



# Jeremiah

Chapters 34-52

*"You who have escaped  
from the sword,  
go, do not stand still!  
Remember the LORD  
from far away,  
and let Jerusalem  
come into your mind...."  
--Jer. 51:50*

# The Bible Challenge

A daily guide to reading the Bible in a year

## Literary Structure of Jeremiah

On the micro level the book resists being outlined in a logical structure. Jeremiah's ministry was during a tumultuous time, the structure and compilation of his book reflects that fact.

That his words were recorded and maintained is miraculous in itself. With the help of his scribal assistant Baruch, the record of Jeremiah's ministry were captured and memorialized for all generations as a testimony to the Lord.

However, the following outline provides some structure to the book on a macro level.

The Prophet Jeremiah	Chapters 1-52
The Call of Jeremiah	(1)
A Prophet to Judah	(2-45)
A Prophet to the Nations	(46-51)
The Fall of Jerusalem	(52)

Chapter 1, is a call narrative to establish Jeremiah's credentials as a prophet of the Lord. For the most part, chapters 2-45 concern the southern kingdom of Judah with a focus on the prophecy of destruction on the city of Jerusalem and the Temple. In chapters 46-51, Jeremiah becomes the prophet to the nations. The final chapter, is a narrative describing the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians.

The general logic of the book is discerned when one considers the work as a whole. The first 45 chapters are written to establish the credentials of the prophet as having words that are true. Chapter 52, historically validates the prophets words. Therefore, the prophecies to the nations are certain and they would do well to heed them, lest they share the fate of Judah and Jerusalem--*"let Jerusalem come into your mind!"* (Jer. 5:1:50) Just as foreigners have come into the holy places of the Lord (51:51), so too will Babylon have destroyers come from the Lord against her (51:53)! The fall of Jerusalem is sign of God's judgment and it will be the focal point of God's restoration.



# The Bible Challenge

A daily guide to reading the Bible in a year

## A Prophet to Judah (2-45)

The prophet's ministry to the kings of Judah leading up to the fall of Jerusalem and deportation to Babylon is recorded first. The section can be generally divided into four parts.

<b>A Prophet to Judah</b>	<b>Chapters 2-45</b>
<b>Prophecies of Judgment on Judah</b>	2-25
<b>Contending with False Prophets</b>	26-29
<b>Prophecies of Restoration for Judah</b>	30-33
<b>The Fall of Jerusalem</b>	34-45

*“Have you not observed that these people are saying, ‘The LORD has rejected the two clans that he chose’? Thus they have despised my people so that they are no longer a nation in their sight.*

*Thus says the LORD: If I have not established my covenant with day and night and the fixed order of heaven and earth, then I will reject the offspring of Jacob and David my servant and will not choose one of his offspring to rule over the offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.*

*For I will restore their fortunes and will have mercy on them.”*

*--Jer. 33:24-26*

In the last lesson, we looked at the promise of the new covenant and restoration. However, Jeremiah concludes this section with a record of the Fall of Jerusalem in chapters 34-45.

## The Fall of Jerusalem (34-45)

At the heart of this section stands an indictment against a rebellious people of God: You have rejected God's Word.

### To obey or not to obey--that is the question! (34-35)

The Lord has been faithful to the word and terms of his covenant with Israel and Judah. He reminds them how he rescued them from bondage in Egypt and out of the House of Slavery. For this reason the principle and practice of Jubilee was critical.

*You recently repented and did what was right in my eyes by proclaiming liberty, each to his neighbor, and you made a covenant before me in the house that is called by my name,<sup>16</sup> but then you turned around and profaned my name when each of you took back his male and female slaves, whom you had set free according to their desire, and you brought them into subjection to be your slaves.*



# The Bible Challenge

A daily guide to reading the Bible in a year

The Lord gave them an opportunity to repent that he might relent from the disaster planned for them. They briefly did repent, but then repented of their repentance! This is just one last sign of the disobedience that indicates the situation leading to the sentence of judgment. Their failure to proclaim liberty to slaves, will become the occasion of the Lord to proclaim liberty to the sword, to pestilence, to famine! (34:17) The cities of Judah will fall to the sword of Babylon.

As a contrast, to the royal rebellion, there remains a righteous remnant in the Rechabites (35:1-19) Their story is told as a foil against the widespread rebellion. They are among those who "obeyed the command" and therefore they "shall never lack a man to stand before me [the Lord]" (35:19).

## **Jehoiakim Rejects God's Word (36:1-32)**

At the command of the Lord, Jeremiah recorded on a scroll word for word the Lord's planned judgment. The aim was to encourage repentance.

*"It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the disaster that I intend to do to them, so that every one may turn from his evil way, and that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin."*

*--Jer. 36:3*

*And I will punish him and his offspring and his servants for their iniquity. I will bring upon them and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem and upon the people of Judah all the disaster that I have pronounced against them, but they would not hear."*

*--Jer. 36:31*

The scroll of prophecy was met at first by the royal officials with sincerity and fear of the Lord. (36:11-19) However when the words were read to the King, he tore the scroll into pieces and burned it in a fire pot. (36:20-26) The king would not listen to his officials, but more concerning he would not listen to the Lord. His fate was sealed. Jeremiah's written prophecies of disaster would be realized on Jehoiakim and Judah--for they would not hear! (36:31)

## **Jerusalem's Last Days (37-39)**

Jehoiakim hated Jeremiah and his prophecies and as a result was judged most severely, his kinder brother Zedekiah also failed to "listen to the words of the Lord spoken through Jeremiah the prophet" (37:2).



King Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, "I am afraid of the Judeans..." --Jer:38:19

# The Bible Challenge

A daily guide to reading the Bible in a year

In Zedekiah's day, it was the court officials who rebelled against the prophet. Zedekiah himself would take secret council. Jeremiah challenged Zedekiah to surrender to the officials of Babylon, but the king feared the words of his rebellious advisors more than the Lord and his true prophet.

*'Your trusted friends have deceived you  
and prevailed against you;  
now that your feet are sunk in the mud,  
they turn away from you.'* --Jer.38:22

---

Instead of heeding the words of the prophet and surrendering, Zedekiah fled the conquering Babylonian army (39:1:10). He thus sealed his own fate as one under judgment and guaranteed the total destruction of the city of Jerusalem. Ironically, a gentile Ethiopian pleads for the life of Jeremiah.

The people of Judah were exiled into Babylon, only a few poor farmers were left to tend vineyards and fields.

*Then Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard,  
carried into exile to Babylon the rest of the  
people who were left in the city, those who had  
deserted to him, and the people who remained.  
Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, left in  
the land of Judah some of the poor people who  
owned nothing, and gave them vineyards and  
fields at the same time. Jer. 39:9-10*

---

## Judah's futile Rebellion against Babylon and God (40-45)

Earlier in the prophets writing, Jeremiah had written to the people who were carted into exile in Babylon to settle in for a long exile under Babylon for 70 years (see Jer. 29:4:-14)). The same principle was at work for the remnant who remained in the land. The principle is submit and surrender for a season.

*"Dwell in the land and serve the king of  
Babylon, and it shall be well with you." Jer. 40:9*

---



# The Bible Challenge

A daily guide to reading the Bible in a year

However, there remained a rebellious streak in certain members of the Judah. Ishmael the son of Nethaniah led a rebellion against the Babylonian appointed leadership (41:1-18). The rebellion against Babylon then led to an even greater rebellion against the Lord.

The leaders of Judah inquired of the prophet as to what they should do. They feared the reprisal of Babylon and in their own plans purposed to seek refuge in Egypt.

The Word of the Lord again called them to remain in the land and trust the Lord to protect them from Babylon.

*Do not fear the king of Babylon, of whom you are afraid. Do not fear him, declares the LORD, for I am with you, to save you and to deliver you from his hand. <sup>12</sup> I will grant you mercy, that he may have mercy on you and let you remain in your own land. <sup>13</sup> But if you say, 'We will not remain in this land,' disobeying the voice of the LORD your God <sup>14</sup> and saying, 'No, we will go to the land of Egypt, where we shall not see war or hear the sound of the trumpet or be hungry for bread, and we will dwell there,' <sup>15</sup> then hear the word of the LORD, O remnant of Judah. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: If you set your faces to enter Egypt and go to live there, <sup>16</sup> then the sword that you fear shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt, and the famine of which you are afraid shall follow close after you to Egypt, and there you shall die. Jer. 42:10-16*

*Behold, I am watching over them for disaster and not for good. All the men of Judah who are in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by famine, until there is an end of them. <sup>28</sup> And those who escape the sword shall return from the land of Egypt to the land of Judah, few in number; and all the remnant of Judah, who came to the land of Egypt to live, shall know whose word will stand, mine or theirs. Jer. 44:27-28*

Sadly, they did not humble themselves (44:10) and walk in the ways of the Lord. Egypt would be their grave, only the Lord would preserve a remnant as a testimony to his Word.



# The Bible Challenge

A daily guide to reading the Bible in a year

## A Prophet to the Nations (46-51)

The final section of the prophet Jeremiah are the Lord's Word of Judgment against the nations. There are 5 oracles of judgment:

- God will Judge Egypt (46:1-28)
- God will Judge Philistia (47:1-7)
- God will Judge Moab (48:1-47)
- God will Judge Many Nations (49:1-39)
- God will Judge Babylon (50:1-51:64)

In several of the prophecies, the judgment is not total. Just as the Lord disciplines Judah and still preserves a remnant. The same principle is operative in the prophecies against the nations. The exceptions are Philistia and Babylon. For example to Egypt the Lord declares:

*The LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, said:  
"Behold, I am bringing punishment upon Amon  
of Thebes, and Pharaoh and Egypt and her gods  
and her kings, upon Pharaoh and those who  
trust in him. <sup>26</sup> I will deliver them into the hand  
of those who seek their life, into the hand of  
Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and his  
officers.*

*Afterward Egypt shall be inhabited as in the  
days of old, declares the LORD.*

*--Jer. 46:25-26*

*But fear not, O Jacob my  
servant,  
nor be dismayed, O  
Israel,  
for behold, I will save you  
from far away,  
and your offspring from  
the land of their captivity.  
Jacob shall return and  
have quiet and ease,  
and none shall make  
him afraid.*

*<sup>28</sup> Fear not, O Jacob my  
servant,  
declares the LORD,  
for I am with you.  
I will make a full end of all  
the nations  
to which I have driven  
you, but of you I will not  
make a full end.*

*--Jer. 46:27-28*

The fall of the nations is a sign to the remnant of Judah and Israel of the Lord's justice and judgment.

These prophecies of judgment serve not only to as a warning to the rebellions found among Israel and Judah's neighbors, they are also a sign of vindication and salvation for the people of God. The word of comfort to Jacob and Israel provides a vision of a hope and a future-- God will not make a full end to Israel. (46:27-28)



# The Bible Challenge

A daily guide to reading the Bible in a year

## The Fall of Jerusalem (52)

The final narrative chapter of the prophet Jeremiah's writings serve as the sign of the certainty of the Lord's decrees. Jerusalem's fall and Zedekiah's blinding is a warning to all (Judah, Israel and the Nations) that the Word of the Lord is not to go unheeded.

What the Lord has done to the rebellious kings of Judah, he will certainly do to the rebellious kings of the nations if they persist in their rebellion. Future generations of leaders, remember the fall of Jerusalem, the destruction of the Temple of the Lord, and the exiling of the people of God.

They thought that it would never happen to them. It did. Nations and peoples of the world be warned. If the walls of the city of God, Jerusalem have fallen under judgment for its rebellion, so too will the walls of the City of Man, Babylon, fall for its rebellion.

*"Thus says the LORD of hosts:  
The broad wall of Babylon  
shall be leveled to the ground,  
and her high gates  
shall be burned with fire.  
The peoples labor for nothing,  
and the nations weary themselves only for  
fire."  
--Jer. 51:58*

---

The final words of the prophet provide a glimmer of hope. The Davidic monarchy is alive "graciously freed" in the city of Babylon. God has preserved a remnant unto himself.

*And he spoke kindly to him and gave him a seat above the seats of the kings who were with him in Babylon. <sup>33</sup> So Jehoiachin put off his prison garments. And every day of his life he dined regularly at the king's table, <sup>34</sup> and for his allowance, a regular allowance was given him by the king, according to his daily needs, until the day of his death, as long as he lived.  
--Jer. 52:32-34*

---