



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

JEREMIAH 1-33

Week 1

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Before You Begin Your Journey...

Imagine for a moment the unimaginable. Your country and community have been taken over by a foreign power. Any semblance of stability in your life and the life of your family and friends is only a distant memory. The social order as well as your local government and municipal services have fallen into disarray. Homes whose occupants you once knew now stand vacant, looted or burned. The residents have been deported hundreds of miles away. You are forced to dig through trash cans for scraps of food for your family. Malnourishment and disease are threatening. You don't know how much longer you can hold out. Any day now, soldiers whose language you don't understand may come and force you and your family to leave.

You would be confused—looking for answers. You would be looking for meaning in a bleak future. This is the chaotic environment in which Jeremiah the prophet preached his message.

Most people in the ancient world believed that disasters came from any one (or a combination) of a number of pagan gods or the one true God. The Israelites were no different—they thought God had unfairly singled them out. Jeremiah's job was to show that God had allowed this destruction to come for good reason—the Hebrews had abandoned their covenant with God. The Hebrews brought their pain and misery on themselves.

Jeremiah's ministry had begun years before the crisis that ended in the downfall of the Jewish kingdom. He had seen physical prosperity and spiritual reform under the reign of King Josiah. But Josiah's reign was one of the few bright spots in an increasingly dark and gloomy sequence of rulers, who finally brought the kingdom to its gruesome end.

Yet, like all other prophets, ministers and representatives of God throughout history, Jeremiah is called to direct the attention of his listeners above and beyond the present earthly distress toward hope and trust in their creator.

Christians would do well to learn a major lesson from Jeremiah. In a world where problems and crises of society seem overwhelming and at times hopeless, Christians should constantly point people toward the One who *is* the only lasting solution.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Albrecht". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "G" and a long, sweeping underline that extends across the name.

Greg Albrecht
Executive Director, Plain Truth Ministries

How to Use the CWR Bible Survey...

1—Read and study at your own pace. This is a devotional. It is designed to help you consider and ponder the great truths of God’s written revelation. It is designed to help you worship and come to know God. We plan to cover the entire Bible in 43 volumes, and while that sounds like a long time, don’t be in a hurry. Take your time! Even though each volume is divided into bite-size daily lessons, you may want to take two days on each “daily” lesson.

2—We suggest you set aside a special time for the *CWR Bible Survey* every day. We recommend allowing 30-45 minutes, but even if you can only spare 15 minutes, try to make it part of your regular schedule. You will find that the *CWR Bible Survey* will be an invaluable resource for facing your daily challenges.

3—You will need a good Bible. This might be an excellent time for you to consider purchasing a study Bible. Plain Truth Ministries has reviewed many of the study Bibles that are available, and in cooperation with Thomas Nelson and Zondervan, we are pleased to be able to offer two superb study Bibles that will be an excellent resource and help to you. Please see the back pages of this book for more details.

4—Always read the assigned passage of the daily lesson in your Bible first. Each daily lesson builds upon the portion of the Bible being covered that day. You may want to begin by praying about what God has in store for you as you read, and then look at the questions and background information.

5—Consider the format of each daily lesson. Almost every daily lesson will include:

- **Opening Up to the Word** —a section designed to help you open your mind to the teaching God has inspired.
- **Digging Into the Word**—this section will encourage you to get your nose into the Bible and think deeply about what it says.
- **Living Out the Word**—here you will be challenged to consider the practical implications for your life. How does this passage help you live?

• **Window On the Word**—will offer key insights to help you more clearly understand the daily Bible passage.

6—After you finish the daily lesson, take some quiet time. You may simply think, look out the window, take a walk, or even get down on your knees. But use this time to let this daily lesson sink in. Ask God to show you what he wants you to understand from your reading and study.

7—Consider the *CWR Bible Survey* for small groups in which you may be involved. Tell your friends about it. If you are involved in a small group that meets for prayer and Bible study, introduce your group to it. Many are seeking an easy-to-read guide to help them understand the Bible and to help them know God. The *CWR Bible Survey* can do that!

• **Abbreviations Used in the *CWR Bible Survey***—

Genesis	Ge	Nahum	Na
Exodus	Ex	Habakkuk	Hab
Leviticus	Lev	Zephaniah	Zep
Numbers	Nu	Haggai	Hag
Deuteronomy	Dt	Zechariah	Zec
Joshua	Jos	Malachi	Mal
Judges	Jdg	Matthew	Mt
Ruth	Ru	Mark	Mk
1 Samuel	1Sa	Luke	Lk
2 Samuel	2Sa	John	Jn
1 Kings	1Ki	Acts	Ac
2 Kings	2Ki	Romans	Ro
1 Chronicles	1Ch	1 Corinthians	1Co
2 Chronicles	2Ch	2 Corinthians	2Co
Ezra	Ezr	Galatians	Gal
Nehemiah	Ne	Ephesians	Eph
Esther	Est	Philippians	Php
Job	Job	Colossians	Col
Psalms	Ps	1 Thessalonians	1Th
Proverbs	Pr	2 Thessalonians	2Th
Ecclesiastes	Ecc	1 Timothy	1Ti
Song of Songs	SS	2 Timothy	2Ti
Isaiah	Isa	Titus	Tit
Jeremiah	Jer	Philemon	Phm
Lamentations	La	Hebrews	Heb
Ezekiel	Eze	James	Jas
Daniel	Da	1 Peter	1Pe
Hosea	Hos	2 Peter	2Pe
Joel	Joel	1 John	1Jn
Amos	Am	2 John	2Jn
Obadiah	Ob	3 John	3Jn
Jonah	Jnh	Jude	Jude
Micah	Mic	Revelation	Rev

JEREMIAH 1-33

The Collapse of
a Nation

Introduction to Jeremiah 1-33

Authorship: The precise meaning of Jeremiah's name is not certain. It may mean, "Yahweh establishes," "Yahweh exalts" or "Yahweh hurls down." Any of these could fit the ministry of this great prophet.

Jeremiah's father, Hilkiah, was a member of the Levitical priesthood and lived in Anathoth, a small village northeast of Jerusalem.

Date: Jeremiah's ministry extended from the 13th year of the reign of Josiah (Jer 1:2), until the exile of the citizens of Jerusalem (1:3)—from about 627 B.C. to the fall of Judah in 586 B.C., possibly even to 582 B.C. Jeremiah's ministry spanned five rulers in Israel and more than 40 years.

One of the interesting characteristics of Jeremiah is his apparent disdain for chronology. Jeremiah often places prophecies together that were actually years apart. On another note, while Jeremiah was the greatest spiritual leader of his time in Israel, his was not a happy life. It was marked by constant sadness. He has been referred to as the most "psychological" of the prophets and the most interesting as a person. Jeremiah never married. His closest friend was his faithful secretary and scribe, Baruch.

Jeremiah prophesied and ministered among the survivors in Judah and later among the Jews who fled to Egypt. Because he prophesied that Babylon would take Judah into captivity, he was not popular. False prophets were constantly contradicting his message and seeking to silence him. He was often arrested or in trouble with the authorities, yet he never backed off from the message God had given him to deliver. Judah and Jerusalem were to be destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar and the people carried off into captivity.

Jeremiah encountered more opposition from more enemies than any other Old Testament prophet. He was unlike most of the other prophets who urged the nation to withstand their enemies with God's help. Because Jeremiah was convinced that Israel would be overcome by its enemies as God ordained, he urged

surrender.

Reading outline:

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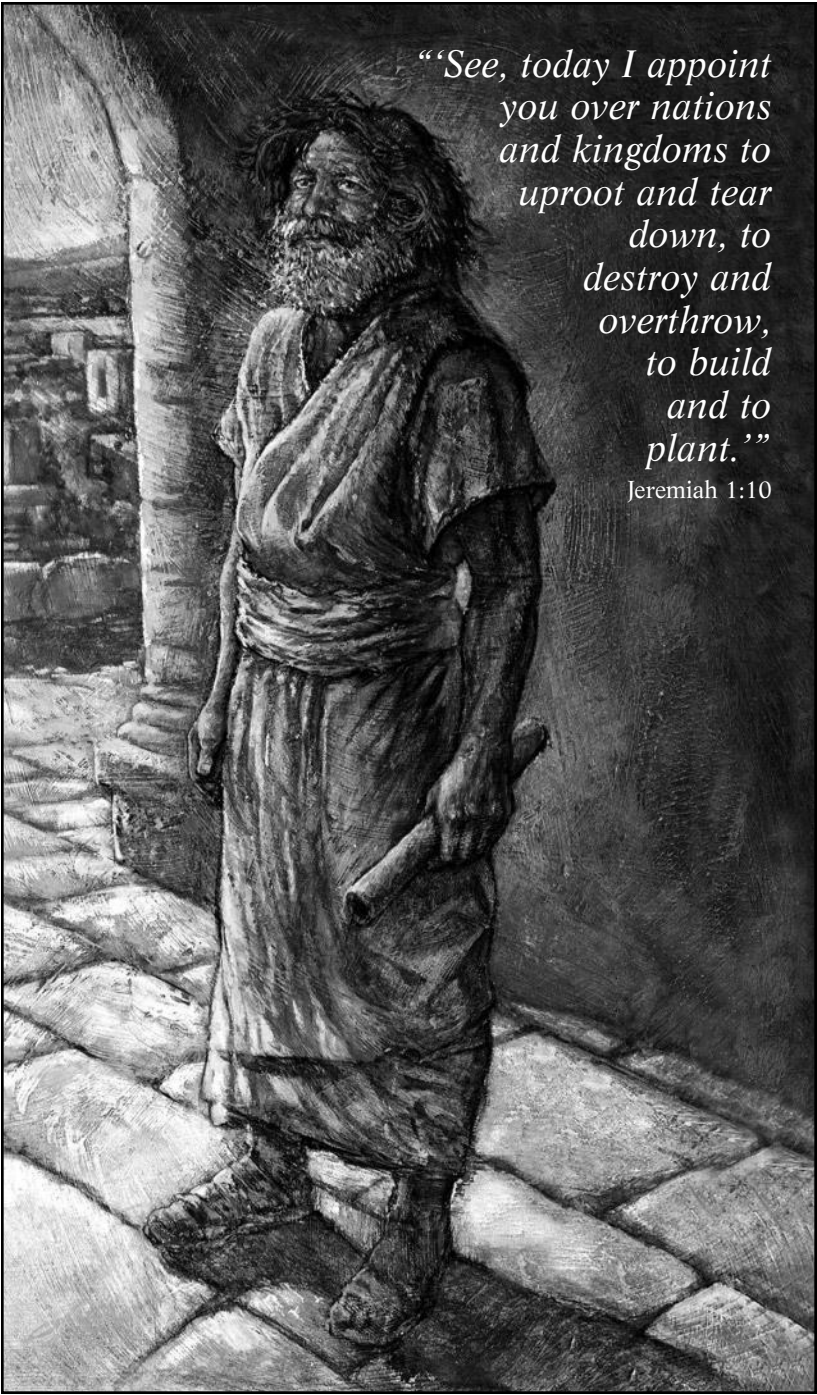
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*“See, today I appoint
you over nations
and kingdoms to
uproot and tear
down, to
destroy and
overthrow,
to build
and to
plant.”*

Jeremiah 1:10

These Lips Were Made for Talking

DAY 1

Jeremiah 1

Have you ever felt inadequate when it comes to talking to people about God? Are you afraid you might not say the right thing?

1. Who was Jeremiah's father, and what was Jeremiah's vocation by birth (v. 1)?
2. At what point in Jeremiah's life did God set him apart for a special purpose (vs. 4-5)? At what age was he called to be a prophet (v. 6)?
3. What was Jeremiah's great fear (v. 6), and what was God's answer to Jeremiah's concern (v. 9)?
4. What two signs did God give Jeremiah (vs. 2-13), and what did they portend (vs. 12, 14-16)?

1. What was your best experience talking with someone about God? What was your worst, and why?
2. When you think about talking with someone about God, do you feel: (a) no fear, just excitement; (b) a little fear, but still excited; (c) equal parts excitement and fear; (d) more fear than excitement; (e) no excitement, just fear.
3. Do you feel God has ever used you to speak to others about him?

Jeremiah was a **priest** by birth, but a prophet by divine calling (vs. 1-2). The Hebrew word for **child** (v. 6) does not indicate a precise age, but could refer to infants or to people in their early 20's. Judging from the length of Jeremiah's ministry, he was probably called between 20 to 25 years of age. **The almond tree** (v. 11) was called the awake tree because it announced the coming of spring. In the same way, God was awake—making sure his word would come to pass. The **boiling pot** (v. 13) represents destruction, a coming invasion from the north, to spill out on Israel in the south. This probably refers to the Babylonians, who would approach from the north because of the impassable Arabian Desert.

OPENING
up to the Word

DIGGING
into the Word

LIVING
out the Word

WINDOW
on the Word

A Lost Love

Jeremiah 2

OPENING
up to the Word

Did you ever have a loving relationship with someone, only to have the other person stop loving you? Do you remember all the painful emotions that experience aroused?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What was the quality of the relationship between God and Israel in the beginning (vs. 2-3)?
2. What amazing thing had Israel done that no other nation had done (vs. 9-11)?
3. Of what two sins did God accuse Israel (v. 13), and what does *digging your own cisterns* represent?
4. Using an analogy, God declared that he planted one thing, but something else grew. What did He plant, and what grew (v. 21)?
5. How many gods did God accuse Israel of having (v. 28)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. What is the most painful part of being spurned by someone you loved?
2. Has there ever been a time in your life when you spurned God's love, and chose another interest or attraction over him? What was it, and why did you find it so attractive?
3. Although we are sometimes unfaithful to God, what is his eternal promise to us (2Ti 2:13)?

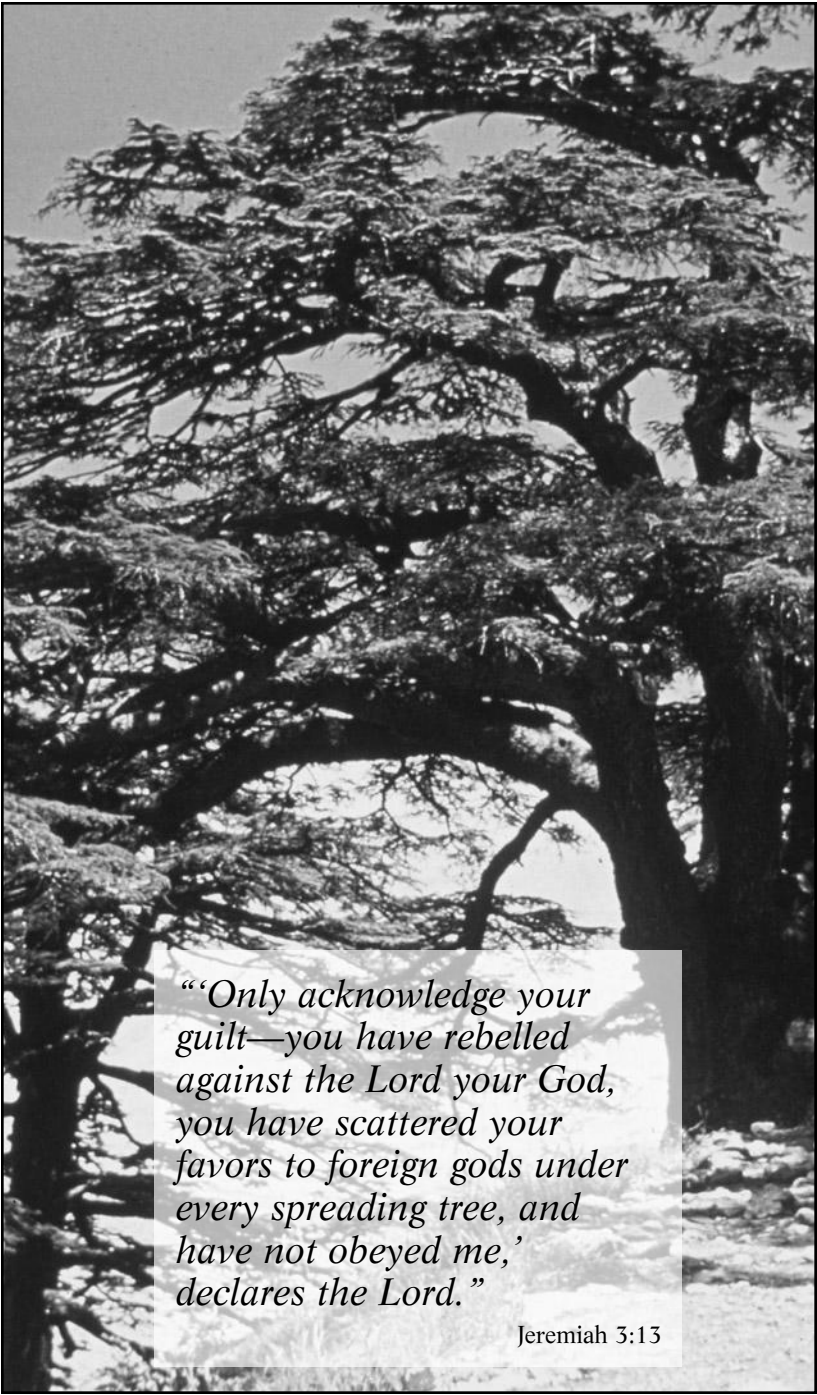
WINDOW
on the Word

"Broken cisterns" (v. 13). *Jeremiah compares Israel's abandonment of him for idols with someone abandoning a spring for a cistern. A spring was the source of the most reliable, pure and refreshing water. In contrast, a cistern was a large pit dug into the rock and covered with plaster, used to gather rainwater. Water from cisterns had a bad taste. They were not reliable, since they depended on the rains. When a cistern was broken, the water leaked out. Jeremiah uses an analogy of **female camels and donkeys** (vs. 23-24) that were in heat and seeking a mate, to describe Israel's chasing of foreign gods. Modesty and self control were no longer exercised. The Israelites were now being ruled by sinful passions.*



*“This is what the Lord says:
‘What fault did your fathers find
in me, that they strayed so far
from me? They followed
worthless idols and became
worthless themselves.’”*

Jeremiah 2:5



“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.”

Jeremiah 3:13

The Shame of a Nation

DAY 3

Jeremiah 3

What nations come to your mind as having shameful periods in their history? Name several.

1. What shameful act did God accuse Israel of in vs. 1-3?
2. In order to appease God, rather than change their sinful activity, what did Israel do that God condemns (vs. 4-5)?
3. Who did God name as the first unfaithful sister, and how did her activity affect the other (vs. 6-10)?
4. Although the northern kingdom of Israel sinned first, and most blatantly, who did God say was more righteous (v. 11), and why?
5. Because God is merciful, what promise did he make to Israel and Judah, despite their unfaithfulness (vs. 14-18)?

1. Have you ever done something that you were deeply ashamed of? What do you now wish you had done differently?
2. Do you think your shameful act had a more detrimental affect on your human relationships, or your fellowship with God?
3. Have you ever acknowledged your sin before God and asked for forgiveness? He promises that he is merciful and will “not be angry forever” (vs. 12-13).

*If a wife were adulterous, a husband could give her a **certificate of divorce** (v. 8) and send her away. Since Israel had been unfaithful, God gave her a certificate of divorce and sent her away from him. This is probably referring to the destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel by Assyria in 722 B.C., when Israel was conquered, and taken into exile. **The Ark of the Covenant** (v. 16), which resided in the Temple, was lost after Babylon destroyed the southern kingdom of Judah in 586 B.C. But in the future restoration of Israel and Judah, it was not replaced.*

OPENING
up to the Word

DIGGING
into the Word

LIVING
out the Word

WINDOW
on the Word

Truth and Consequences

Jeremiah 4

OPENING
up to the Word

Has anyone ever told you something about yourself that was true, but painful to hear? How long did it take before you finally accepted the truth about yourself?

DIGGING
into the Word

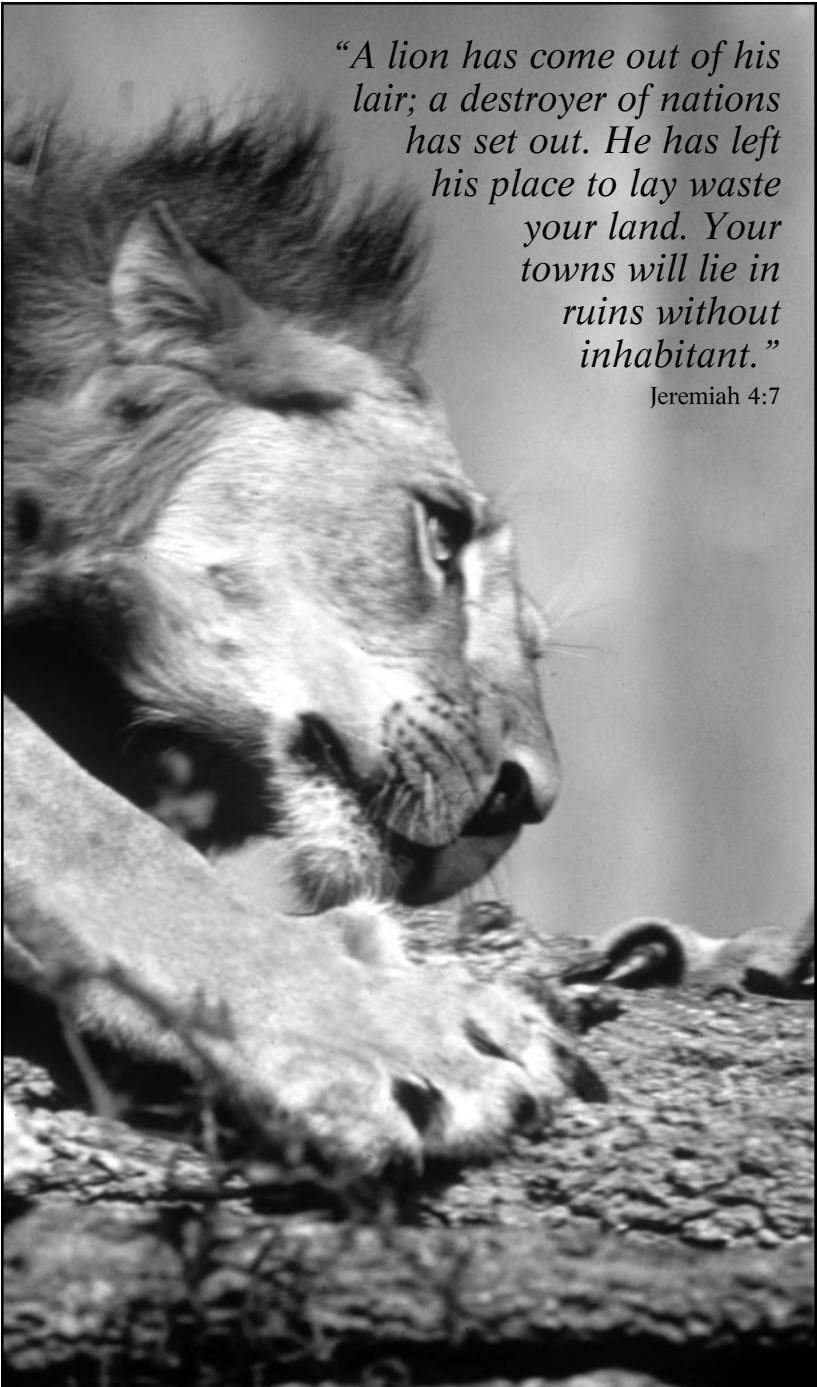
1. What part of their bodies did God encourage the men of Judah and Jerusalem to “circumcise” (v. 4)?
2. When disaster came from the north (v. 6), how would certain government officials, priests and prophets respond (v. 9)?
3. What was Jeremiah’s quandary in verse 10? Did God lie to the people of Israel?
4. In what had the people become skilled (v. 22)? (a) studying the Law, (b) setting up idols, (c) getting divorced, (d) doing evil, (e) offering sacrifices.
5. What sound would soon send everyone running (v. 29) and what would it represent (v. 31)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Have you ever come to see a sin you had previously not recognized? If so, how did he do that? How did you respond at first?
2. How can you tell when God is speaking to your heart about a needed change in your life?

WINDOW
on the Word

“Lord, how completely you have deceived this people” (v. 10). *This is probably one of the most controversial passages in the book of Jeremiah. It seems to say that God deceived Israel by telling them he would bring peace, but then delivering war and destruction. Yet, at no time did Jeremiah ever prophesy peace. Some say that Jeremiah spoke these words during a bout of depression. It might be best understood as yet another time when the Bible records humans “putting words into God’s mouth” and attributing their perspectives to Him.*



*“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.”*

Jeremiah 4:7

The Price of Stubbornness

Jeremiah 5

OPENING
up to the Word

Has anyone ever accused you of being hard-headed or stubborn? Did you take that as a criticism or a compliment?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What did God dare Jeremiah to find in the land (v. 1)? What did God promise to do if Jeremiah could find that one person?

2. What happened every time God tried to get Israel's attention by disciplining her for her sin (v.3)?

3. False prophets were spreading lies about God. What were the lies (v. 12), and to what did God compare the false prophets?

4. What did God say had kept the rains and harvest away (vs. 23-25)?

5. What did Jeremiah conclude that the people truly loved in verse 31?

LIVING
out the Word

1. How would you honestly describe yourself? (a) easy to teach, (b) difficult to teach, (c) almost impossible to teach.

2. Can you be stubborn in a good way? How can your stubbornness displease God?

3. Can God get your attention when he needs to? (a) easily, (b) reluctantly, (c) it's almost impossible! Do you think God would agree with your assessment?

4. True or False: you are able to admit your mistakes or weaknesses.

WINDOW
on the Word

***"A lion...a wolf...a leopard"** (v. 6) is not meant to be taken literally, for the Israelites could easily ward these attackers off. These were representative of the coming invasion from the north. Some commentators feel they may represent different nations (as they might in Daniel). In this context, however, they most likely refer to the Babylonians—strong like lions, ravenous like the wolf and swift like the leopard.*

Jeremiah 6

Have you ever found yourself in a dangerous situation? Had you ignored any warnings? Which ones?

1. When could Jerusalem expect her attack to come (vs. 5-6)?
2. Why were people not listening to the Lord's message as Jeremiah preached it (v. 10)?
3. What had God's people lost and what had they forgotten how to do (v. 15)?
4. Where did God tell his people they could still find safety (v. 16)?
5. What were the people offering to God instead of true repentance (v. 20)?

1. Do you feel that every bad thing that happens to you is a result of God's discipline, or are some problems the result of your own faulty decisions? Do you feel God has ever used circumstances in your life to warn you or guide you? When and how?

2. When you felt God was telling you to "wake up" and change your ways, did you? If you did, was your repentance immediate or did it take some time?

"Incense from Sheba...sweet calamus" (v. 20). Incense for offerings was imported from Sheba, southwest of Arabia. Cane, or calamus probably came from India and was used in making holy anointing oil. Both were expensive. Instead of genuinely repenting, Israel was trying to buy God's favor.

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

“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.””

Jeremiah 7:12



Ruins of ancient Shiloh. Photo by Leroy Neff—PTM

The Great

Deception

Jeremiah 7–8

Have you ever discovered that something you had thought to be true wasn't? Did you feel that someone deceived you—or did you deceive yourself?

1. Why did the people of Jerusalem repeat “this is the temple of the Lord” (7:4)?
2. What had God done to Shiloh that he was then preparing to do to the Temple (vs. 14-15)?
3. Who was the *Queen of Heaven* (v. 18)?
4. What were the people of Israel loving, serving and consulting (8:2)?
5. What were the leaders of Israel repeating to calm the people (v. 11)? _____

1. When was the last time you felt you were deceived?
2. Do you feel that you are: (a) gullible—you'll fall for almost anything, (b) not easily deceived, but it happens (c) rarely, if ever, deceived.
3. Do you have an area in your life you've been hiding from yourself? What was that area and are you still resisting the truth?

*Many false prophets were giving the people of Judah the idea that the **Temple** (7:4) had special protective powers. They thought of it as a magical incantation that would ward off danger. “**Cut off your hair**” (7:29) is a reference to a Nazirite vow. When a Nazirite had been ceremonially defiled, he had to shave off his hair, for it was polluted and could no longer be offered to the Lord as an offering at the completion of his vow. In the same way, Jerusalem was going to have her glory shaved off. “**Burn their sons and daughters in the fire**” (7:31). It was in the Valley of Hinnom that the Jews dumped their refuse and trash. It was also where hideous child sacrifices were made to appease the fire god Molech.*

DAY 7

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word