



*Becoming Fully Devoted Followers
by Studying the Followers Before Us*

WEEK 30
JEREMIAH

JULY 23-27, 2007

DAY	<i>THROUGH THE BIBLE</i>	ABBREVIATED STUDY
Monday	Jeremiah 21-26; Psalm 146	Jeremiah 1; Psalm 146
Tuesday	Jeremiah 27-33; Psalm 147	Jeremiah 20; Psalm 147
Wednesday	Jeremiah 34-39; Psalm 148	Jeremiah 32-33; Psalm 148
Thursday	Jeremiah 40-45; Psalm 149	Jeremiah 36; Psalm 149
Friday	Jeremiah 46-52; Psalm 150	Jer 52; Lam 3; Psalm 150



Connecting people to abundant life.

READ

Jeremiah 1
Psalm 146

REFLECT

Principle: God calls and equips believers with His Word.

Nearly a hundred years have passed since the northern kingdom has collapsed. When God calls Jeremiah to preach to the southern kingdom, it too is in danger. For forty years Jeremiah warns the people and urges a return to faithful obedience and trust. The people do not listen and they turn away from God. Jeremiah lives to see the results: the destruction of Judah.

Jeremiah was born into a priestly family in the city of Anathoth. When he was in his late teens and ready to start serving as a priest, the Lord called him to become His prophet. Ezekiel, Zechariah and John the Baptist all had the same experience of going from priest to prophet. Serving as a priest would have been much easier for this sensitive young man. The job as priest was to conserve the past, while a prophet's work was to change the present so as to guarantee the future. The people supported and respected the priests, but usually rejected the prophets and sometimes killed them. To be God's messenger to a rebellious nation was a frightening challenge and it is no wonder Jeremiah began by resisting the call.

God's call to Jeremiah was profound. "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you; before you were born I set you apart" (1:5). Jeremiah argues he is too young to represent the Lord before the nations. But God assures him he had appointed and equipped him to be His prophet. A seraph had touched Isaiah's mouth with a coal from the altar, but the Lord Himself touched Jeremiah's mouth and gave him words to speak.

Through the vision of the Almond branch, God gives Jeremiah the promise that: "I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled" (1:12). Like Samuel, none of Jeremiah's words would fall to the ground and be lost (1 Samuel 3:19). When we speak the words that God gives us – "It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11). His Word shall not pass away.

The second vision (vv.14-16) encapsulates the message Jeremiah is to proclaim to God's people. Disaster will spill from the north as the Babylonian army would invade Judah, bringing devastation, death, destruction and deportation. If the Jewish people repented of their sins, turned from their idols to the Lord and surrender to Nebuchadnezzar, the city and temple would be spared. But instead, the people believed the false prophets and expected the Lord to rescue Judah from the enemy.

The apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians Eph 1:4-5, 11 "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will. In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will."

RESPOND

Do you know what task God has in mind for you? How has He made it known? What are you doing about it today? What attributes of God do you see in this lesson? What changes have you seen in yourself recently that enabled you to better fulfill God's desire for his kingdom?

PRAY

Psalm 145 is a wonderful prayer!

I will praise you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever...(keep going).

- C.M.

READ

Jeremiah 20
Psalm 147

REFLECT

Principle: Prayer is essential to every believer.

When God called young Jeremiah to be a prophet, He called him to be a destroyer, a builder, and a planter (Jer 1:10), an assayer (Jer 6:27), a physician (Jer 8:21-22), and a shepherd (Jer 13:17). Jeremiah saw himself as a sacrificial lamb being led to the slaughter (Jer 11:19) and a religious troublemaker that everybody would hate (Jer 15:10). When he complained to the Lord and thought about resigning (9:2), the Lord told him that the work was going to get harder! “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?” (12:5).

What kept Jeremiah going? He listened to the Word of the Lord, fed on it (15:16), and fearlessly declared it to the people. He knew that he was called of God and that the Lord would keep His promises. God watches over His Word and accomplishes His will, even if we don't see anything happening. Our responsibility is to listen to the Lord and declare His truth, and He will do the rest. Ours is a work of faith, and “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom 10:17). Jeremiah was also a man of prayer. In his book, there are at least fifteen times we find him speaking to the Lord (1:6; 4:10; 9:1-2; 10:23-25; 12:1-4; 14:7-9, 19-22; 15:10, 15-18; 16:19-20; 17:12-18; 18:19-23; 20:7-18; 32:16-25; 42:1-22). Jeremiah must have been a faithful intercessor, for at least three times the Lord commanded him to stop praying for the nation (7:16; 11:14; 14:11). Like the apostles, Jeremiah devoted himself to prayer and the Word of God (Acts 6:4).

The Lord instructs Jeremiah to go out and give a strong message of judgment to the leaders of Judah; Jeremiah does just what God asks of him (19:1-15). What is the response? Jeremiah is arrested by the Temple priest, publicly beaten and placed in stocks (20:1-2). Obedience to God does not guarantee it will be easy. If the priest, Pashhur, was expecting to change Jeremiah's message, he was sorely wrong. Jeremiah instead spoke of God's judgment again! (20:3-6)

The prayer of Jeremiah (20:7-18) is honest, raw and vulnerable. One moment he is calling God a mighty warrior who's always with him, and the next he's wishing he had never been born (1:5). Jeremiah like everyone else, had feelings, hopes, and needs. He wasn't a cardboard cutout or a saint on a pedestal; he was a man who exposed his heart in God's presence.

RESPOND

How honest are you in your prayer time? Though God could easily penetrate our defense, he often waits until we are ready to come to Him, just as we are, without the pretense, without the need to defend ourselves in His presence. What attributes of God do you see in today's lesson? How does Jeremiah's prayer strike you – accusatory, honest, self-pitying? How do you see his relationship with God? To what extent can you identify with Jeremiah's prayer? What difficulty or trial will you bring in honesty and vulnerability to God today, knowing He will listen?

PRAY

Praise the Lord! I will praise the Lord as long as I live. Happy are those who have the God of Israel as their helper, whose hope is in the LORD their God. He is the one who made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them. He is the one, who keeps every promise forever. (Psalm 146)

- C.M.

READ

Jeremiah 32, 33

Psalms 148

REFLECT

Principle: Every promise of God will be accomplished.

Jeremiah is often considered a prophet of doom, a man who warned God's people of grievous consequences of their sin. Yet it would not have been possible for him to thunder on about impending judgment, if he had not believed in the possibility that Judah might actually repent and be saved. Surely it was hope that kept him going. This is the hope that sustains through being rejected, imprisoned and alone.

This hope was made tangible during Babylon's sustained siege of Jerusalem. While in prison for his ministry, Jeremiah heard the Lord telling him that one of his cousins would soon ask Jeremiah to buy a field belonging to him (32:6-7). Jeremiah had prophesied consistently of God's promised destruction and *future* restoration of Judah (30-31). Now, Jeremiah has the opportunity to show how he believes the certainty of God's future promise by putting his money forth to prove it.

As Jeremiah tried to make sense of this impractical business transaction, God spoke again, telling him, "I will surely gather (my people) from all the lands where I banish them in my furious anger and great wrath; I will bring them back to this place and let them live in safety. They will be my people, and I will be their God. I will give them singleness of heart and action, so that they will always fear me for their own good and the good of their children after them. I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never stop doing good to them" (32:37-40).

Jeremiah's hope is based on the knowledge and believing trust that nothing is too hard for the Lord (32:17), not even restoring the fortunes of

a people whose future seemed utterly wrecked. God's people need to know that they will suffer for their sin and rebellion, but God will still be merciful to them. God tells His rebellious people His plan to keep His covenants with the house of Israel and the house of Judah! (33:14-18). He also echoes the covenant promises He made to the patriarchs (Gen 22:17; Gen 26:4; Gen 32:12)

RESPOND

How believers use their money and resources tells the world what they believe. What are you investing in for the Lord? What promises will you claim this week for your future? What attributes of God did you see in today's lesson (especially in Jeremiah's prayer)? What is Judah's future? To what extent is what God requires of His people an extension of His character (32:40-41)? To what extent does God's justice involve evil and good? To whom? List specific things you have thanked God for in the past week. What were your reasons?

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. (1 Tim 6:10)

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. (1 Tim 6:17)

PRAY

Praise the LORD! How good it is to sing praises to our God! How delightful and how right! The LORD is rebuilding Jerusalem and bringing the exiles back to Israel. He heals the brokenhearted, binding up their wounds. He counts the stars and calls them all by name. How great is our Lord! His power is absolute! His understanding is beyond comprehension! (Psalm 147:1-5)

- C.M.

READ

Jeremiah 36

Psalm 149

REFLECT

Principle: All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Tim 3:16-17)

God's word comes to Jeremiah while he is in prison, commanding Jeremiah "take and write all God's words given to you in the reign of Josiah till now," (36:2). The year is 605 BC and the reigning king is Jehoiakim. Simply, God plans for His written Word to "have each person who hears turn from his wicked way." Then God "will forgive their wickedness and their sin" (36:3). Baruch is called to help Jeremiah and becomes the faithful go-between (36:8). He went first to read to the people at the Temple (v.10) and then to the princes (v.14). They heard it all and were afraid; like Felix, who trembled at Paul's reasoning. We are not told what impressions this reading of the roll made upon the people (v.10), but the princes were put into a fright by it, and (as some read it) looked one upon another, not knowing what to say. They were all convinced that it was worthy to be regarded, but none of them had courage to second it, only they agreed to tell the king of all these words. The leaders then warned Baruch to "go and hide with Jeremiah" expecting the king's anger (v.19).

The king had his secretary read aloud God's Word! However, when the reader finished three or four columns of the scroll, the king would cut them off with a scribe's knife and throw them into the firepot until the entire scroll was consumed (v.23). They showed no fear or repentance. The apostle Paul helps us understand these actions in the first chapter of

Romans: "For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened."

God's Word will always triumph! Jeremiah is commanded to rewrite the scroll adding a judgment upon the knife-welding king (36:28-32). The preservation of God's Word is one of the proofs we have today of its divine nature.

RESPOND

Today we see these same responses: faithful obedience, fearful conviction, denial, no action (people). Our current culture, like King Jehoiakim, is trying to cut out all evidence of God. Let this lesson encourage you that God is in control. We are to know all of God's Word, for Joshua encourages us to: "Not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it" (Joshua 1:8).

Praise God today for His Word that changes lives. Ezekiel 36:26: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." The gospel of John says that Jesus is our Word (John 1:1-2). How do you think the leaders of our nation would respond to a reading of God's word about the destruction of their nation? Why? What attributes of God do you see in this lesson? Who will you share God's Word with this week?

PRAY

Sovereign Lord, thank you that in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. We praise you for you delight in your people; you crown the humble with salvation. (Psalm 149:4-5)

- C.M.

READ

Jeremiah 52
Lamentations 3
Psalm 150

REFLECT

Principle: In the darkest of times, believers have hope in the unfailing love of God.

Jeremiah's prophecy opens with God saying, "I am ready to perform My word" (1:12) and it closes with evidence that God did what He said He would do. God's overall message is that kingship and priesthood together form the core of the life of God's people. Without the proper representation of God to man and of man to God, it simply cannot exist. We should try to visualize the buildings of old Jerusalem, and to picture there the succession of kings and priests, the two great families of David and Aaron; for in them God has set up a system to help us grasp this vital truth.

King Zedekiah was a rebel, not only against the king of Babylon but also against the Lord, and he lost both battles. He led his sons and his leaders into death and himself into darkness and bondage (Samson in Judges 16:20-21). The religious leaders who had persecuted Jeremiah were also slain by the enemy (vv. 24-27). God's covenant promise to the House of David (2 Sam 7:11-12) is the shining hope of Israel.

The temple was plundered despite the promises given by the false prophets (27:19-28:4). The walls were broken down, and the city and the temple were burned. The people were deported to remain in captivity for 70 years (25:1-14). God would rather destroy His city and His house than permit His people to sin successfully. If they will not glorify Him in obedience, they must honor Him in judgment.

The central message of Lamentations teaches that sin is costly. Jeremiah wrote this series of five funeral dirges lamenting that God must punish sin, but God's mercy never fails. Chapter 3 marks the turning

point in Jeremiah's experience of grief and prayer. As he looked at himself (v. 1-18), and considered his feelings, the more hopeless he felt.

Then he looked by faith to the Lord (vv. 19-39). Now he can say, "I have hope" (v. 21). Why? Because of God's mercies, compassions, and faithfulness: "For He does not afflict willingly" (v. 33; Hos. 11:8-9), and He "will not cast off forever" (v. 31). Finally, Jeremiah looked to the people (vv. 40-66) and called for a time of prayer and confession of sin. The "weeping prophet" (vv. 48-49) pleaded with the people to lift their hearts and hands to the Lord and ask Him for forgiveness and mercy. What did God do for His suffering servant? "You came near when I called you, and said, "Do not fear!" (v. 57). Wait before the Lord (vv. 25-26), and He will speak to you from His Word.

RESPOND

How is God working in your difficult circumstances today? How can this lesson help you to look to God for help and hope?

God does not enjoy having to chasten His people; but as a loving Father, he must do it (Prov. 3:11-12). "Do not be deceived; God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows" (Gal 6:7). What have you been sowing for the Lord? When have you experienced affliction? What has been your response? What has sin cost you? When have you recently heard God say, "Do not fear"? What has been your response? What attributes of God have you seen in this lesson?

PRAY

Father, we have so much to thank You for everyday! We praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in His mighty heavens. Praise Him for His acts of power; praise Him for His surpassing greatness. Let everything that has breath praise the LORD!

- Carole Mathews