

11 Studies in Jeremiah

	Introduction to Jeremiah	p 2
Study 1	Introduction to the Old Testament	p 4
Study 2	Jeremiah ch 1, the call	p 8
Study 3	Jeremiah ch 2, sin and grace	p 10
Study 4	Jeremiah chs 3-4, repentance	p 13
Study 5	Jeremiah chs 5-6, growth	p 15
Study 6	Jeremiah chs 7 and 26, the Temple Sermon	p 17
Study 7	Jeremiah's parables	p 20
Study 8	Jeremiah ch 35, the Rechabites	p 24
Study 9	Jeremiah chs 11-45, troubles	p 26
Study 10	Jeremiah ch 31, new covenant	p 29
Study 11	Jeremiah chs 32-33, restoration	p 32

In preparing these studies I've used the following sources: 8 Studies in Jeremiah by Naremburn Cammeray Anglican Church, The Message of Jeremiah (Bible Speaks Today series) by Derek Kidner, the Bible Brief on Jeremiah by Andrew Barry from The Briefing magazine # 363, "Judgement in the words of Jeremiah", "Forgiveness in the words of Jeremiah", "Re-creation in the words of Jeremiah" (Part 3) by Andrew Shead, the Briefing 17/9/2012, 28/1/2013, 27/5/2013, Lion Handbook to the Bible Second Revised Edition, New Bible Dictionary 3rd edition, Two Cities by Andrew Reid and Karen Morris, Luke for Everyone, Mark for Everyone and Paul for Everyone 1 Corinthians by Tom Wright, Encouragement The Key to Caring by Larry Crabb and Dan Allender, Postcard from Palestine by Andrew Reid, sermon by John Dickson 15/3/2015, www.bible-history.com

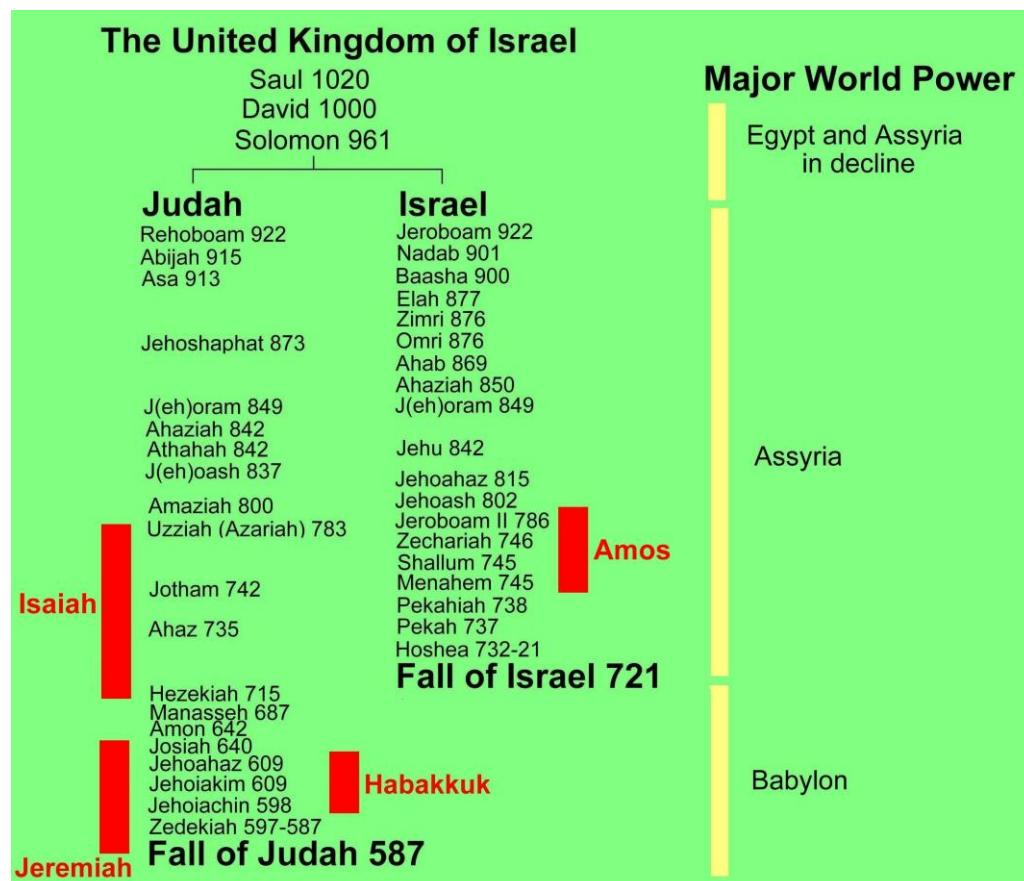
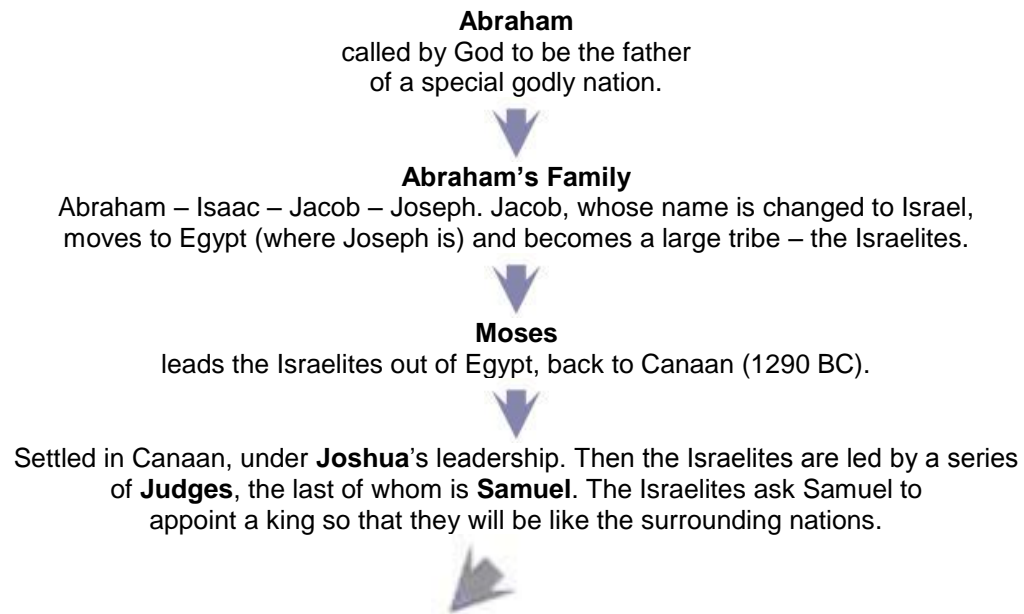
Ed O'Connor 2015

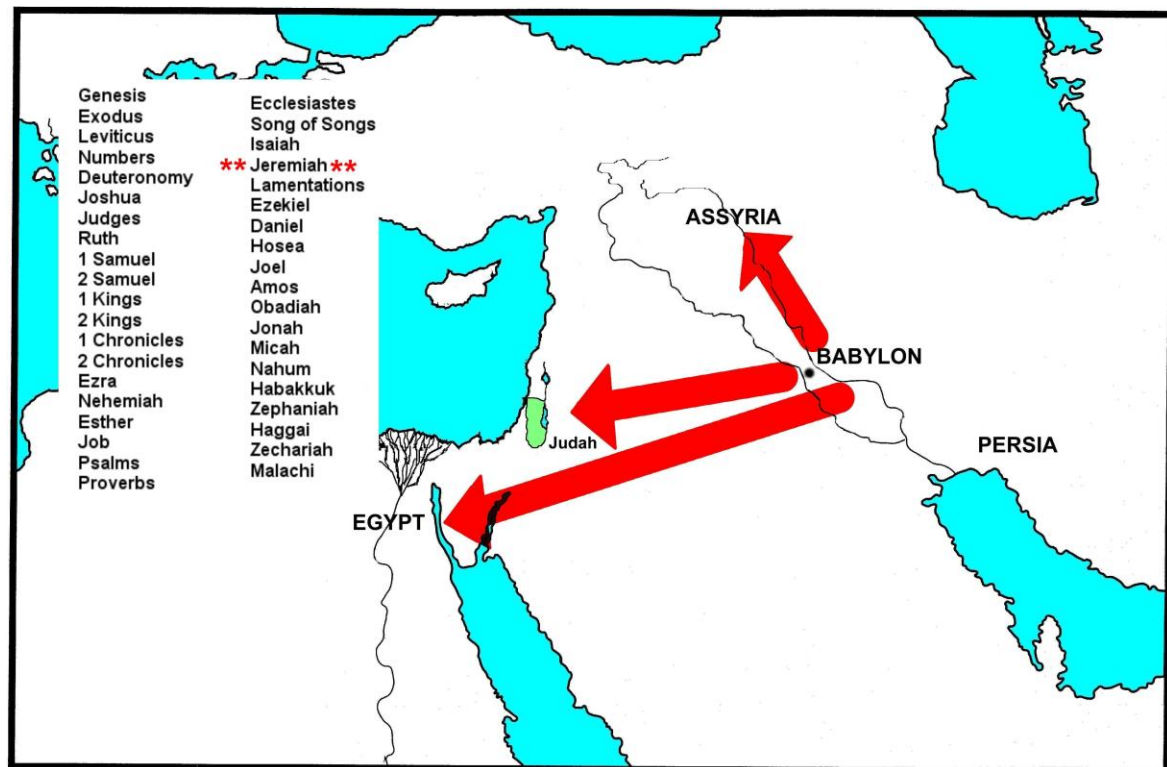
Introduction to Jeremiah

Jeremiah was a prophet who prophesied to the Southern Kingdom of Judah during the late 7th Century BC to early 6th Century BC (626BC- 587BC). His period span from just before the exile of Judah and Jerusalem to just slightly after their exile into Babylon. The Northern Kingdom of Israel was destroyed about 100 years before by the Assyrian Empire. So at this stage of Israel's history, only Judah was left. Even though Judah and Jerusalem survived the assault by the Assyrian Empire 100 years before, Jeremiah prophesied that they would not survive this new threat from Babylon.

From 8 Studies in Jeremiah by Naremburn Cammeray Anglican Church p 2.

How did God's people get to this stage?





[In Jeremiah's day] the Assyrian empire, the superpower that ruled the Middle Eastern world, was in decline. The power vacuum was being filled by Babylon and Egypt. Both Babylon and Egypt fought for supremacy during this period, the battle of Carchemish in 605BC, decided in favour of Babylon [Jer 46:2]. Jerusalem was also caught up in this struggle, giving in to Babylon in one instance and then siding with Egypt in another. Jeremiah prophesied over this period. He prophesied during the reign of the last 5 kings of Judah.

From 8 Studies in Jeremiah by Naremburn Cammeray Anglican Church p 2.

The Old Testament books that relate to this period are:

1 and 2 Kings account for four centuries of Israel's history with a succession of kings from both the northern and southern kingdoms, ending in exile. 1 and 2 Kings were written as one book from the viewpoint of an Israelite living in exile in Babylon.

1 and 2 Chronicles follow the kings from the line of David, ignoring the northern kings. The Chronicler wrote from the viewpoint of an Israelite who had returned from exile with Ezra and Nehemiah.

Assyria became the major world power from about 900 BC to 612 BC. **Jonah** preached God's message of repentance to Nineveh, Assyria's capital, at about 800 BC. They did repent and avoided God's judgement for a time only to re-commit their sins bringing on God's warning through **Nahum**. Israel also needed to repent and a number of prophets warned that God's instrument of judgement would be Assyria. **Isaiah**, **Joel** and **Obadiah** warned Judah (the southern kingdom), **Hosea** and **Amos** warned Israel (the northern kingdom) and **Micah** addressed both kingdoms.

Babylon was the next major world power from 612 BC to 539 BC. They attacked and defeated nearly everybody. **Jeremiah** and **Zephaniah** warned Judah and **Habakkuk** said that, even worse than Assyria, Babylon would be God's instrument of judgement.

In 587 BC, Babylon took Jerusalem, destroyed the Temple and drove most of the people to Babylon leaving only the poorest behind. This was known as the Exile.

Some **psalms** were written during the exile.

Jeremiah was offered a comfortable life in Babylon but chose to remain in Judah.

Lamentations was written, probably by Jeremiah, about the suffering of the people in exile.

Ezekiel and **Daniel** were taken into exile.

Isaiah, **Jeremiah** and **Daniel** prophesied the defeat of the Babylonians and the return of the exiles.

These prophesies came true when Cyrus the Great defeated the Babylonians in 539 BC and Persia became the major world power.

Isaiah, **Jeremiah**, **Ezekiel**, **Haggai**, **Zechariah** and **Malachi** all looked ahead to a time beyond the exile, to a time of restoration and a time when God's king, Jesus, would come.

Study 1, Introduction to the Old Testament

Getting started

To refresh our thinking on the Old Testament I thought it would be fun to read some quotes and listen to some sound bites. Your job is to say where the quote is from and its context in the Bible. Some of these are easy and some are quite hard. Some of these will be relevant to our study of Jeremiah. See how you go.

1. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

Where?

Context?

2. "The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

Where?

Context?

3. Play first section of Bob Dylan's Highway 61.

Translation: God said to Abraham "Kill me a son."
 Abe said "Man, you must be putting me on."
 God said "No."
 Abe said "What?"
 God said "You can do what you want to but, the next time you see me coming you better run."
 Well Abe said "Where do you want this killing done?"
 God said "Out on Highway 61."

Bible: Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!"
 "Here I am," he replied.
 Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you."

Where?

Context?

4. "Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour. You shall not covet your neighbour's house. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour."

Where?

Context?

5. As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground.

Where?

Context?

6. When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with a rod wielded by men, with floggings inflicted by human hands. But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.

Where?

Context?

7. Play My Redeemer Liveth from Handel's Messiah

Translation: I know that my Redeemer liveth, and he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.

Bible: I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth.
And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God;
I myself will see him with my own eyes - I, and not another.
How my heart yearns within me!

Where?

Context?

8. "The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want."

Where?

Context?

9. Play "Rivers Of Babylon" by Boney M.

Translation: By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down. Yeah we wept when we remembered Zion. (twice)
When the wicked carried us away in captivity, required from us a song. }
Now how shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land. } (twice)

Bible: By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion.
There on the poplars we hung our harps, for there our captors asked us for songs,
our tormentors demanded songs of joy; they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"
How can we sing the songs of the LORD while in a foreign land?

Where?

Context?

10. Play “His Banner Over Me Is Love” from Scripture in Song

Bible: He has taken me to the banquet hall, and his banner over me is love.

Where?

Context?

11. Play the scene from the movie “Chariots of Fire” where Eric Liddell reads the lesson in church

As read from KJV: Behold, the nations are as a drop in the bucket and are counted as the small dust in the balance. All nations before him are as nothing. They are counted to him as less than nothing and vanity.
He bringeth the princes to nothing. He maketh the judges of the earth as a vanity. Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? He giveth power to the faint and to them that have no strength he increaseth might. But they that waiteth on the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles.
They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint.

Bible: v 15 Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket; they are regarded as dust on the scales;
V 17 Before him all the nations are as nothing, they are regarded by him as worthless and less than nothing.
V 23 He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.
V 28 Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary,
V 29 He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.
V 31 but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Where?

Context?

12. **‘The time is coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,’ declares the LORD.**

‘This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after that time,’ declares the LORD. ‘I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbour, or say to one another, “Know the LORD,” because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,’ declares the LORD. ‘For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.’

Where?

Context?

To finish

13. (a) Do you have a favourite Old Testament book?
- (b) What is it?
- (c) Why is it your favourite?
15. (a) Do you have any difficulties reading the Old Testament?
- (b) What are they, if any?

Reading Plan

Before we dive into Jeremiah there are some things you will soon notice and I write this to warn you about the difficulties and encourage you to persist to the end of the book. Some of the difficulties are:

- the length of the book – one of the longest books in the Bible.
- place names and kings' names that you have probably never heard of.
- consecutive chapters don't always follow each other in a linear time sequence
- many passages about God's judgement on many sins, especially idolatry.

But there are also wonderful chapters on God's plan for restoring his people and bringing in a new covenant, ultimately, as the New Testament reveals, through Jesus.

Have you ever tried to read through a Bible book that is *this* big e.g. Isaiah or Ezekiel? You slog through the boring bits until you get to an interesting bit and sit there to enjoy it for a while. Then you plough on until you get to another interesting bit. If you make it to the end of the book you can congratulate yourself on your marathon effort. Perhaps you have some doubts about getting the most out of the book but at least you can say you've read it. If that's the way you do it then I've tried to make it a bit easier and a bit more profitable by devising a **reading plan** which you could follow before beginning to each study on Jeremiah. The studies don't cover every chapter in Jeremiah but the reading plan does so you will be able to read and understand the whole book and make stops on the way to look more carefully at some of the details in the studies.

Study 2, Jeremiah ch 1, the call

Reading Plan

Before beginning this study please read Jeremiah chs 1-4.

Jeremiah 1:1-19 God tells Jeremiah what he must do

Jeremiah 2:1-3:10 The people followed God through the exodus and into the promised land but then followed idols. God has judged Israel and will judge Judah for their sins.

Jeremiah 3:11-4:4 God asks his people to return to him.

Jeremiah 4:5-31 God will bring an army from the north to bring destruction on Judah.

Getting started

1. When you give someone “your word” what does that mean?

2. What do you think “the Word of God” means (see also John 1:1)?

Bible

3. Read Jer 1:1-3.

Local **priests** in all the towns and villages acted as teachers and administrators of the law.

Duties: Teach the people (Leviticus 10:8-11), serve as judges to resolve controversy (Deut. 21:5), offer sacrifices (Exodus 29:38-42), assess impurity (Leviticus 13-15), burn incense (Exodus 30:7-8), bless the people (Numbers 6:22-27), bless God (Deuteronomy 10:8), take care of the altar (Leviticus 6:8-13), the lamps, and the bread (Leviticus 24:1-9) and continue the sacred fire (Leviticus 6;12-13).

From Luke for Everyone by Tom Wright p 57 and www.biblecharts.org.

Jehoiakim (v 3). His predecessor (Jehoahaz) and successor (Jehoiachin) are not mentioned, since they each reigned only three months (see also p 2 and 17 of these studies).

What does “the word of the Lord” coming to Jeremiah mean (v 2)?

4. What do these verses suggest about (a) the geographical context?

(b) the historical and political context?

(c) the theological context?

5. Read Jer 1:4-19.

(a) What does this tell us about Jeremiah?

(b) How does God deal with Jeremiah?

(c) What has Jeremiah got to do?

(d) What do these images mean (i) the almond tree?

(ii) the boiling pot?

The almond (1:11-12), by its name, 'wakeful', proclaims itself the earliest to greet the spring. So too, when all seems dormant, God is wakeful, ready for his moment to fulfil his word. In the companion picture, that word will be judgment; but here is hope, a living token of hidden promise and of God's silent, creative energy.

The seething cauldron (1:13-16), tilting dangerously as the fire settled, make a terribly appropriate picture of the menace from the north (the old invasion route of Assyria, soon to be that of Babylon); and it remains as apt as ever to the human scene where, from one quarter after another, human aggressiveness lets loose a scalding stream of havoc. Nothing could be less like the quiet and creative promise of the previous picture, yet God would not only tolerate it: he would summon it (*calling all the tribes of the kingdoms of the north*, v 15) to engulf his land.

From The Message of Jeremiah by Derek Kidner p 27.

(e) What is God going to do with (i) the nations?

(ii) "the people of the land"?

To finish

6. (a) Have you ever felt "called" by God? What was that "call"?

(b) How would you know if it was God's call or your own idea? Is there a difference?

Study 3, Jeremiah ch 2, sin & grace

Reading Plan

Before beginning this study please read Jeremiah chs 5-9.

Jeremiah 5:1-31 God will bring judgement on an unrepentant people.

Jeremiah 6:1-30 God's warnings have fallen on deaf ears so God will allow the invasion.

Jeremiah 7:1-8:3 The people have a superstitious faith in the temple but it won't do them any good.

Jeremiah 8:4-17 No-one repents. Even the leaders teach falsely.

Jeremiah 8:18-9:26 Jeremiah mourns and God's judgement is inevitable.

Getting started

1. (a) As you lead your "Christian life" how much do you think about being obedient to God/Christ and not sinning?

- (b) What is meant by "God's grace"?

- (c) Can we use this idea of God's grace and apply it to our lives in a way that we can show or give grace to others? How would we do this?

- (d) How would our lives be different if our thinking was dominated by giving grace to people rather than focusing on our own obedience/sin?

Bible

2. Read Jeremiah 2:1-13.
 - (a) What part of God's history with Israel is being referred to?

 - (b) What sins is Israel accused of in verses 5-8?

 - (c) What are the two sins in v 13 and what do they mean?

Kittim . . . Kedar (Jer 2:10). Kittim is Cyprus in the west and Kedar is in Arabia in the east i.e. the whole pagan world.

In the earliest times of the Bible **cisterns** [Jer 2:13] were used to store water. They were usually pear shaped, and 15 to 20 feet deep, and the actual opening was only a 2 to 3 feet. There was usually a stone cover. Cisterns were either large or small, large enough to store water for the community, or small and privately owned. Cisterns were like wells of water, which could be hoisted up with ropes and a bucket.

From www.bible-history.com.

Abraham – Isaac – Jacob. Jacob had 12 sons and a daughter (Gen chs 29 – 35). Judah was Jacob's 4th son and Joseph was Jacob's 11th son. God changed Jacob's name to Israel (Gen 32:28) and all of Jacob's sons had families that became the tribes of **Israel**. Instead of a tribe of Joseph, Joseph's 2 sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, formed 2 half tribes.

"[Ephraim's] descendants became one of the most prestigious of the twelve tribes of Israel. It was the Ephraimite, Jeroboam, who was responsible for splitting the ten northern tribes, including Ephraim, from the southern tribes during the reign of Rehoboam [see page 1 of these studies]. The prophets often use 'Ephraim' as an alternative expression for 'Israel'. . . . **Judah** is the tribe from which King David and all the kings of the southern kingdom come and, for this reason, 'Judah' is often used to describe the whole southern kingdom."

From Two Cities by Andrew Reid and Karen Morris p 32.

In chapter 2 Jeremiah is addressing Judah (Jer 2:28), the southern kingdom, and uses "Israel" to describe God's people before the north/south split.

3. In Jeremiah idolatry looms large among the sins of the people (Jer 2:9-3:5, 5:7-9, 7:5-6, 17-18, 30-31, 11:9-13, 17, 16:5-13, 17:1-6, 18:13-17, 22:8-9, 44:1-30).

(a) Today, what do people commonly have as their idols?

(b) Consider the idea that people today are, above all else, concerned with themselves, and what we consider to be idols are merely tools to make people feel good about themselves.

If this is true, what then are they worshipping?

(c) Are Christians any different? Why/why not?

4. Read the rest of Jeremiah ch 2 to get a sense of how appalled (v 12) God is about his people's sins.

(a) What images are used to describe what God's people have done?

(b) What do God's people deserve?

(c) Read Jer 31:31-34 (we will look at this in more detail in study 10).
How is this an example of God's grace?

5. In the NIV "backsliding" (Jer 2:19, 3:22, 5:6, 14:7) is used to describe what God's people have done. The RSV and ESV use the words "faithlessness" or "apostasy" (which means abandonment of faith) instead of "backsliding".

(a) What do you think is meant in Jeremiah ch 2 by "backsliding"?

(b) What do we mean today by "backsliding"?

(c) If we sin are we “backsliding”? Why/why not?

(d) Do we rate different sins such that if we do fairly bad sins then we are backsliding but if our sins are more acceptable then we aren't too good but we aren't backsliding?

(e) Is it right to rate different sins? Why/why not?

(f) Do we rate different sins because we like to compare ourselves with others (see Matt 7:1-5)?

To finish

6. Obedience is the flip side of sin i.e. if you are not obedient then you are sinning. Churches today are pre-occupied with sin/obedience. The emphasis should be on what we are like as people i.e. our character and how gracious we are, not sin/obedience. Agree or disagree? Why/why not?

7. Does following Jesus mean more than obeying rules/commands (see John 15:10)? How so?

Study 4, Jeremiah chs 3 & 4, repentance

Reading Plan

Before beginning this study please read Jeremiah chs 10-14.

Jeremiah 10:1-25 Comparing idols with God.

Jeremiah 11:1-17 The people have broken the covenant and will bring disaster upon themselves.

Jeremiah 11:18- 12:17 A plot against Jeremiah's life and Jeremiah asks why the wicked don't get punished.

Jeremiah 13:1-27 Enacted parables of the linen belt and the wineskins. The exile is imminent and Jeremiah weeps.

Jeremiah 14:1-22 A drought and false prophets and Jeremiah appeals to God for the sake of his name.

Getting started

1. A new couple come to your church. They come on consecutive weeks and you quickly become good friends. No-one else seems to relate to them like you do. They are Christians but you soon realise they are involved in some serious sins. You want to maintain a good relationship with them but you are worried about their lack of godliness. What do you do?

Bible

2. Read Jer 3:1-11.

Note: Jeremiah now makes a distinction between Israel, the northern kingdom, and Judah, the southern kingdom.

(a) What have God's people done?

(b) Why are the descriptions of prostitution and adultery appropriate?

(c) What happened to Israel (vv 6-8, see also 2 Kings 17:1-6)?

3. Read Jer 3:12-4:4.

(a) What is repentance?

(b) How should the people repent?

(c) How is God their "husband" (Jer 3:14)?

(d) How will God give grace to his people (vv 15-19)?

(e) How should they circumcise their hearts (4:4)?

Circumcision

The cutting off of the foreskin. Male circumcision was a major mark of identity for Jews, following its initial commandment to Abraham (Genesis 17), reinforced by Joshua (Joshua 5:2-9). Other peoples, e.g. the Egyptians, also circumcised male children. A line of thought from Deuteronomy (e.g. 30:6), through Jeremiah (e.g. 31:33), to the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament (e.g. Romans 2:29) speaks of 'circumcision of the heart' as God's real desire, by which one may become inwardly what the male Jew is outwardly, that is, marked out as part of God's people.

From Paul for Everyone 1 Corinthians by Tom Wright p 242.

4. (a) Do Christians need to repent or only non-Christians? Give reasons for your answer.

(b) Why is it so hard to repent?

(c) (i) What if you repent but soon after go and do those same sins again?
Was your repentance genuine?

(ii) If you didn't *really* repent where does that leave you with God?

(d) How does God show grace to us? Is it conditional on our repentance?

5. Read Jer 4:5-31.
What is going to happen?

And from this point on, the voice of God changes from that of an anguished husband to that of an impersonal, implacable foe: [see Jer 4:16-18].

We need to be clear that this is not the sadistic violence of a tyrant; God never stops being the husband whose love for his bride cannot be quenched. This can be hard for us to fathom, because our sinful hearts don't have room for strong anger, strong love and perfect goodness all in the one place. But to help us get it, God allows the voice of Jeremiah to find its way into the discourse, so that in his reaction we are reminded of God's anguished love [see Jer 4:19].

This is Jeremiah's pain we are hearing, but not his alone, because in these words we hear God speaking too. How? Because what God has done to Jeremiah in making him a prophet means that Jeremiah now feels God's feelings.

From "Judgement in the words of Jeremiah" by Andrew Shead, the Briefing #401, 17 September, 2012.

To finish

6. (a) When you meet new people what do you talk about – jobs, family, common interests, sin etc.?

(b) Do you or should you ever point out their sins to them (see Matt 7:3-5)?

(c) How does grace fit in with sin spotting?

(d) Does grace cancel out sin?

Study 5, Jeremiah chs 5-6, growth

'But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. He 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.'

Jeremiah 17:7-8.

Reading Plan

Before beginning this study please read Jeremiah chs 15-19.

Jeremiah 15:1-21 Jeremiah has feelings of self-pity, depression and rebellion. God tells him to repent.

Jeremiah 16:1-21 An enacted parable as Jeremiah is told not to marry, but there is hope for a return after the exile.

Jeremiah 17:1-27 God gives people choices. Jeremiah preaches on Sabbath observance.

Jeremiah 18:1-23 God can shape nations like a potter. More plots against Jeremiah and his reaction.

Jeremiah 19:1-15 Enacted parable: Jeremiah and the clay jar.

Getting started

1. What is Christian growth?

2. How do you grow?

Bible

3. Read Jer 5:1-31.

Chapter 5 is a conversation between God and Jeremiah.

(a) Which bits are said by God and which bits are said by Jeremiah?

(b) What is God's argument and what is Jeremiah's argument?

(c) Who are the people in v 21 who "have eyes but do not see" and "ears but do not hear"?

(d) Jesus uses a similar expression to explain why he teaches in parables (see Mark 4:9-12 = Matt 13:13-15 = Luke 8:8-10).

(i) Who is Jesus referring to?

(ii) How can Jesus' disciples learn from his parables/teaching?

(iii) Does this help explain why the people wouldn't listen to Jeremiah's prophecies? How so?

(e) What things might Christians shut out of their thinking?

(f) How do new ideas effect your growth?

(g) Where might new ideas come from?

4. Read Jer 6:1-5.
Why should the people flee?

5. Read Jer 6:6-16.
(a) How is the destruction of Jerusalem described?

(b) What is the sin of the prophets and priests?

(c) Who are at the crossroads in v 16? What are their choices?

(d) Read Matt 11:20-30. How are Jesus' crossroads like Jeremiah's crossroads?

6. Read Jer 6:17-30.
What are the consequences of the decision they made at the crossroads?

To finish

7. (a) Can you name one decision you had to make that could be thought of as being at the crossroads?
- (b) How did you decide which way to go?
- (c) Did you grow as a result of your decision (see Jer 6:27)? Describe how you grew?

Study 6, Jeremiah chs 7 & 26, the Temple Sermon

Reading Plan

Before beginning this study please read Jeremiah chs 20-24.

Jeremiah 20:1-18 Jeremiah is beaten and put in the stocks.

Jeremiah 21:1-14 Jeremiah tells Zedekiah to surrender to the Babylonians.

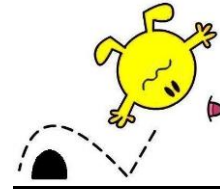
Jeremiah 22:1-30 In time sequence this chapter comes before ch 21. The kings mentioned: Josiah, Jehoahaz (= Shallum v 11), Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin all come before Zedekiah.

Jeremiah 23:1-40 False shepherds and false prophets but God promises the remnant a new exodus, a wise king and true shepherds.

Jeremiah 24:1-10 Another time shift: this comes after the exile. Enacted parable of the 2 baskets of figs.

Getting started

1. Church has been described as a "hospital for sinners". Do you agree or disagree? Why?

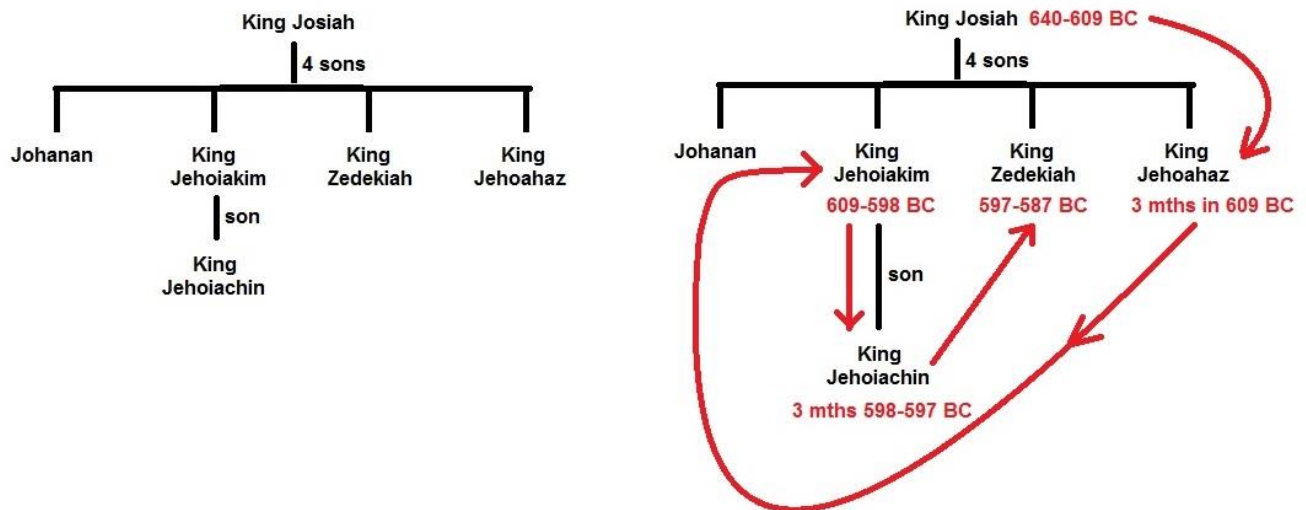


Bible

2. Read Jer 7:1-20.

Jeremiah may have preached on this subject more than once, since his dire warning in terms of the ruins of Shiloh (vv 12,14) meets us again in chapter 26, dated there in the reign of Jehoiakim (26:9). On that occasion, with no Josiah to protect him, the sermon nearly cost Jeremiah his life. It may be, however, that our present chapter, which is undated, belongs to that same troubled time, when Judah was caught between two warring empires, Egypt and Babylon, and was desperate for reassurance. While chapter 26 concentrates on the effect of the sermon on the hearers, chapter 7 is concerned with its contents in full, which clinch the predictions and reproaches of the previous chapters. The two sermons, or the two accounts of one sermon, complement and reinforce one another, pointing on to the blow which fell surely enough in 587.

The Message of Jeremiah by Derek Kidner p 48.



From New Bible Dictionary 3rd edition p 546.

Josiah had 4 sons, 3 of which became kings of Judah (see above, left hand side) but not in order of age (see right hand side). For a full list of kings see p 2 of these studies.

- (a) Jeremiah is giving this sermon from the gate to the temple (v 2). Why would this have taken courage?

- (b) Why is the temple of the Lord a good thing?

(c) Why is the temple of the Lord a bad thing (v 4)?

(d) (i) What sins are being committed while hiding under the “protection” of religion?

(ii) Why does Jeremiah call the temple a “den of robbers” (v 11)?

(iii) How would this have affected the people listening to Jeremiah?

(iv) Read Mark 11:15-19 and John 2:13-16.

Why does Jesus call the temple a “den of robbers” (Mark 11:17)?

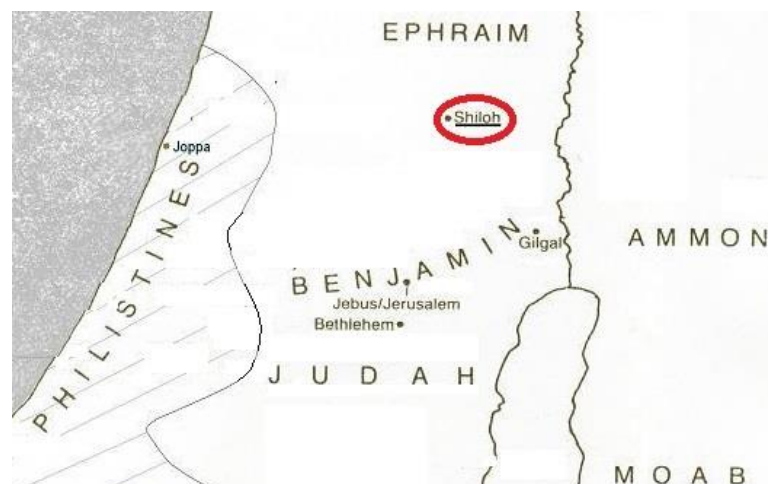
(v) What can we learn from this as we apply it to church today?

(e) (i) What happened at Shiloh (vv 12-15) (see 1 Sam 4:1-11 and Ps 78:60)?

(ii) Why does Jeremiah use this example?

[I]t was at **Shiloh** that the tent of meeting was set up in the early days of the Conquest (Joshua 18:1), and it was the principal sanctuary of the Israelites during the time of the Judges (Judges 18:31). . . . By the time of Eli and his sons [1 Samuel chs 1-4] the sanctuary had become a well-established structure for centralised worship. . . . Although Scripture does not refer directly to its destruction, it is possible from archaeological evidence that it did take place and this would fit in well with the references to Shiloh as an example of God’s judgment upon his people’s wickedness (Ps 78:60, Jer 7:12, 14, 26:6, 9).

From New Bible Dictionary 3rd edition p 1094.



The Temple in Jerusalem was planned by David (c. 1000 BC) and built by his son Solomon as the central sanctuary for all Israel. It was destroyed by Babylon in 587 BC and rebuilt by the returning exiles. Desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes in 167 BC. Rebuilding and beautification began by Herod the Great in 19 BC and completed in 63 AD. The Court of the Gentiles contained the thriving markets in sacrificial animals and sacred money for the temple offerings. Here too men would gather in the shaded porticos to listen to any teacher who cared to set up his stand. The Temple was not only the place of sacrifice, it was believed to be the unique dwelling of YHWH on earth, the place heaven and earth met. It was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD.

From Mark for Everyone by Tom Wright p 242

and The Lion Handbook to the Bible article by Richard France p 494.

3. Read Jer 26:1-11.
What is the reaction to Jeremiah's sermon?

4. Read Jer 26:12-24.
(a) What changed their minds?

(b) Why wasn't Uriah (vv 20-23) so lucky?

(c) How would Jeremiah have felt about all this since the same king that executed Uriah (see 26:1, 21) is in control of Judah?

To finish

5. What does true worship look like? How does God want us to worship him (see John 4:23-24)?
6. In what ways do we trust in the form of our worship rather than trusting the One we worship?

Study 7, Jeremiah's parables

Reading Plan

Before beginning this study please read Jeremiah chs 25-29.

Jeremiah 25:1-38 God's judgement will involve serving the Babylonians for 70 yrs. Other nations will also drink the cup of God's wrath.

Jeremiah 26:1-24 From the temple Jeremiah preaches repentance or judgement and is nearly killed for it.

Jeremiah 27:1-22 Enacted parable with Jeremiah making and wearing a yoke like that used for a team of oxen.

Jeremiah 28:1-17 Another prophet, Hananiah, flatly contradicts Jeremiah's prophecies.

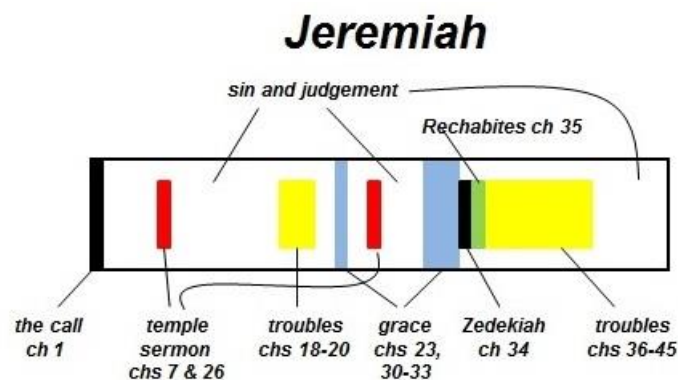
Jeremiah 29:1-32 Jeremiah writes a letter to the exiles in Babylon.

Getting started

1. When you were at school how did you learn things?
2. Was there a method of learning that worked particularly well for you (e.g. lectures, film, conversations, group projects, question and answer, reading or experiences)?

Bible

In the first 6 studies we've looked at Jeremiah chs 1 to 7 and ch 26. Jeremiah has 52 chapters and we are not going to do studies on each chapter one by one. Instead we will look at some specific features of the book like Jeremiah's enacted parables in this study, the example of the Rechabites in study 8, the troubles Jeremiah gets into in study 9, the new covenant in study 10 and God's restoration in study 11. If you've been working through the reading plan and the studies then you will already have a good idea of what Jeremiah is about. The diagram below will give you a quick overview of the whole book.



3. (a) Give an example of a parable from the Bible.

(b) What does it mean?

A Parable is a metaphor or simile which compares a religious truth with a common experience or circumstance in life.

Jesus often used parables to teach the meaning of his own life and ministry, and the nature of the kingdom of God.

Parables are a punchy form of communication designed to creep up on you without your knowing it. They are like time bombs. They look innocuous and are therefore received quite readily, only to go off suddenly and shatter your way of looking at life.

From Postcard from Palestine by Andrew Reid p 48.

Like the ancient prophets of Israel Jesus conveyed a lot of his message through what we call **prophetic signs** or **enacted parables**. He offered pieces of public theatre to drive home the message. This is such a massive part of the Jewish background that I think modern Christians, and certainly the general public, don't spot.

Just to give you some examples:

Hosea, the prophet 700 years before Jesus, was told to marry a known prostitute [Hosea chs 1-3]. Why? It was a prophetic symbol. He actually did it but it was meant to be a prophetic symbol of the fact that God was married to Israel who had prostituted itself. . . .

Ezekiel. I think he probably got the rawest deal. He had to do a whole bunch of things: lie on his left side for months, lie on his right side for months [Eze 4:4-8]. But he also had to build a little model of Jerusalem in the public court. Then, everyone's watching the prophet and he had to attack it – play war games against this little model of Jerusalem without saying anything and everyone was saying he's playing war games against this little model of Jerusalem [Eze 4:1-3]. The point was clear: Jerusalem would fall. . . .

Into the New Testament period, John the Baptist called everyone out to actually go to the Jordan River. They *had* to go into the Jordan River. There were plenty of other rivers, streams and baths around Israel but you had to go into the Jordan. Why? Because that's where Israel had begun on their journey to get into the Promised Land. They had to go through the Jordan. It was a prophetic sign that Israel has to begin again, or it will end. . . .

This is such a huge part of the prophetic mindset and of Jewish culture that unless you look at the life of Jesus through this lens you really miss a lot of what Jesus was trying to do. He selected 12 apostles, not 11, not 13. Why? A symbol of the 12 tribes of Israel. These were the 12 new patriarchs. Israel begins again. He dined and wined with sinners not just because he was a leftie liberal. No, it was a prophetic enacted parable of the invitation God was making to sinners to join his table. He was acting out his message of preaching.

From a sermon by John Dickson on Mark ch 11 at St Andrews, Roseville, 15/3/2015.

4. See if you can guess what point Jeremiah was trying to make with these parables:

(a) Jeremiah binds a belt around himself then takes it off and buries it in a hole. Later he digs it up again and finds it ruined.

(b) The filling of wineskins with wine.

(c) God tells Jeremiah he can't get married.

(d) Jeremiah buys a clay jar and takes some elders and priests out into the country where he smashes the jar.

(e) Two basket of figs are placed in front of the temple. One basket contains good figs and the other basket has inedible figs in it.

(f) Jeremiah makes a yoke of straps and crossbars like a yoke used to harness a team of oxen but Jeremiah wears it himself.

(g) While the Babylonian army were attacking Jerusalem Jeremiah buys a field in an area that will be overrun by the invaders.

(h) Jeremiah carries large stones to the entrance of Pharaoh's palace in Egypt and buries them there.

(i) The words of Jeremiah's prophecies against Babylon are read and then the scroll is sunk in the Euphrates River.

5. Now write the intended message for each of these parables:

(a) Read Jer 13:1-11.

(b) Read Jer 13:12-14.

(c) Read Jer 16:1-4.

(d) Read Jer 19:1-13.

(e) Read Jer ch 24.

In v 7 what are the implications of getting a new "heart" (see John 3:3-7, Heb 8:7-13)?

(f) Read Jer 27:2-8.

(g) Read Jer 32:6-43.

Anathoth suffered greatly from the army of Sennacherib, and only 128 men returned to it from the Babylonian exile (Neh. 7:27; Ezra 2:23).

(h) Read Jer 43:8-13.

(i) Read Jer 51:59-64.

(i) What are the common themes in Jeremiah's parables?

To finish

6. How do you learn things today? What is the best way to get things to sink in?

7. Is Christian growth related to learning? How so?

8. What will be the next step towards your growth?

Study 8, Jeremiah ch 35, The Rechabites

Reading Plan

Before beginning this study please read Jeremiah chs 30-35.

Jeremiah 30:1-24 God promises to bring his people back from exile and restore them in their own land.

Jeremiah 31:1-40 Return from exile, new shepherd, new covenant, new Jerusalem

Jeremiah 32:1-44 Enacted parable: While in prison Jeremiah buys a field from his cousin and God promises an everlasting covenant with his people.

Jeremiah 33:1-26 God promises restoration, a Righteous Branch, a king and priest forever.

Jeremiah 34:1-22 During the siege of Jerusalem Zedekiah promises to free the Hebrew slaves but their owners reneged.

Jeremiah 35:1-19 The Rechabites keep a promise they made 200 yrs ago.

Getting started

1. You accept an invitation to a party but you don't particularly want to go. In the next couple of days something better comes up. What do you do?

- (a) Go to the party and miss out on the better option.
- (b) Make up an excuse to get out of the party.
- (c) Tell them you never really wanted to go their party.
- (d) Not turn up and pretend you forgot.
- (e) None of the above. What do you do instead?

Why would you make the particular decision you selected?

Bible

2. Read Jeremiah 35:1-11.

(a) What were the Rechabites commanded to do?

(b) Why?

(c) What pressures were they under?

(d) What compromise had they already made?

The Rechabites, these spartan characters, saw themselves as living witnesses to the pilgrim origins of Israel, shunning the settled life of farms and vineyards for the simplicities of tents and flocks. Their ancestor, Jonadab, had not only set them this pattern: he was the zealot who had joined with Jehu [see chart of Israel's kings on p 2 of these studies] in setting up that king's notorious massacre of Baal-worshippers [2 Kings 10:15-

Study 9, Jeremiah chs 11-45, troubles

Reading Plan

Before beginning this study please read Jeremiah chs 36-40.

Jeremiah 36:1-32 Banned from the temple Jeremiah writes his book on a scroll which Jehoiakim burns.

Jeremiah and Baruch write it again.

Jeremiah 37:1-21 The Babylonians withdraw from attacking Jerusalem to fight with the Egyptians. Jeremiah tries to leave to go to Benjamin but is accused of deserting and arrested, beaten and thrown in a dungeon.

Jeremiah 38:1-28 Jeremiah's advice to surrender to the Babylonians nearly gets him killed. They put him in a muddy cistern instead but Ebed-Melech gets him out.

Jeremiah 39:1-40:16 Jerusalem is taken by the Babylonians and most of the people are taken into exile.

Jeremiah is allowed to stay behind with the poorest people and Gedaliah is appointed governor.

Getting started

1. How do you react when you are told something you don't want to hear?

Bible

2. Read Jer 11:18-23 and 18:13-23.

(a) What is the reaction to Jeremiah's words?

(b) How does Jeremiah handle it compared with Jesus (see Isaiah 53:7 and 1 Peter 2:21-24)?

3. Read Jer 19:1-20:2.

Why is Jeremiah beaten and put in the stocks?

4. Read Jer 20:3-18.

(a) What is Jeremiah's reaction?

(b) How can we speak to God?

5. Read Jer 36:1-26.

Why does Jehoiakim burn the scroll?

6. Read Jer 36:27-32.

What will happen to Jehoiakim?

7. Read Jer 37:1-21.

Why is Jeremiah arrested?

8. Read Jer 38:1-6.
Why is Jeremiah put down a cistern?
9. Read Jer 38:7-13.
Why is Jeremiah pulled out?
10. Read Jer 38:14-28.
(a) What is the power play between King Zedekiah and the officials?

(b) What choices does the king have?

11. Read Jer 39:1- 40:4.
(a) What happens?

(b) Why does Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, look after Jeremiah?

I suspect he [Jeremiah] realized the fall of Jerusalem had one immediate positive effect: it scattered not only Judah but also the word of God among the nations, where it began to take root in people beyond the borders of Israel, such as Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian (Jer 38:7-13; 39:16) and Nebuzaradan the Babylonian (Jer 40:1-5). The age of the Gentiles was dawning, and the climax of Jeremiah's book is the series of oracles to the nations of the world, beginning in Egypt (Jer 46) and culminating in Babylon (Jer 50–51).

From "Re-creation in the words of Jeremiah" (Part 3) by Andrew Shead *the Briefing* 27 May, 2013.

12. Read Jer 40:5-10.
(a) Why does Jeremiah stay in Israel?
- (b) Who is now living in Israel (see 39:10, 40:7-10)?
13. Read Jer 40:11-41:10.
What happens to Gedaliah?
14. Read Jer 41:11-18.
Why does Jeremiah go to Egypt?

15. Read Jer 42:1-43:7.
What choices does Jeremiah give them?

16. Read Jer 44:1-45:5. (We looked at Jer 43:8-13 in study 7.)
What will happen to God's people in Egypt?

To finish

17. How do you think Jeremiah would have felt as he experienced these events?

18. How do adverse events effect your growth? Why?

Study 10, Jeremiah ch 31, new covenant

Reading Plan

Before beginning this study please read Jeremiah chs 41-45.

Jeremiah 41:1-18 Ishmael kills Gedaliah. Johanan attacks Ishmael and leads the captives towards Egypt.

Jeremiah 42:1-22 Jeremiah advises Johanan's group not to go to Egypt but to stay in the land.

Jeremiah 43:1-13 They go to Egypt taking Jeremiah and Baruch with them. Enacted parable: Jeremiah buries large stones at the entrance to Pharaoh's palace.

Jeremiah 44:1-30 God will judge his people in Egypt because of their idolatry.

Jeremiah 45:1-5 Message from God to Baruch.

Getting started

1. Think of people you consider close friends. What is it that makes you consider them to be close friends (pick your top 5 and also the least important aspect)?
 - Good sense of humour
 - Time spent together
 - Shared experiences
 - Adventurous
 - Unpredictability
 - Encouraging
 - Same religion
 - Can talk on a "deep and meaningful" level
 - Physically attractive
 - Same political persuasion
 - Similar tastes in music, films, food etc.
 - Fun to be with
 - Sympathetic
 - Prayerful
 - Helpful
 - Considerate
 - Passionate
 - Understanding
2. What is it about God that makes you consider Him to be in a relationship with you?
3. What is it about your relationship with God that is different to that of a close friendship with a human being?

Bible

Covenant

To the modern mind a 'covenant' is simply a matter of legal documents and sealing-wax. But to the Hebrew mind it covered all human relationships. It was the bond which united people in mutual obligations, whether through a marriage contract, a commercial enterprise or a verbal undertaking. It was natural that people's relationship to God should have been expressed in covenant terms.

God establishes his covenant (agreement) successively with Noah, with Abraham, with the nation of Israel (through Moses), and with David. Each covenant grows progressively richer in promise, until the coming of Christ ushers in the 'new covenant'.

In every instance God takes the initiative – this is no agreement between equal parties. God draws up the terms. He makes them known. And he alone guarantees their keeping. Men enjoy the blessings of the covenant in so far as they obey God's commands.

From Lion Handbook to the Bible Second Revised Edition pp 123 and 134.

4. Read Jer 31:1-30.
 - (a) What promise does God make?

(b) What will things look like in terms of their land, city and joy?

5. Read Jer 31:31-34.

(a) Which old covenant is Jeremiah talking about (see Jer 11:1-5)?

(b) What went wrong (see Jer 11:6-8)?

(c) What is the new covenant (Jer 31:31-33)?

(d) What are the basic differences between the old and new covenants?

(e) What will living under the new covenant be like (Jer 31:33-34)?

Notice what God promises to forgive here: iniquity. This is not normal. The word 'iniquity' describes evil behaviour beyond the power of the law to forgive. Previously God had only forgiven Israel's iniquity under extraordinary circumstances, extending forgiveness on appeal quite apart from covenant or law: a forgiveness offered solely out of his divine goodness. Forgiveness of iniquity is first mentioned after the golden calf incident, when God reveals himself to Moses as: [see Ex 34:6-7a]. . . .

In Israel's later history we find a handful of times when a prophet intercedes with God to forgive iniquity, and the appeal is always made to God's name, or his faithful love—but not by the time Jeremiah came on the scene: The LORD will remember their iniquity and punish their sins. Then the LORD said to me, "Do not pray for the welfare of this people." (Jer 14:10-11)

Judah was cut off even from extraordinary forgiveness because, as the song cycle makes quite clear, the long pattern of sin and forgiveness simply couldn't go on. Forgiveness had done nothing to fix the problem of sin-inscribed hearts. Which brings us back to our text, where God's promise to "forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more" [Jer 31:34] is not only a direct reversal of Jeremiah 14, but also an explicit allusion to Exodus 34. . . .

In Israel's case, the transformative act of God that marks their forgiveness is his bringing them back from exile. Jeremiah looks forward to a day when God will bring his people home, and his understanding is that God's act of bringing them out of their captivity will be instrumental for their inner renewal. . . .

However, the new covenant holds out a new type of forgiveness that does not simply declare us right with God but *makes* us right with God. This forgiveness inwardly recreates us so that our heart is facing towards God and not away from him. And that opens in us a door through which the word of God enters to transform us from within, rather than destroying us from without. . . .

Jesus wanted the disciples to see this miracle as a work of resurrection power, a sign of the forgiveness he came to bestow. After his own resurrection they would come to experience for themselves, as we now have, the self-giving of Jesus that extends to his presence in each one of us by his Spirit, a self-giving that literally makes each of us a new creation.

From "Forgiveness in the words of Jeremiah" by Andrew Shead, *the Briefing*, 28 January, 2013.

(f) How do you reconcile this new covenant of Jeremiah's with the new covenant Jesus talks about in Luke 22:14-20?

6. Read Jer 31:35-40.

How secure are God's people under this new covenant?

To finish

7. (a) How can people accept the invitation to the new covenant?

(b) What relationships are involved?

Study 11, Jeremiah chs 32-33, restoration

Reading Plan

Before beginning this study please read Jeremiah chs 46-52.

Jeremiah 46:1-28 Babylon will defeat Egypt but Jacob (God's people) will be saved.

Jeremiah 47:1-7 Babylon will defeat the Philistines

Jeremiah 48:1-47 Moab will be destroyed but restored in the future.

Jeremiah 49:1-39 The fate of Ammon, Edom, Damascus, Kedar, Hazor and Elam.

Jeremiah 50:1-46 Babylon will fall. God's people will be forgiven and brought back to the land.

Jeremiah 51:1-64 Babylon was God's instrument of judgement but will itself be judged. Enacted parable:

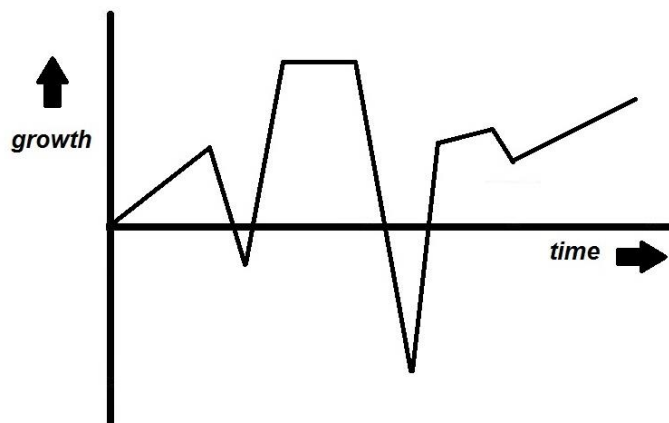
Baruch's brother, Seraiah, (see Jer 32:12) read the words of Jeremiah's prophecies against Babylon and then sunk the scroll in the Euphrates River.

Jeremiah 52:1-34 Similar to Jer 39 and 2 Kings 24-25. Jerusalem is taken by the Babylonians and most of the people are taken into exile, the temple is plundered, successive deportations and Jehoiachin is released after 37 years in exile.

Getting started

1. What is Christian growth (we looked at this question in study 5 and it is worth revisiting now)?

2. (a) Draw a graph of your growth since becoming a Christian e.g.



(b) What things adversely affected your growth?

(c) What things restored progress in your growth?

It was customary in our congregation to encourage young men to enter into the privilege of worship by standing and praying aloud. That particular Sunday I sensed the pressure of the saints (not, I fear, the leading of the Spirit), and I responded by unsteadily leaving my chair, for the first time, with the intention of praying.

Filled less with worship than with nervousness, I found my theology becoming confused to the point of heresy. I remember thanking the Father for hanging on the cross and praising Christ for triumphantly bringing the Spirit from the grave. Stuttering throughout, I finally thought of the word *Amen* (perhaps the first evidence of the Spirit's leading), said it, and sat down. I recall staring at the floor, too embarrassed to look around, and solemnly vowing *never again* to pray or speak aloud in front of a group.

When the service was over, I darted toward the door, not wishing to encounter an elder who might feel obliged to correct my twisted theology. But I was not quick enough. An older Christian man named Jim Dunbar intercepted me, put his arm on my shoulder, and cleared his throat to speak.

I remember thinking to myself, "Here it comes. Oh well, just endure it and then get to the car." I then listened to this godly gentleman speak words that I can repeat verbatim today, more than twenty years later.

"Larry," he said, "there's one thing I want you to know. Whatever you do for the Lord, I'm behind you one thousand per cent." Then he walked away.

Even as I write these words, my eyes fill with tears. I have yet to tell that story to an audience without at least mildly choking. Those words were life words. They had power. They reached deep into my being. My resolve never again to speak publicly weakened instantly.

From Encouragement The Key to Caring p24 by Larry Crabb and Dan Allender.

Bible

3. Read Jer ch 32.
(a) Why is Jeremiah in prison?

(b) How does God promise restoration?

4. Read Jeremiah ch 33.
(a) What is God going to do for his people?

(b) Why? Do they deserve it (see Jer 14:10, 17:1-2)?

(c) How would these prophecies have affected the people who felt the Babylonians breathing down their necks?

(d) How were these promises fulfilled (see Mark 2:5-11, Luke 1:32-33, 7:22, Heb 6:19-20)?

(e) What does God do for Christians?

(f) Why? Do we deserve it?

To finish

5. Have you ever felt that aspects of your life have been restored e.g. confidence, self-esteem, courage, health, faith, love, hope etc.? If so, how so?

6. When you feel down how can people restore your spirits?

7. How can you grow?

8. Look around, are there people who you could help with their restoration? How would you do about it?

So we reach the end of our tour. Like Jeremiah we are called to boldly proclaim this prophetic word. Jeremiah preached his Babylonian oracle in the fourth year of king Zedekiah (Jer 51:59), at a time when Babylon was at the height of her power and Jeremiah's words must have seemed like escapist fantasy. The gospel of judgement and forgiveness that we preach is just as disturbing today. . . . What has the power to open the eyes of this generation to such impossible truths? To bring them to the impossible admission of their guilt, and to the impossible recognition of their Lord and their God? The word of forgiveness that we call the gospel has this power, and its power to bring the dead to life is released in its fullness when the word is spoken. The act of power by which history will end and a new creation descend is nothing more or less than the very same word of judgement and forgiveness already spoken: Christ.

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. (Heb 2:14-15).

From "Re-creation in the words of Jeremiah" (Part 3) by Andrew Shead, *the Briefing*, 27 May, 2013.