proclaim concerning Jerusalem:

‘A besieging army is coming from a distant land,
raising a war cry against the cities of Judah.

¹⁷ They surround her like men guarding a field,
because she has rebelled against me,”

declares the Lord.

¹⁸ “Your own conduct and actions
have brought this on you.
This is your punishment.
How bitter it is!
How it pierces to the heart!”
¹⁹ Oh, my anguish, my anguish!
I writhe in pain.
Oh, the agony of my heart!
My heart pounds within me,
I cannot keep silent.
For I have heard the sound of the trumpet;
I have heard the battle cry.
²⁰ Disaster follows disaster;
the whole land lies in ruins.
In an instant my tents are destroyed,
my shelter in a moment.
²¹ How long must I see the battle standard
and hear the sound of the trumpet?
²² “My people are fools;
they do not know me.
They are senseless children;
they have no understanding.
They are skilled in doing evil;
they know not how to do good.”
²³ I looked at the earth,
and it was formless and empty;
and at the heavens,
and their light was gone.
²⁴ I looked at the mountains,
and they were quaking;
all the hills were swaying.
²⁵ I looked, and there were no people;
every bird in the sky had flown away.
²⁶ I looked, and the fruitful land was a desert;
all its towns lay in ruins

before the Lord, before his fierce anger.
²⁷ This is what the Lord says:
“The whole land will be ruined,
though I will not destroy it completely.
²⁸ Therefore the earth will mourn
and the heavens above grow dark,
because I have spoken and will not relent,
I have decided and will not turn back.”
²⁹ At the sound of horsemen and archers
every town takes to flight.
Some go into the thickets;
some climb up among the rocks.
All the towns are deserted;
no one lives in them.
³⁰ What are you doing, you devastated one?
Why dress yourself in scarlet
and put on jewels of gold?
Why highlight your eyes with makeup?
You adorn yourself in vain.
Your lovers despise you;
they want to kill you.
³¹ I hear a cry as of a woman in labor,
a groan as of one bearing her first child—
the cry of Daughter Zion gasping for breath,
stretching out her hands and saying,
“Alas! I am fainting;
my life is given over to murderers.”
⁵ ¹ “Go up and down the streets of Jerusalem,
look around and consider,
search through her squares.
If you can find but one person
who deals honestly and seeks the truth,
I will forgive this city.
² Although they say, ‘As surely as the Lord lives,’
still they are swearing falsely.”

³ Lord, do not your eyes look for truth?
You struck them, but they felt no pain;
you crushed them, but they refused correction.
They made their faces harder than stone
and refused to repent.

⁴ I thought, "These are only the poor;
they are foolish,
for they do not know the way of the Lord,
the requirements of their God.

⁵ So I will go to the leaders
and speak to them;
surely they know the way of the Lord,
the requirements of their God."

But with one accord they too had broken off the
yoke
and torn off the bonds.

⁶ Therefore a lion from the forest will attack them,
a wolf from the desert will ravage them,
a leopard will lie in wait near their towns
to tear to pieces any who venture out,
for their rebellion is great
and their backslidings many.

⁷ "Why should I forgive you?
Your children have forsaken me
and sworn by gods that are not gods.
I supplied all their needs,
yet they committed adultery
and thronged to the houses of prostitutes.

⁸ They are well-fed, lusty stallions,
each neighing for another man's wife.

⁹ Should I not punish them for this?"
declares the Lord.

"Should I not avenge myself
on such a nation as this?

¹⁰ "Go through her vineyards and ravage them,

but do not destroy them completely.
Strip off her branches,
for these people do not belong to the Lord.

¹¹ The people of Israel and the people of Judah
have been utterly unfaithful to me,"
declares the Lord.

¹² They have lied about the Lord;
they said, "He will do nothing!
No harm will come to us;
we will never see sword or famine.

¹³ The prophets are but wind
and the word is not in them;
so let what they say be done to them."

¹⁴ Therefore this is what the Lord God Almighty
says:

"Because the people have spoken these words,
I will make my words in your mouth a fire
and these people the wood it consumes.

¹⁵ People of Israel," declares the Lord,
"I am bringing a distant nation against you—
an ancient and enduring nation,
a people whose language you do not know,
whose speech you do not understand.

¹⁶ Their quivers are like an open grave;
all of them are mighty warriors.

¹⁷ They will devour your harvests and food,
devour your sons and daughters;
they will devour your flocks and herds,
devour your vines and fig trees.

With the sword they will destroy
the fortified cities in which you trust.

¹⁸ "Yet even in those days," declares the Lord, "I
will not destroy you completely. ¹⁹ And when the
people ask, 'Why has the Lord our God done all
this to us?' you will tell them, 'As you have forsaken
me and served foreign gods in your own land,
so now you will serve foreigners in a land not
your own.'

²⁰ “Announce this to the descendants of Jacob
and proclaim it in Judah:
²¹ Hear this, you foolish and senseless people,
who have eyes but do not see,
who have ears but do not hear:
²² Should you not fear me?” declares the Lord.
“Should you not tremble in my presence?
I made the sand a boundary for the sea,
an everlasting barrier it cannot cross.
The waves may roll, but they cannot prevail;
they may roar, but they cannot cross it.
²³ But these people have stubborn and rebellious
hearts;
they have turned aside and gone away.
²⁴ They do not say to themselves,
‘Let us fear the Lord our God,
who gives autumn and spring rains in season,
who assures us of the regular weeks of harvest.’
²⁵ Your wrongdoings have kept these away;
your sins have deprived you of good.
²⁶ “Among my people are the wicked
who lie in wait like men who snare birds
and like those who set traps to catch people.

²⁷ Like cages full of birds,
their houses are full of deceit;
they have become rich and powerful
²⁸ and have grown fat and sleek.
Their evil deeds have no limit;
they do not seek justice.
They do not promote the case of the fatherless;
they do not defend the just cause of the poor.
²⁹ Should I not punish them for this?”
declares the Lord.
“Should I not avenge myself
on such a nation as this?
³⁰ “A horrible and shocking thing
has happened in the land:
³¹ The prophets prophesy lies,
the priests rule by their own authority,
and my people love it this way.
But what will you do in the end?

Week 2 | Reading 3

JEREMIAH 6

6¹ “Flee for safety, people of Benjamin!

Flee from Jerusalem!

Sound the trumpet in Tekoa!

Raise the signal over Beth Hakkerem!

For disaster looms out of the north,

even terrible destruction.

² I will destroy Daughter Zion,

so beautiful and delicate.

³ Shepherds with their flocks will come against her;

they will pitch their tents around her,

each tending his own portion.”

⁴ “Prepare for battle against her!

Arise, let us attack at noon!

But, alas, the daylight is fading,

and the shadows of evening grow long.

⁵ So arise, let us attack at night

and destroy her fortresses!”

⁶ This is what the Lord Almighty says:

“Cut down the trees

and build siege ramps against Jerusalem.

This city must be punished;

it is filled with oppression.

⁷ As a well pours out its water,

so she pours out her wickedness.

Violence and destruction resound in her;

her sickness and wounds are ever before me.

⁸ Take warning, Jerusalem,

or I will turn away from you

and make your land desolate

so no one can live in it.”

⁹ This is what the Lord Almighty says:

“Let them glean the remnant of Israel

as thoroughly as a vine;

pass your hand over the branches again,

like one gathering grapes.”

¹⁰ To whom can I speak and give warning?

Who will listen to me?

Their ears are closed

so they cannot hear.

The word of the Lord is offensive to them;

they find no pleasure in it.

¹¹ But I am full of the wrath of the Lord,

and I cannot hold it in.

“Pour it out on the children in the street

and on the young men gathered together;

both husband and wife will be caught in it,

and the old, those weighed down with years.

¹² Their houses will be turned over to others,

together with their fields and their wives,

when I stretch out my hand

against those who live in the land,”

declares the Lord.

¹³ “From the least to the greatest,

all are greedy for gain;

prophets and priests alike,

all practice deceit.

¹⁴ They dress the wound of my people

as though it were not serious.

‘Peace, peace,’ they say,

when there is no peace.

¹⁵ Are they ashamed of their detestable conduct?

No, they have no shame at all;

they do not even know how to blush.

So they will fall among the fallen;

they will be brought down when I punish them,”
says the Lord.

¹⁶ This is what the Lord says:

“Stand at the crossroads and look;

ask for the ancient paths,

ask where the good way is, and walk in it,

and you will find rest for your souls.

But you said, ‘We will not walk in it.’

¹⁷ I appointed watchmen over you and said,

‘Listen to the sound of the trumpet!’

But you said, ‘We will not listen.’

¹⁸ Therefore hear, you nations;

you who are witnesses,

observe what will happen to them.

¹⁹ Hear, you earth:

I am bringing disaster on this people,

the fruit of their schemes,

because they have not listened to my words

and have rejected my law.

²⁰ What do I care about incense from Sheba

or sweet calamus from a distant land?

Your burnt offerings are not acceptable;

your sacrifices do not please me.”

²¹ Therefore this is what the Lord says:

“I will put obstacles before this people.

Parents and children alike will stumble over
them;

neighbors and friends will perish.”

²² This is what the Lord says:

“Look, an army is coming

from the land of the north;

a great nation is being stirred up

from the ends of the earth.

²³ They are armed with bow and spear;

they are cruel and show no mercy.

They sound like the roaring sea

as they ride on their horses;

they come like men in battle formation

to attack you, Daughter Zion.”

²⁴ We have heard reports about them,

and our hands hang limp.

Anguish has gripped us,

pain like that of a woman in labor.

²⁵ Do not go out to the fields

or walk on the roads,

for the enemy has a sword,

and there is terror on every side.

²⁶ Put on sackcloth, my people,

and roll in ashes;

mourn with bitter wailing

as for an only son,

for suddenly the destroyer

will come upon us.

²⁷ “I have made you a tester of metals

and my people the ore,

that you may observe

and test their ways.

²⁸ They are all hardened rebels,

going about to slander.

They are bronze and iron;

they all act corruptly.

²⁹ The bellows blow fiercely

to burn away the lead with fire,

but the refining goes on in vain;

the wicked are not purged out.

³⁰ They are called rejected silver,

because the Lord has rejected them.”

JEREMIAH 7-8

7 ¹ This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: ² “Stand at the gate of the Lord’s house and there proclaim this message:

“Hear the word of the Lord, all you people of Judah who come through these gates to worship the Lord. ³ This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place. ⁴ Do not trust in deceptive words and say, “This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord!” ⁵ If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, ⁶ if you do not oppress the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm, ⁷ then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your ancestors for ever and ever. ⁸ But look, you are trusting in deceptive words that are worthless.

⁹ “Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known, ¹⁰ and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name, and say, “We are safe”—safe to do all these detestable things? ¹¹ Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the Lord.

¹² “Go now to the place in Shiloh where I first made a dwelling for my Name, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of my people Israel. ¹³ While you were doing all these things, declares the Lord, I spoke to you again and again, but you did not listen; I called you, but you did not answer. ¹⁴ Therefore, what I did to Shiloh I will now do to the house that bears my Name, the temple you trust in, the place I gave to you and your ancestors. ¹⁵ I will thrust you from my presence, just as I did all your fellow Israelites, the people of Ephraim.’

¹⁶ “So do not pray for this people nor offer any plea or petition for them; do not plead with me, for I will not listen to you. ¹⁷ Do you not see what they are doing in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? ¹⁸ The children gather wood, the fathers light the fire, and the women knead the dough and make cakes to offer to the Queen of Heaven. They pour out drink offerings to other gods to arouse my anger. ¹⁹ But am I the one they are provoking? declares the Lord. Are they not rather harming themselves, to their own shame?

²⁰ “Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: My anger and my wrath will be poured out on this place—on man and beast, on the trees of the field and on the crops of your land—and it will burn and not be quenched.

²¹ “This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Go ahead, add your burnt offerings to your other sacrifices and eat the meat yourselves!

²² For when I brought your ancestors out of Egypt and spoke to them, I did not just give them commands about burnt offerings and sacrifices, ²³ but I gave them this command: Obey me, and I will be your God and you will be my people. Walk in obedience to all I command you, that it may go well with you. ²⁴ But they did not listen or pay attention; instead, they followed the stubborn inclinations of their evil hearts. They went backward and not forward. ²⁵ From the time your ancestors left Egypt until now, day after day, again and again I sent you my servants the prophets. ²⁶ But they did not listen to me or pay attention. They were stiff-necked and did more evil than their ancestors.’

²⁷ “When you tell them all this, they will not listen to you; when you call to them, they will not answer. ²⁸ Therefore say to them, ‘This is the nation that has not obeyed the Lord its God or responded to correction. Truth has perished; it has vanished from their lips.

²⁹ “Cut off your hair and throw it away; take up a lament on the barren heights, for the Lord has rejected and abandoned this generation that is under his wrath.

³⁰ “The people of Judah have done evil in my eyes, declares the Lord. They have set up their detestable idols in the house that bears my Name and have defiled it. ³¹ They have built the high places of Topheth in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to burn their sons and daughters in the fire—something I did not command, nor did it enter my mind. ³² So beware, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when people will no longer call it Topheth or the Valley of Ben Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter, for they will bury the dead in Topheth until there is no more room. ³³ Then the carcasses of this people will become food for the birds and the wild animals, and there will be no one to frighten them away. ³⁴ I will bring an end to the sounds of joy and gladness and to the voices of bride and bridegroom in the towns of

Judah and the streets of Jerusalem, for the land will become desolate.

8 ¹ “At that time, declares the Lord, the bones of the kings and officials of Judah, the bones of the priests and prophets, and the bones of the people of Jerusalem will be removed from their graves.

² They will be exposed to the sun and the moon and all the stars of the heavens, which they have loved and served and which they have followed and consulted and worshiped. They will not be gathered up or buried, but will be like dung lying on the ground. ³ Wherever I banish them, all the survivors of this evil nation will prefer death to life, declares the Lord Almighty.’

⁴ “Say to them, ‘This is what the Lord says:

“When people fall down, do they not get up?

When someone turns away, do they not return?

⁵ Why then have these people turned away?

Why does Jerusalem always turn away?

They cling to deceit;

they refuse to return.

⁶ I have listened attentively,

but they do not say what is right.

None of them repent of their wickedness,

saying, “What have I done?”

Each pursues their own course

like a horse charging into battle.

⁷ Even the stork in the sky

knows her appointed seasons,

and the dove, the swift and the thrush

observe the time of their migration.

But my people do not know

the requirements of the Lord.

⁸ “How can you say, “We are wise,

for we have the law of the Lord,”

when actually the lying pen of the scribes

has handled it falsely?

⁹ The wise will be put to shame;

they will be dismayed and trapped.

Since they have rejected the word of the Lord,

what kind of wisdom do they have?

¹⁰ Therefore I will give their wives to other men

and their fields to new owners.

From the least to the greatest,

all are greedy for gain;

prophets and priests alike,

all practice deceit.

¹¹ They dress the wound of my people

as though it were not serious.

“Peace, peace,” they say,

when there is no peace.

¹² Are they ashamed of their detestable conduct?

No, they have no shame at all;

they do not even know how to blush.

So they will fall among the fallen;

they will be brought down when they are punished,

says the Lord.

¹³ “I will take away their harvest,

declares the Lord.

There will be no grapes on the vine.

There will be no figs on the tree,

and their leaves will wither.

What I have given them

will be taken from them.”

¹⁴ Why are we sitting here?

Gather together!

Let us flee to the fortified cities

and perish there!

For the Lord our God has doomed us to perish

and given us poisoned water to drink,

because we have sinned against him.

¹⁵ We hoped for peace

but no good has come,

for a time of healing

but there is only terror.

¹⁶ The snorting of the enemy's horses

is heard from Dan;

at the neighing of their stallions

the whole land trembles.

They have come to devour

the land and everything in it,

the city and all who live there.

¹⁷ "See, I will send venomous snakes among you,

vipers that cannot be charmed,

and they will bite you,"

declares the Lord.

¹⁸ You who are my Comforter in sorrow,

my heart is faint within me.

¹⁹ Listen to the cry of my people

from a land far away:

"Is the Lord not in Zion?

Is her King no longer there?"

"Why have they aroused my anger with their
images,

with their worthless foreign idols?"

²⁰ "The harvest is past,

the summer has ended,

and we are not saved."

²¹ Since my people are crushed, I am crushed;

I mourn, and horror grips me.

²² Is there no balm in Gilead?

Is there no physician there?

Why then is there no healing

for the wound of my people?

JEREMIAH 9-10

9¹ Oh, that my head were a spring of water
and my eyes a fountain of tears!

I would weep day and night
for the slain of my people.

2 Oh, that I had in the desert
a lodging place for travelers,
so that I might leave my people
and go away from them;
for they are all adulterers,
a crowd of unfaithful people.

3 “They make ready their tongue
like a bow, to shoot lies;
it is not by truth
that they triumph in the land.
They go from one sin to another;
they do not acknowledge me,”
declares the Lord.

4 “Beware of your friends;
do not trust anyone in your clan.
For every one of them is a deceiver,
and every friend a slanderer.

5 Friend deceives friend,
and no one speaks the truth.
They have taught their tongues to lie;
they weary themselves with sinning.

6 You live in the midst of deception;
in their deceit they refuse to acknowledge me,”
declares the Lord.

7 Therefore this is what the Lord Almighty says:
“See, I will refine and test them,
for what else can I do
because of the sin of my people?

8 Their tongue is a deadly arrow;
it speaks deceitfully.

With their mouths they all speak cordially to their
neighbors,
but in their hearts they set traps for them.

9 Should I not punish them for this?”
declares the Lord.

“Should I not avenge myself
on such a nation as this?”

10 I will weep and wail for the mountains
and take up a lament concerning the wilder-
ness grasslands.

They are desolate and untraveled,
and the lowing of cattle is not heard.

The birds have all fled
and the animals are gone.

11 “I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins,
a haunt of jackals;
and I will lay waste the towns of Judah
so no one can live there.”

12 Who is wise enough to understand this? Who
has been instructed by the Lord and can explain
it? Why has the land been ruined and laid waste
like a desert that no one can cross?

13 The Lord said, “It is because they have forsaken
my law, which I set before them; they have not
obeyed me or followed my law. ¹⁴ Instead, they
have followed the stubbornness of their hearts;
they have followed the Baals, as their ancestors
taught them.” ¹⁵ Therefore this is what the Lord
Almighty, the God of Israel, says: “See, I will make
this people eat bitter food and drink poisoned
water. ¹⁶ I will scatter them among nations that
neither they nor their ancestors have known, and
I will pursue them with the sword until I have
made an end of them.”

17 This is what the Lord Almighty says:
“Consider now! Call for the wailing women to
come;

send for the most skillful of them.

¹⁸ Let them come quickly
and wail over us
till our eyes overflow with tears
and water streams from our eyelids.

¹⁹ The sound of wailing is heard from Zion:
'How ruined we are!
How great is our shame!
We must leave our land
because our houses are in ruins.'"

²⁰ Now, you women, hear the word of the Lord;
open your ears to the words of his mouth.
Teach your daughters how to wail;
teach one another a lament.

²¹ Death has climbed in through our windows
and has entered our fortresses;
it has removed the children from the streets
and the young men from the public squares.

²² Say, "This is what the Lord declares:
"Dead bodies will lie
like dung on the open field,
like cut grain behind the reaper,
with no one to gather them.'"

²³ This is what the Lord says:
"Let not the wise boast of their wisdom
or the strong boast of their strength
or the rich boast of their riches,
²⁴ but let the one who boasts boast about this:
that they have the understanding to know me,
that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness,
justice and righteousness on earth,
for in these I delight,"
declares the Lord.

²⁵ "The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when
I will punish all who are circumcised only in the
flesh— ²⁶ Egypt, Judah, Edom, Ammon, Moab and

all who live in the wilderness in distant places.
For all these nations are really uncircumcised, and
even the whole house of Israel is uncircumcised
in heart."

10 ¹ Hear what the Lord says to you, people of
Israel. ² This is what the Lord says:

"Do not learn the ways of the nations
or be terrified by signs in the heavens,
though the nations are terrified by them.
³ For the practices of the peoples are worthless;
they cut a tree out of the forest,
and a craftsman shapes it with his chisel.

⁴ They adorn it with silver and gold;
they fasten it with hammer and nails
so it will not totter.

⁵ Like a scarecrow in a cucumber field,
their idols cannot speak;
they must be carried
because they cannot walk.

Do not fear them;
they can do no harm
nor can they do any good."

⁶ No one is like you, Lord;
you are great,
and your name is mighty in power.

⁷ Who should not fear you,
King of the nations?
This is your due.

Among all the wise leaders of the nations
and in all their kingdoms,
there is no one like you.

⁸ They are all senseless and foolish;
they are taught by worthless wooden idols.

⁹ Hammered silver is brought from Tarshish
and gold from Uphaz.

What the craftsman and goldsmith have made
is then dressed in blue and purple—

all made by skilled workers.

¹⁰ But the Lord is the true God;
he is the living God, the eternal King.
When he is angry, the earth trembles;
the nations cannot endure his wrath.

¹¹ “Tell them this: ‘These gods, who did not make
the heavens and the earth, will perish from the
earth and from under the heavens.’”

¹² But God made the earth by his power;
he founded the world by his wisdom
and stretched out the heavens by his under-
standing.

¹³ When he thunders, the waters in the heavens
roar;
he makes clouds rise from the ends of the
earth.
He sends lightning with the rain
and brings out the wind from his storehouses.

¹⁴ Everyone is senseless and without knowledge;
every goldsmith is shamed by his idols.
The images he makes are a fraud;
they have no breath in them.

¹⁵ They are worthless, the objects of mockery;
when their judgment comes, they will perish.

¹⁶ He who is the Portion of Jacob is not like these,
for he is the Maker of all things,
including Israel, the people of his inheritance—
the Lord Almighty is his name.

¹⁷ Gather up your belongings to leave the land,
you who live under siege.

¹⁸ For this is what the Lord says:
“At this time I will hurl out
those who live in this land;
I will bring distress on them
so that they may be captured.”

¹⁹ Woe to me because of my injury!
My wound is incurable!

Yet I said to myself,
“This is my sickness, and I must endure it.”

²⁰ My tent is destroyed;
all its ropes are snapped.
My children are gone from me and are no more;
no one is left now to pitch my tent
or to set up my shelter.

²¹ The shepherds are senseless
and do not inquire of the Lord;
so they do not prosper
and all their flock is scattered.

²² Listen! The report is coming—
a great commotion from the land of the north!
It will make the towns of Judah desolate,
a haunt of jackals.

²³ Lord, I know that people’s lives are not their
own;
it is not for them to direct their steps.

²⁴ Discipline me, Lord, but only in due measure—
not in your anger,
or you will reduce me to nothing.

²⁵ Pour out your wrath on the nations
that do not acknowledge you,
on the peoples who do not call on your name.
For they have devoured Jacob;
they have devoured him completely
and destroyed his homeland.

Study Two | Jeremiah 7:1-8:3

THE TRUTH EXPOSED

“The truth always comes out.” How have you seen this saying play out in real life?

1. Break into groups and look at one of these sections: 7:1-15, 7:16-20, 7:21-28 and 7:29-8:3. What are the main charges that Jeremiah makes against the people in your section?

2. What things are you unsure about in this passage?

3. What are the “deceptive words” that the people of Judah been trusting in? Why are they “deceptive”? (See 7:4-11, 7:21)

4. Thinking about the whole passage, how would you sum up the people of Judah in a few words?

5. What makes the gospel message an uncomfortable message for people to hear? Why is it so important that we and others hear it?

6. It is tempting to create a façade of godliness, as was the case in Jeremiah’s time. However, we must remember that God is watching us and calls us to combine our religious ritual with personal godliness (7:11).

Are you aware of any attitudes and behaviours that God is calling you to repent of? What steps do you need to take to address them?

Glossary:

Baal: A Canaanite god whose worship was a consistent problem throughout Israel's history. Baal was connected with life and fertility.

Shiloh: Location of the tent of meeting and the Ark of the Covenant during the time of the Judges and Samuel.

Queen of Heaven: A reference to the Assyrian-Babylonian goddess Astarte. Worship of her was popular in Judah during the reign of king Manasseh.

FAMILY QUESTION:

Read Jeremiah 7:9-11.

When are you on your best behaviour?

God sees everything we do, both good and bad. What does this mean for how we should live?

**WEEK 3:
3RD TO 9TH MAY**



JEREMIAH 11

11 1 This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: ² “Listen to the terms of this covenant and tell them to the people of Judah and to those who live in Jerusalem. ³ Tell them that this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘Cursed is the one who does not obey the terms of this covenant— ⁴ the terms I commanded your ancestors when I brought them out of Egypt, out of the iron-smelting furnace.’ I said, ‘Obey me and do everything I command you, and you will be my people, and I will be your God. ⁵ Then I will fulfill the oath I swore to your ancestors, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey’—the land you possess today.”

I answered, “Amen, Lord.”

⁶ The Lord said to me, “Proclaim all these words in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem: ‘Listen to the terms of this covenant and follow them. ⁷ From the time I brought your ancestors up from Egypt until today, I warned them again and again, saying, “Obey me.” ⁸ But they did not listen or pay attention; instead, they followed the stubbornness of their evil hearts. So I brought on them all the curses of the covenant I had commanded them to follow but that they did not keep.”

⁹ Then the Lord said to me, “There is a conspiracy among the people of Judah and those who live in Jerusalem. ¹⁰ They have returned to the sins of their ancestors, who refused to listen to my words. They have followed other gods to serve them. Both Israel and Judah have broken the covenant I made with their ancestors. ¹¹ Therefore this is what the Lord says: ‘I will bring on them a disaster they cannot escape. Although they cry out to me, I will not listen to them. ¹² The towns of Judah and the people of Jerusalem will go and cry out to the gods to whom they burn incense, but they will not help them at all when disaster strikes. ¹³ You, Judah, have as many gods as you have towns; and the altars you have set up to burn incense to that shameful god Baal are as many as the streets of Jerusalem.’

¹⁴ “Do not pray for this people or offer any plea or petition for them, because I will not listen when they call to me in the time of their distress.

¹⁵ “What is my beloved doing in my temple

as she, with many others, works out her evil schemes?

Can consecrated meat avert your punishment?

When you engage in your wickedness,

then you rejoice.”

¹⁶ The Lord called you a thriving olive tree

with fruit beautiful in form.

But with the roar of a mighty storm

he will set it on fire,

and its branches will be broken.

¹⁷ The Lord Almighty, who planted you, has decreed disaster for you, because the people of both Israel and Judah have done evil and aroused my anger by burning incense to Baal.

¹⁸ Because the Lord revealed their plot to me, I knew it, for at that time he showed me what they were doing. ¹⁹ I had been like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter; I did not realize that they had plotted against me, saying,

“Let us destroy the tree and its fruit;

let us cut him off from the land of the living,

that his name be remembered no more.”

²⁰ But you, Lord Almighty, who judge righteously

and test the heart and mind,

let me see your vengeance on them,

for to you I have committed my cause.

²¹ Therefore this is what the Lord says about the people of Anathoth who are threatening to kill you, saying, “Do not prophesy in the name of the Lord or you will die by our hands”— ²² therefore this is what the Lord Almighty says: “I will punish them. Their young men will die by the sword, their sons and daughters by famine. ²³ Not even a remnant will be left to them, because I will bring disaster on the people of Anathoth in the year of their punishment.”

JEREMIAH 12-13

12 ¹ You are always righteous, Lord,
when I bring a case before you.

Yet I would speak with you about your justice:

Why does the way of the wicked prosper?

Why do all the faithless live at ease?

² You have planted them, and they have taken
root;

they grow and bear fruit.

You are always on their lips

but far from their hearts.

³ Yet you know me, Lord;

you see me and test my thoughts about you.

Drag them off like sheep to be butchered!

Set them apart for the day of slaughter!

⁴ How long will the land lie parched

and the grass in every field be withered?

Because those who live in it are wicked,

the animals and birds have perished.

Moreover, the people are saying,

“He will not see what happens to us.”

⁵ “If you have raced with men on foot

and they have worn you out,

how can you compete with horses?

If you stumble in safe country,

how will you manage in the thickets by the
Jordan?

⁶ Your relatives, members of your own family—

even they have betrayed you;

they have raised a loud cry against you.

Do not trust them,

though they speak well of you.

⁷ “I will forsake my house,

abandon my inheritance;

I will give the one I love

into the hands of her enemies.

⁸ My inheritance has become to me

like a lion in the forest.

She roars at me;

therefore I hate her.

⁹ Has not my inheritance become to me

like a speckled bird of prey

that other birds of prey surround and attack?

Go and gather all the wild beasts;

bring them to devour.

¹⁰ Many shepherds will ruin my vineyard

and trample down my field;

they will turn my pleasant field

into a desolate wasteland.

¹¹ It will be made a wasteland,

parched and desolate before me;

the whole land will be laid waste

because there is no one who cares.

¹² Over all the barren heights in the desert

destroyers will swarm,

for the sword of the Lord will devour

from one end of the land to the other;

no one will be safe.

¹³ They will sow wheat but reap thorns;

they will wear themselves out but gain nothing.

They will bear the shame of their harvest

because of the Lord's fierce anger.”

¹⁴ This is what the Lord says: “As for all my wicked
neighbors who seize the inheritance I gave my
people Israel, I will uproot them from their lands
and I will uproot the people of Judah from among
them. ¹⁵ But after I uproot them, I will again have
compassion and will bring each of them back
to their own inheritance and their own country.

¹⁶ And if they learn well the ways of my people and swear by my name, saying, 'As surely as the Lord lives'—even as they once taught my people to swear by Baal—then they will be established among my people. ¹⁷ But if any nation does not listen, I will completely uproot and destroy it," declares the Lord.

13 ¹ This is what the Lord said to me: "Go and buy a linen belt and put it around your waist, but do not let it touch water." ² So I bought a belt, as the Lord directed, and put it around my waist.

³ Then the word of the Lord came to me a second time: ⁴ "Take the belt you bought and are wearing around your waist, and go now to Perath and hide it there in a crevice in the rocks." ⁵ So I went and hid it at Perath, as the Lord told me.

⁶ Many days later the Lord said to me, "Go now to Perath and get the belt I told you to hide there." ⁷ So I went to Perath and dug up the belt and took it from the place where I had hidden it, but now it was ruined and completely useless.

⁸ Then the word of the Lord came to me: ⁹ "This is what the Lord says: 'In the same way I will ruin the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem. ¹⁰ These wicked people, who refuse to listen to my words, who follow the stubbornness of their hearts and go after other gods to serve and worship them, will be like this belt—completely useless! ¹¹ For as a belt is bound around the waist, so I bound all the people of Israel and all the people of Judah to me,' declares the Lord, 'to be my people for my renown and praise and honor. But they have not listened.'

¹² "Say to them: 'This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Every wineskin should be filled with wine.' And if they say to you, 'Don't we know that every wineskin should be filled with wine?' ¹³ then tell them, 'This is what the Lord says: I am going to fill with drunkenness all who live in this land, including the kings who sit on David's throne, the priests, the prophets and all those living in Jerusalem. ¹⁴ I will smash them one against the other, parents and children alike, declares the Lord. I will allow no pity or mercy or compassion to keep me from destroying them.'"

¹⁵ Hear and pay attention,
do not be arrogant,
for the Lord has spoken.

¹⁶ Give glory to the Lord your God
before he brings the darkness,

before your feet stumble
on the darkening hills.

You hope for light,
but he will turn it to utter darkness
and change it to deep gloom.

¹⁷ If you do not listen,
I will weep in secret
because of your pride;
my eyes will weep bitterly,
overflowing with tears,
because the Lord's flock will be taken captive.

¹⁸ Say to the king and to the queen mother,
"Come down from your thrones,
for your glorious crowns
will fall from your heads."

¹⁹ The cities in the Negev will be shut up,
and there will be no one to open them.
All Judah will be carried into exile,
carried completely away.

²⁰ Look up and see
those who are coming from the north.
Where is the flock that was entrusted to you,
the sheep of which you boasted?

²¹ What will you say when the Lord sets over you
those you cultivated as your special allies?
Will not pain grip you
like that of a woman in labor?

²² And if you ask yourself,
"Why has this happened to me?"—
it is because of your many sins
that your skirts have been torn off
and your body mistreated.

²³ Can an Ethiopian change his skin
or a leopard its spots?
Neither can you do good

who are accustomed to doing evil.

²⁴ “I will scatter you like chaff
driven by the desert wind.

²⁵ This is your lot,
the portion I have decreed for you,”
declares the Lord,
“because you have forgotten me
and trusted in false gods.

²⁶ I will pull up your skirts over your face
that your shame may be seen—

²⁷ your adulteries and lustful neighings,
your shameless prostitution!

I have seen your detestable acts
on the hills and in the fields.

Woe to you, Jerusalem!

How long will you be unclean?”

JEREMIAH 14-15

14 ¹ This is the word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah concerning the drought:

² “Judah mourns,

her cities languish;

they wail for the land,

and a cry goes up from Jerusalem.

³ The nobles send their servants for water;

they go to the cisterns

but find no water.

They return with their jars unfilled;

dismayed and despairing,

they cover their heads.

⁴ The ground is cracked

because there is no rain in the land;

the farmers are dismayed

and cover their heads.

⁵ Even the doe in the field

deserts her newborn fawn

because there is no grass.

⁶ Wild donkeys stand on the barren heights

and pant like jackals;

their eyes fail

for lack of food.”

⁷ Although our sins testify against us,

do something, Lord, for the sake of your name.

For we have often rebelled;

we have sinned against you.

⁸ You who are the hope of Israel,

its Savior in times of distress,

why are you like a stranger in the land,

like a traveler who stays only a night?

⁹ Why are you like a man taken by surprise,

like a warrior powerless to save?

You are among us, Lord,

and we bear your name;

do not forsake us!

¹⁰ This is what the Lord says about this people:

“They greatly love to wander;

they do not restrain their feet.

So the Lord does not accept them;

he will now remember their wickedness

and punish them for their sins.”

¹¹ Then the Lord said to me, “Do not pray for the well-being of this people. ¹² Although they fast, I will not listen to their cry; though they offer burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Instead, I will destroy them with the sword, famine and plague.”

¹³ But I said, “Alas, Sovereign Lord! The prophets keep telling them, ‘You will not see the sword or suffer famine. Indeed, I will give you lasting peace in this place.’”

¹⁴ Then the Lord said to me, “The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I have not sent them or appointed them or spoken to them. They are prophesying to you false visions, divinations, idolatries and the delusions of their own minds.

¹⁵ Therefore this is what the Lord says about the prophets who are prophesying in my name: I did not send them, yet they are saying, ‘No sword or famine will touch this land.’ Those same prophets will perish by sword and famine. ¹⁶ And the people they are prophesying to will be thrown out into the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and sword. There will be no one to bury them, their wives, their sons and their daughters. I will pour out on them the calamity they deserve.

¹⁷ “Speak this word to them:

“Let my eyes overflow with tears

night and day without ceasing;

for the Virgin Daughter, my people,

has suffered a grievous wound,

a crushing blow.

¹⁸ If I go into the country,

I see those slain by the sword;
if I go into the city,
I see the ravages of famine.
Both prophet and priest
have gone to a land they know not.”
¹⁹ Have you rejected Judah completely?
Do you despise Zion?
Why have you afflicted us
so that we cannot be healed?
We hoped for peace
but no good has come,
for a time of healing
but there is only terror.
²⁰ We acknowledge our wickedness, Lord,
and the guilt of our ancestors;
we have indeed sinned against you.
²¹ For the sake of your name do not despise us;
do not dishonor your glorious throne.
Remember your covenant with us
and do not break it.
²² Do any of the worthless idols of the nations
bring rain?
Do the skies themselves send down showers?
No, it is you, Lord our God.
Therefore our hope is in you,
for you are the one who does all this.

15 ¹ Then the Lord said to me: “Even if Moses and Samuel were to stand before me, my heart would not go out to this people. Send them away from my presence! Let them go! ² And if they ask you, ‘Where shall we go?’ tell them, ‘This is what the Lord says:

“Those destined for death, to death;
those for the sword, to the sword;
those for starvation, to starvation;
those for captivity, to captivity.’

³ “I will send four kinds of destroyers against them,” declares the Lord, “the sword to kill and

the dogs to drag away and the birds and the wild animals to devour and destroy. ⁴ I will make them abhorrent to all the kingdoms of the earth because of what Manasseh son of Hezekiah king of Judah did in Jerusalem.

⁵ “Who will have pity on you, Jerusalem?

Who will mourn for you?

Who will stop to ask how you are?

⁶ You have rejected me,” declares the Lord.

“You keep on backsliding.

So I will reach out and destroy you;

I am tired of holding back.

⁷ I will winnow them with a winnowing fork
at the city gates of the land.

I will bring bereavement and destruction on my people,

for they have not changed their ways.

⁸ I will make their widows more numerous
than the sand of the sea.

At midday I will bring a destroyer

against the mothers of their young men;

suddenly I will bring down on them

anguish and terror.

⁹ The mother of seven will grow faint
and breathe her last.

Her sun will set while it is still day;

she will be disgraced and humiliated.

I will put the survivors to the sword

before their enemies,”

declares the Lord.

¹⁰ Alas, my mother, that you gave me birth,

a man with whom the whole land strives and contends!

I have neither lent nor borrowed,

yet everyone curses me.

¹¹ The Lord said,

“Surely I will deliver you for a good purpose;

surely I will make your enemies plead with you
in times of disaster and times of distress.

¹² “Can a man break iron—
iron from the north—or bronze?”

¹³ “Your wealth and your treasures
I will give as plunder, without charge,
because of all your sins
throughout your country.

¹⁴ I will enslave you to your enemies
in a land you do not know,
for my anger will kindle a fire
that will burn against you.”

¹⁵ Lord, you understand;
remember me and care for me.
Avenge me on my persecutors.
You are long-suffering—do not take me away;
think of how I suffer reproach for your sake.

¹⁶ When your words came, I ate them;
they were my joy and my heart’s delight,
for I bear your name,
Lord God Almighty.

¹⁷ I never sat in the company of revelers,
never made merry with them;
I sat alone because your hand was on me
and you had filled me with indignation.

¹⁸ Why is my pain unending
and my wound grievous and incurable?
You are to me like a deceptive brook,
like a spring that fails.

¹⁹ Therefore this is what the Lord says:
“If you repent, I will restore you
that you may serve me;
if you utter worthy, not worthless, words,
you will be my spokesman.

Let this people turn to you,
but you must not turn to them.

²⁰ I will make you a wall to this people,
a fortified wall of bronze;
they will fight against you
but will not overcome you,
for I am with you
to rescue and save you,”

declares the Lord.

²¹ “I will save you from the hands of the wicked
and deliver you from the grasp of the cruel.”

JEREMIAH 16

16 ¹ Then the word of the Lord came to me: ² “You must not marry and have sons or daughters in this place.” ³ For this is what the Lord says about the sons and daughters born in this land and about the women who are their mothers and the men who are their fathers: ⁴ “They will die of deadly diseases. They will not be mourned or buried but will be like dung lying on the ground. They will perish by sword and famine, and their dead bodies will become food for the birds and the wild animals.”

⁵ For this is what the Lord says: “Do not enter a house where there is a funeral meal; do not go to mourn or show sympathy, because I have withdrawn my blessing, my love and my pity from this people,” declares the Lord. ⁶ “Both high and low will die in this land. They will not be buried or mourned, and no one will cut themselves or shave their head for the dead. ⁷ No one will offer food to comfort those who mourn for the dead—not even for a father or a mother—nor will anyone give them a drink to console them.

⁸ “And do not enter a house where there is feasting and sit down to eat and drink. ⁹ For this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Before your eyes and in your days I will bring an end to the sounds of joy and gladness and to the voices of bride and bridegroom in this place.

¹⁰ “When you tell these people all this and they ask you, ‘Why has the Lord decreed such a great disaster against us? What wrong have we done? What sin have we committed against the Lord our God?’ ¹¹ then say to them, ‘It is because your ancestors forsook me,’ declares the Lord, ‘and followed other gods and served and worshiped them. They forsook me and did not keep my law. ¹² But you have behaved more wickedly than your ancestors. See how all of you are following the stubbornness of your evil hearts instead of obeying me. ¹³ So I will throw you out of this land into a land neither you nor your ancestors have known, and there you will serve other gods day and night, for I will show you no favor.’

¹⁴ “However, the days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when it will no longer be said, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt,’ ¹⁵ but it will be said, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.’ For I will restore them to the land I gave their ancestors.

¹⁶ “But now I will send for many fishermen,” declares the Lord, “and they will catch them. After that I will send for many hunters, and they will hunt them down on every mountain and hill and from the crevices of the rocks. ¹⁷ My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from me, nor is their sin concealed from my eyes. ¹⁸ I will repay them double for their wickedness and their sin, because they have defiled my land with the lifeless forms of their vile images and have filled my inheritance with their detestable idols.”

¹⁹ Lord, my strength and my fortress,
my refuge in time of distress,
to you the nations will come
from the ends of the earth and say,
“Our ancestors possessed nothing but false gods,
worthless idols that did them no good.

²⁰ Do people make their own gods?
Yes, but they are not gods!”

²¹ “Therefore I will teach them—
this time I will teach them
my power and might.

Then they will know
that my name is the Lord.

JEREMIAH 17

17¹ “Judah’s sin is engraved with an iron tool,

inscribed with a flint point,

on the tablets of their hearts

and on the horns of their altars.

² Even their children remember

their altars and Asherah poles

beside the spreading trees

and on the high hills.

³ My mountain in the land

and your wealth and all your treasures

I will give away as plunder,

together with your high places,

because of sin throughout your country.

⁴ Through your own fault you will lose

the inheritance I gave you.

I will enslave you to your enemies

in a land you do not know,

for you have kindled my anger,

and it will burn forever.”

⁵ This is what the Lord says:

“Cursed is the one who trusts in man,

who draws strength from mere flesh

and whose heart turns away from the Lord.

⁶ That person will be like a bush in the waste-lands;

they will not see prosperity when it comes.

They will dwell in the parched places of the desert,

in a salt land where no one lives.

⁷ “But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord,

whose confidence is in him.

⁸ They will be like a tree planted by the water

that sends out its roots by the stream.

It does not fear when heat comes;

its leaves are always green.

It has no worries in a year of drought

and never fails to bear fruit.”

⁹ The heart is deceitful above all things

and beyond cure.

Who can understand it?

¹⁰ “I the Lord search the heart

and examine the mind,

to reward each person according to their conduct,

according to what their deeds deserve.”

¹¹ Like a partridge that hatches eggs it did not lay

are those who gain riches by unjust means.

When their lives are half gone, their riches will desert them,

and in the end they will prove to be fools.

¹² A glorious throne, exalted from the beginning,

is the place of our sanctuary.

¹³ Lord, you are the hope of Israel;

all who forsake you will be put to shame.

Those who turn away from you will be written in the dust

because they have forsaken the Lord,

the spring of living water.

¹⁴ Heal me, Lord, and I will be healed;

save me and I will be saved,

for you are the one I praise.

¹⁵ They keep saying to me,

“Where is the word of the Lord?

Let it now be fulfilled!”

¹⁶ I have not run away from being your shepherd;

you know I have not desired the day of despair.

What passes my lips is open before you.

¹⁷ Do not be a terror to me;
you are my refuge in the day of disaster.

¹⁸ Let my persecutors be put to shame,
but keep me from shame;

let them be terrified,

but keep me from terror.

Bring on them the day of disaster;

destroy them with double destruction.

¹⁹ This is what the Lord said to me: "Go and stand at the Gate of the People, through which the kings of Judah go in and out; stand also at all the other gates of Jerusalem. ²⁰ Say to them, 'Hear the word of the Lord, you kings of Judah and all people of Judah and everyone living in Jerusalem who come through these gates. ²¹ This is what the Lord says: Be careful not to carry a load on the Sabbath day or bring it through the gates of Jerusalem. ²² Do not bring a load out of your houses or do any work on the Sabbath, but keep the Sabbath day holy, as I commanded your ancestors. ²³ Yet they did not listen or pay attention; they were stiff-necked and would not listen or respond to discipline. ²⁴ But if you are careful to obey me, declares the Lord, and bring no load through the gates of this city on the Sabbath, but keep the Sabbath day holy by not doing any work on it, ²⁵ then kings who sit on David's throne will come through the gates of this city with their officials. They and their officials will come riding in chariots and on horses, accompanied by the men of Judah and those living in Jerusalem, and this city will be inhabited forever. ²⁶ People will come from the towns of Judah and the villages around Jerusalem, from the territory of Benjamin and the western foothills, from the hill country and the Negev, bringing burnt offerings and sacrifices, grain offerings and incense, and bringing thank offerings to the house of the Lord. ²⁷ But if you do not obey me to keep the Sabbath day holy by not carrying any load as you come through the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle an unquenchable fire in the gates of Jerusalem that will consume her fortresses."

Study Three | Jeremiah 16

FACING THE CONSEQUENCES

What was discipline like in your family when you were growing up?

What has Jeremiah's message been so far to the people of Judah?

Read Jeremiah 16:1-21

1. Look at God's commands to Jeremiah in verses 1-9. What do you notice about:

- The commands?
- The reasons for the command?
- The impact these commands would have on Jeremiah's life?

2. Why would the words of verse 5 have been shocking for the people of Judah?

3. What do the people's questions and God's response in verse 10-12 show us about the people?

4. List the various images of God's judgement in this passage. What do these images teach us about how terrible it is to come under the judgement of the Lord?

5. Sometimes people say, “The Old Testament was all about judgement, but the New Testament is all about forgiveness.” How do you think Jesus would respond?

6. The message of the gospel includes the reality of hell and judgement as the just punishment for sin. What place do these truths have in your presentation of the gospel? Why?.

FAMILY QUESTION:

Read Jeremiah 16:10-13.

Why does God take the people’s sin so seriously in these verses?

**WEEK 4:
10TH TO 16TH MAY**



JEREMIAH 18-19

18 ¹ This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: ² “Go down to the potter’s house, and there I will give you my message.” ³ So I went down to the potter’s house, and I saw him working at the wheel. ⁴ But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him.

⁵ Then the word of the Lord came to me. ⁶ He said, “Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does?” declares the Lord. “Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel. ⁷ If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, ⁸ and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned. ⁹ And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted, ¹⁰ and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it.

¹¹ “Now therefore say to the people of Judah and those living in Jerusalem, ‘This is what the Lord says: Look! I am preparing a disaster for you and devising a plan against you. So turn from your evil ways, each one of you, and reform your ways and your actions.’ ¹² But they will reply, ‘It’s no use. We will continue with our own plans; we will all follow the stubbornness of our evil hearts.’”

¹³ Therefore this is what the Lord says:

“Inquire among the nations:

Who has ever heard anything like this?

A most horrible thing has been done

by Virgin Israel.

¹⁴ Does the snow of Lebanon

ever vanish from its rocky slopes?

Do its cool waters from distant sources

ever stop flowing?

¹⁵ Yet my people have forgotten me;

they burn incense to worthless idols,

which made them stumble in their ways,

in the ancient paths.

They made them walk in byways,

on roads not built up.

¹⁶ Their land will be an object of horror

and of lasting scorn;

all who pass by will be appalled

and will shake their heads.

¹⁷ Like a wind from the east,

I will scatter them before their enemies;

I will show them my back and not my face

in the day of their disaster.”

¹⁸ They said, “Come, let’s make plans against Jeremiah; for the teaching of the law by the priest will not cease, nor will counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophets. So come, let’s attack him with our tongues and pay no attention to anything he says.”

¹⁹ Listen to me, Lord;

hear what my accusers are saying!

²⁰ Should good be repaid with evil?

Yet they have dug a pit for me.

Remember that I stood before you

and spoke in their behalf

to turn your wrath away from them.

²¹ So give their children over to famine;

hand them over to the power of the sword.

Let their wives be made childless and widows;

let their men be put to death,

their young men slain by the sword in battle.

²² Let a cry be heard from their houses

when you suddenly bring invaders against them,

for they have dug a pit to capture me

and have hidden snares for my feet.

²³ But you, Lord, know

all their plots to kill me.

Do not forgive their crimes

or blot out their sins from your sight.

Let them be overthrown before you;

deal with them in the time of your anger.

19 ¹ This is what the Lord says: “Go and buy a clay jar from a potter. Take along some of the elders of the people and of the priests ² and go out to the Valley of Ben Hinnom, near the entrance of the Potsherd Gate. There proclaim the words I tell you, ³ and say, ‘Hear the word of the Lord, you kings of Judah and people of Jerusalem. This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Listen! I am going to bring a disaster on this place that will make the ears of everyone who hears of it tingle. ⁴ For they have forsaken me and made this a place of foreign gods; they have burned incense in it to gods that neither they nor their ancestors nor the kings of Judah ever knew, and they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent. ⁵ They have built the high places of Baal to burn their children in the fire as offerings to Baal—something I did not command or mention, nor did it enter my mind. ⁶ So beware, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when people will no longer call this place Topheth or the Valley of Ben Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter.

⁷ “In this place I will ruin the plans of Judah and Jerusalem. I will make them fall by the sword before their enemies, at the hands of those who want to kill them, and I will give their carcasses

as food to the birds and the wild animals. ⁸ I will devastate this city and make it an object of horror and scorn; all who pass by will be appalled and will scoff because of all its wounds. ⁹ I will make them eat the flesh of their sons and daughters, and they will eat one another’s flesh because their enemies will press the siege so hard against them to destroy them.’

¹⁰ “Then break the jar while those who go with you are watching, ¹¹ and say to them, ‘This is what the Lord Almighty says: I will smash this nation and this city just as this potter’s jar is smashed and cannot be repaired. They will bury the dead in Topheth until there is no more room. ¹² This is what I will do to this place and to those who live here, declares the Lord. I will make this city like Topheth. ¹³ The houses in Jerusalem and those of the kings of Judah will be defiled like this place, Topheth—all the houses where they burned incense on the roofs to all the starry hosts and poured out drink offerings to other gods.’”

¹⁴ Jeremiah then returned from Topheth, where the Lord had sent him to prophesy, and stood in the court of the Lord’s temple and said to all the people, ¹⁵ “This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: ‘Listen! I am going to bring on this city and all the villages around it every disaster I pronounced against them, because they were stiff-necked and would not listen to my words.’”

JEREMIAH 20

20 ¹ When the priest Pashhur son of Immer, the official in charge of the temple of the Lord, heard Jeremiah prophesying these things, ² he had Jeremiah the prophet beaten and put in the stocks at the Upper Gate of Benjamin at the Lord's temple. ³ The next day, when Pashhur released him from the stocks, Jeremiah said to him, "The Lord's name for you is not Pashhur, but Terror on Every Side. ⁴ For this is what the Lord says: 'I will make you a terror to yourself and to all your friends; with your own eyes you will see them fall by the sword of their enemies. I will give all Judah into the hands of the king of Babylon, who will carry them away to Babylon or put them to the sword. ⁵ I will deliver all the wealth of this city into the hands of their enemies—all its products, all its valuables and all the treasures of the kings of Judah. They will take it away as plunder and carry it off to Babylon. ⁶ And you, Pashhur, and all who live in your house will go into exile to Babylon. There you will die and be buried, you and all your friends to whom you have prophesied lies.'"

⁷ You deceived me, Lord, and I was deceived;
you overpowered me and prevailed.

I am ridiculed all day long;
everyone mocks me.

⁸ Whenever I speak, I cry out
proclaiming violence and destruction.

So the word of the Lord has brought me
insult and reproach all day long.

⁹ But if I say, "I will not mention his word
or speak anymore in his name,"
his word is in my heart like a fire,
a fire shut up in my bones.

I am weary of holding it in;
indeed, I cannot.

¹⁰ I hear many whispering,
"Terror on every side!
Denounce him! Let's denounce him!"

All my friends
are waiting for me to slip, saying,

"Perhaps he will be deceived;
then we will prevail over him
and take our revenge on him."

¹¹ But the Lord is with me like a mighty warrior;
so my persecutors will stumble and not prevail.

They will fail and be thoroughly disgraced;
their dishonor will never be forgotten.

¹² Lord Almighty, you who examine the righteous
and probe the heart and mind,
let me see your vengeance on them,
for to you I have committed my cause.

¹³ Sing to the Lord!
Give praise to the Lord!

He rescues the life of the needy
from the hands of the wicked.

¹⁴ Cursed be the day I was born!
May the day my mother bore me not be blessed!

¹⁵ Cursed be the man who brought my father the news,
who made him very glad, saying,

"A child is born to you—a son!"

¹⁶ May that man be like the towns
the Lord overthrew without pity.

May he hear wailing in the morning,
a battle cry at noon.

¹⁷ For he did not kill me in the womb,
with my mother as my grave,
her womb enlarged forever.

¹⁸ Why did I ever come out of the womb
to see trouble and sorrow
and to end my days in shame?

JEREMIAH 21

21 ¹ The word came to Jeremiah from the Lord when King Zedekiah sent to him Pashhur son of Malkijah and the priest Zephaniah son of Maa-seiah. They said: ² “Inquire now of the Lord for us because Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon is attacking us. Perhaps the Lord will perform wonders for us as in times past so that he will withdraw from us.”

³ But Jeremiah answered them, “Tell Zedekiah, ⁴ ‘This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I am about to turn against you the weapons of war that are in your hands, which you are using to fight the king of Babylon and the Babylonians who are outside the wall besieging you. And I will gather them inside this city. ⁵ I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and a mighty arm in furious anger and in great wrath. ⁶ I will strike down those who live in this city—both man and beast—and they will die of a terrible plague. ⁷ After that, declares the Lord, I will give Zedekiah king of Judah, his officials and the people in this city who survive the plague, sword and famine, into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and to their enemies who want to kill them. He will put them to the sword; he will show them no mercy or pity or compassion.’

⁸ “Furthermore, tell the people, ‘This is what the Lord says: See, I am setting before you the way of life and the way of death. ⁹ Whoever stays in this city will die by the sword, famine or plague. But whoever goes out and surrenders to the Babylonians who are besieging you will live; they will

escape with their lives. ¹⁰ I have determined to do this city harm and not good, declares the Lord. It will be given into the hands of the king of Babylon, and he will destroy it with fire.’

¹¹ “Moreover, say to the royal house of Judah, ‘Hear the word of the Lord. ¹² This is what the Lord says to you, house of David:

“Administer justice every morning;

rescue from the hand of the oppressor

the one who has been robbed,

or my wrath will break out and burn like fire

because of the evil you have done—

burn with no one to quench it.

¹³ I am against you, Jerusalem,

you who live above this valley

on the rocky plateau, declares the Lord—

you who say, “Who can come against us?

Who can enter our refuge?”

¹⁴ I will punish you as your deeds deserve,

declares the Lord.

I will kindle a fire in your forests

that will consume everything around you.”

JEREMIAH 22-23

22 ¹ This is what the Lord says: “Go down to the palace of the king of Judah and proclaim this message there: ² ‘Hear the word of the Lord to you, king of Judah, you who sit on David’s throne—you, your officials and your people who come through these gates. ³ This is what the Lord says: Do what is just and right. Rescue from the hand of the oppressor the one who has been robbed. Do no wrong or violence to the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place. ⁴ For if you are careful to carry out these commands, then kings who sit on David’s throne will come through the gates of this palace, riding in chariots and on horses, accompanied by their officials and their people. ⁵ But if you do not obey these commands, declares the Lord, I swear by myself that this palace will become a ruin.’”

⁶ For this is what the Lord says about the palace of the king of Judah:

“Though you are like Gilead to me,

like the summit of Lebanon,

I will surely make you like a wasteland,

like towns not inhabited.

⁷ I will send destroyers against you,

each man with his weapons,

and they will cut up your fine cedar beams

and throw them into the fire.

⁸ “People from many nations will pass by this city and will ask one another, ‘Why has the Lord done such a thing to this great city?’ ⁹ And the answer will be: ‘Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God and have worshiped and served other gods.’”

¹⁰ Do not weep for the dead king or mourn his loss;

rather, weep bitterly for him who is exiled,

because he will never return

nor see his native land again.

¹¹ For this is what the Lord says about Shallum son of Josiah, who succeeded his father as king of Judah but has gone from this place: “He will never return. ¹² He will die in the place where they have

led him captive; he will not see this land again.”

¹³ “Woe to him who builds his palace by unrighteousness,

his upper rooms by injustice,

making his own people work for nothing,

not paying them for their labor.

¹⁴ He says, ‘I will build myself a great palace

with spacious upper rooms.’

So he makes large windows in it,

panels it with cedar

and decorates it in red.

¹⁵ “Does it make you a king

to have more and more cedar?

Did not your father have food and drink?

He did what was right and just,

so all went well with him.

¹⁶ He defended the cause of the poor and needy,

and so all went well.

Is that not what it means to know me?”

declares the Lord.

¹⁷ “But your eyes and your heart

are set only on dishonest gain,

on shedding innocent blood

and on oppression and extortion.”

¹⁸ Therefore this is what the Lord says about Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah:

“They will not mourn for him:

‘Alas, my brother! Alas, my sister!’

They will not mourn for him:

‘Alas, my master! Alas, his splendor!’

¹⁹ He will have the burial of a donkey—

dragged away and thrown

outside the gates of Jerusalem.”

²⁰ “Go up to Lebanon and cry out,
let your voice be heard in Bashan,
cry out from Abarim,
for all your allies are crushed.

²¹ I warned you when you felt secure,
but you said, ‘I will not listen!’
This has been your way from your youth;
you have not obeyed me.

²² The wind will drive all your shepherds away,
and your allies will go into exile.
Then you will be ashamed and disgraced
because of all your wickedness.

²³ You who live in ‘Lebanon,’
who are nestled in cedar buildings,
how you will groan when pangs come upon you,
pain like that of a woman in labor!

²⁴ “As surely as I live,” declares the Lord, “even if
you, Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim king of Judah,
were a signet ring on my right hand, I would still
pull you off. ²⁵ I will deliver you into the hands of
those who want to kill you, those you fear—Nebu-
chadnezzar king of Babylon and the Babylonians.
²⁶ I will hurl you and the mother who gave you
birth into another country, where neither of you
was born, and there you both will die. ²⁷ You will
never come back to the land you long to return
to.”

²⁸ Is this man Jehoiachin a despised, broken pot,
an object no one wants?
Why will he and his children be hurled out,
cast into a land they do not know?

²⁹ O land, land, land,
hear the word of the Lord!

³⁰ This is what the Lord says:
“Record this man as if childless,
a man who will not prosper in his lifetime,
for none of his offspring will prosper,
none will sit on the throne of David
or rule anymore in Judah.”

23 ¹ “Woe to the shepherds who are destroying
and scattering the sheep of my pasture!” declares
the Lord. ² Therefore this is what the Lord, the
God of Israel, says to the shepherds who tend my
people: “Because you have scattered my flock and
driven them away and have not bestowed care
on them, I will bestow punishment on you for the
evil you have done,” declares the Lord. ³ “I myself
will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the
countries where I have driven them and will bring
them back to their pasture, where they will be
fruitful and increase in number. ⁴ I will place shep-
herds over them who will tend them, and they
will no longer be afraid or terrified, nor will any be
missing,” declares the Lord.

⁵ “The days are coming,” declares the Lord,
“when I will raise up for David a righteous
Branch,
a King who will reign wisely
and do what is just and right in the land.

⁶ In his days Judah will be saved
and Israel will live in safety.

This is the name by which he will be called:

The Lord Our Righteous Savior.

⁷ “So then, the days are coming,” declares the
Lord, “when people will no longer say, ‘As surely
as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites up
out of Egypt,’ ⁸ but they will say, ‘As surely as the
Lord lives, who brought the descendants of Israel
up out of the land of the north and out of all the
countries where he had banished them.’ Then
they will live in their own land.”

⁹ Concerning the prophets:

My heart is broken within me;
all my bones tremble.

I am like a drunken man,

like a strong man overcome by wine,

because of the Lord

and his holy words.

¹⁰ The land is full of adulterers;

because of the curse the land lies parched
and the pastures in the wilderness are with-
ered.

The prophets follow an evil course

and use their power unjustly.

¹¹ “Both prophet and priest are godless;
even in my temple I find their wickedness,”
declares the Lord.

¹² “Therefore their path will become slippery;
they will be banished to darkness
and there they will fall.
I will bring disaster on them
in the year they are punished,”
declares the Lord.

¹³ “Among the prophets of Samaria
I saw this repulsive thing:
They prophesied by Baal
and led my people Israel astray.

¹⁴ And among the prophets of Jerusalem
I have seen something horrible:
They commit adultery and live a lie.
They strengthen the hands of evildoers,
so that not one of them turns from their wickedness.
They are all like Sodom to me;
the people of Jerusalem are like Gomorrah.”

¹⁵ Therefore this is what the Lord Almighty says
concerning the prophets:
“I will make them eat bitter food
and drink poisoned water,
because from the prophets of Jerusalem
ungodliness has spread throughout the land.”

¹⁶ This is what the Lord Almighty says:
“Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you;
they fill you with false hopes.
They speak visions from their own minds,
not from the mouth of the Lord.

¹⁷ They keep saying to those who despise me,
‘The Lord says: You will have peace.’

And to all who follow the stubbornness of their hearts
they say, ‘No harm will come to you.’

¹⁸ But which of them has stood in the council of the Lord
to see or to hear his word?
Who has listened and heard his word?

¹⁹ See, the storm of the Lord
will burst out in wrath,
a whirlwind swirling down
on the heads of the wicked.

²⁰ The anger of the Lord will not turn back
until he fully accomplishes
the purposes of his heart.
In days to come
you will understand it clearly.

²¹ I did not send these prophets,
yet they have run with their message;
I did not speak to them,
yet they have prophesied.

²² But if they had stood in my council,
they would have proclaimed my words to my people
and would have turned them from their evil ways
and from their evil deeds.

²³ “Am I only a God nearby,”
declares the Lord,
“and not a God far away?”

²⁴ Who can hide in secret places
so that I cannot see them?”
declares the Lord.
“Do not I fill heaven and earth?”
declares the Lord.

²⁵ “I have heard what the prophets say who prophesy lies in my name. They say, ‘I had a dream! I had a dream!’ ²⁶ How long will this continue in the hearts of these lying prophets, who prophesy the delusions of their own minds? ²⁷

They think the dreams they tell one another will make my people forget my name, just as their ancestors forgot my name through Baal worship. ²⁸ Let the prophet who has a dream recount the dream, but let the one who has my word speak it faithfully. For what has straw to do with grain?" declares the Lord. ²⁹ "Is not my word like fire," declares the Lord, "and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?"

³⁰ "Therefore," declares the Lord, "I am against the prophets who steal from one another words supposedly from me. ³¹ Yes," declares the Lord, "I am against the prophets who wag their own tongues and yet declare, 'The Lord declares.' ³² Indeed, I am against those who prophesy false dreams," declares the Lord. "They tell them and lead my people astray with their reckless lies, yet I did not send or appoint them. They do not benefit these people in the least," declares the Lord.

³³ "When these people, or a prophet or a priest, ask you, 'What is the message from the Lord?' say to them, 'What message? I will forsake you,' declares the Lord. ³⁴ If a prophet or a priest or anyone else claims, 'This is a message from the Lord,' I will punish them and their household. ³⁵ This is what each of you keeps saying to your friends and other Israelites: 'What is the Lord's answer?' or 'What has the Lord spoken?' ³⁶ But you must not mention 'a message from the Lord' again, because each one's word becomes their own message. So you distort the words of the living God, the Lord Almighty, our God. ³⁷ This is what you keep saying to a prophet: 'What is the Lord's answer to you?' or 'What has the Lord spoken?' ³⁸ Although you claim, 'This is a message from the Lord,' this is what the Lord says: You used the words, 'This is a message from the Lord,' even though I told you that you must not claim, 'This is a message from the Lord.' ³⁹ Therefore, I will surely forget you and cast you out of my presence along with the city I gave to you and your ancestors. ⁴⁰ I will bring on you everlasting disgrace—everlasting shame that will not be forgotten."

JEREMIAH 24

24 ¹ After Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim king of Judah and the officials, the skilled workers and the artisans of Judah were carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, the Lord showed me two baskets of figs placed in front of the temple of the Lord. ² One basket had very good figs, like those that ripen early; the other basket had very bad figs, so bad they could not be eaten.

³ Then the Lord asked me, “What do you see, Jeremiah?”

“Figs,” I answered. “The good ones are very good, but the bad ones are so bad they cannot be eaten.”

⁴ Then the word of the Lord came to me: ⁵ “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘Like these good figs, I regard as good the exiles from Judah, whom I sent away from this place to the land of the Babylonians. ⁶ My eyes will watch over them for their good, and I will bring them back to this land. I will build them up and not tear them down; I will plant them and not uproot them. ⁷ I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart.

⁸ “‘But like the bad figs, which are so bad they cannot be eaten,’ says the Lord, ‘so will I deal with Zedekiah king of Judah, his officials and the survivors from Jerusalem, whether they remain in this land or live in Egypt. ⁹ I will make them abhorrent and an offense to all the kingdoms of the earth, a reproach and a byword, a curse and an object of ridicule, wherever I banish them. ¹⁰ I will send the sword, famine and plague against them until they are destroyed from the land I gave to them and their ancestors.’”

THE FUTURE IS SET IN STONE

How do you feel when you think about the future of the world, the country, your family and yourself?

Read Jeremiah 21:1-14

Note: The Situation.

Jeremiah 21:1-2 provides the historical context of this section. They show us the particular situation that prompted Jeremiah's words to King Zedekiah. The time period is towards the end of Zedekiah's reign in Jerusalem, while Babylon is attacking Jerusalem (around 588 BC). This Babylonian attack caused Zedekiah to send men to Jeremiah so that he could find out whether God would rescue Jerusalem, as he had in the past.

1. What does God say in response to Zedekiah's question? How would this have been shocking to Zedekiah and the people of Jerusalem?

2. What hope do the people of Jerusalem have for survival? How might this be a hard pill for them to swallow?

Read Jeremiah 22:1-30

3. In chapter 22, Jeremiah addresses the people at the palace. He mentions Judah's kings from the past (Shallum = Jehoahaz, Josiah, Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin). What do you think is Jeremiah's main message?

Read Jeremiah 23:1-8

4. What hope do these verses hold out for Jerusalem after they face God's judgement?

5. How do the kings mentioned in these chapters point us to Jesus?

6. God's message to Jerusalem was "I am against you!" (21:13). How does this compare to his message for Christians in Romans 8:28-39? How does this encourage you when you are troubled by thoughts about your future?

Glossary:

Shallum: Another name for Jehoahaz, the fourth son of Josiah. He became the 18th king of Judah after his father's death in 609 BC but only reigned for 3 months! He was deported by Pharaoh Neco and died in Egypt.

Josiah: The 17th king of Judah. Son of Amon and grandson of Manasseh. Reigned for 31 years (640-609 BC). Carried out a great religious reform in Judah, returning the nation to God's law.

Jehoiakim: Son of Josiah who reigned 11 years (609-598 BC). He was an oppressive ruler and reintroduced the pagan practices that his father had removed. He opposed Jeremiah and burned the scroll containing his words (Jer 36).

Jehoiachin: Son of Jehoiakim who became king of Judah after his father rebelled against Babylon and died in 598 BC. He reigned for just over 3 months and was deported as a prisoner to Babylon.

FAMILY QUESTION:

Read Jeremiah 21:13-14

God says to the people in Jerusalem that he is against them and will punish them.

Read Romans 8:38-39

How does God feel about people who have trusted in Jesus?

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“I have put my words in your mouth.
See, today I appoint you over nations and
kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy
and overthrow, to build and to plant.”

JEREMIAH 1:9-10

