

Week 8 – Jeremiah

Connect: choose 1 *Connect* question and discuss for 5-7 minutes.

- Share a time when you felt too young/unqualified for something.
- Jeremiah was the weeping prophet. When was the last time you cried? (e.g. saying goodbye to someone; watching a prank video?)

Read these passages aloud:

Jeremiah 1- Jeremiah's call and commission

Jeremiah 7 – Jeremiah Proclaims God's Judgment on Israel

Jeremiah 31:31-34 – a new covenant

Engage the text as a group:

1. What do you **observe**?
 - How long has God known Jeremiah would serve God?
 - With what does God charge Jeremiah? How does God encourage Jeremiah?
 - What is God angry with?
 - How is Jeremiah embodying his message given by God for the people?
2. What **questions** arise for you?
 - Why did the people forget God?
 - Did Jeremiah have a choice in how to respond to God's calling on his life?

Why does Jeremiah matter?

Jeremiah's prophetic ministry proclaimed God's judgement *and* God's promise of peace.¹ Jeremiah is known as 'the weeping prophet'; the anguish of Jeremiah conveys the anguish of God at the sin of the people of Judah and Israel—God's chosen people. They had strayed so far that the way Jeremiah responded to it with anger and tears and strong words conveys God's response to what they had done and their situation.

The way the people of God, now the church (in Jeremiah's time, the people of Israel) lives and behaves and carries on in the world elicits responses from God—delight or displeasure, mercy and judgment.

The book of Jeremiah and the prophet Jeremiah teach us, among many things, that God is deeply vested in God's creation and in the wellbeing of God's people. The cosmos matter to God; *and* your single, individual life matters to God. Neither is too large nor too small for God, because God made it all.²

God's judgement flows in response to Israel's sin because sin is serious and has serious consequences. Yet, the last word God issues in the book of Jeremiah is one of promise of a new covenant, where God's people will have the law written on their hearts and not on tablets of stone.³ God is doing a new thing, foretold even in the tumultuous days of Jeremiah the prophet.

¹ "Jeremiah," *The International Bible Society*, <https://www.biblica.com/resources/scholar-notes/niv-study-bible/intro-to-jeremiah/>.

² Ibid.

³ Jeremiah 31:33; Luke 13:34

HOW DOES JEREMIAH POINT US TO JESUS?

Jeremiah wept a lot at the hardheartedness of the people of Judah and Israel. Jesus wept too when he saw Jerusalem, the center for Jewish religious life, from a hill, wishing to gather up its people like a mother hen does its chicks but they weren't willing. Jeremiah's consciousness was invaded by God as a prophet given words by God to speak to the people, but Jesus *is* God incarnate, God come as a human being. Jeremiah came to pronounce God's judgment over the people and witness and suffer with the people in their being conquered and exiled from Judah. Jesus came to proclaim God's judgment, but he absorbed that judgment in his own body and being in his suffering and death at Calvary.

The new covenant promised in Jeremiah 31 is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. With his blood through his death on the cross, Jesus establishes the new covenant⁴ where God's law is written upon people's hearts, and God shall be their God and they shall be God's people. All this is fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

3. What **applications** might these passages/book have for our lives today?
 - Have you sensed a calling on your life? (May not be an audible voice from the LORD, but a knowing, a sense of direction?)
 - Where do you see God at work in the world around you?

6 tools for interpretation: read through the 6 Tools (if time allows) or take-home and read.

Literary: genre = prophetic literature + account of Jeremiah the prophet's life.

Book of Jeremiah not organized chronologically, but the timeline is fragmented, possibly reflecting trauma and fragmentation caused by invasion and exile; theological interpretation of historical event: destruction of Jerusalem (586B.C.) as God's chastening of Israel-Judah.

Historical: Jeremiah = 7th century B.C. prophet in Judah (his ministry spanning 626 B.C.-586 B.C.); aka "the weeping prophet" and "the prophet of doom" for his harrowing messages to the people.⁵ The "disaster out of the north"⁶ = Egypt, Assyria, & Babylon- their invasion is God's judgment of Israel.⁷

Theological: Prophet = messenger of God in words, life, body. Jeremiah's weeping = God's anguish and anger at the sin and waywardness of the people. The book of Jeremiah is a message of God's justice but also of peace.⁸

Cultural: Prophets were individuals set apart by God to relay a message to God's people.

⁴ 1 Corinthians 11:24-26

⁵ "Jeremiah," <https://www.biblica.com/resources/scholar-notes/niv-study-bible/intro-to-jeremiah/>.

⁶ Jeremiah 1:14

⁷ "Jeremiah," <https://www.biblica.com/resources/scholar-notes/niv-study-bible/intro-to-jeremiah/>.

⁸ "Read Scripture: Jeremiah," The Bible Project.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RSK36cHbrk0>

Prophets = often eccentric, isolated – their consciousness’ invaded by God—would isolate them from society, but compelled to speak God’s message.⁹

The bigger story: Jeremiah = longest prophetic book in the Old Testament.

The prophet understands God as creator of all, and also concerned with the smallness of individual lives, including his own. Much judgment, but the last word is God’s mercy and faithfulness in a new covenant to restore Israel.¹⁰

Holy Spirit: the Spirit of God was present with and in the prophet Jeremiah, guiding him in his life and ministry, never leaving him through his life, as promised by the LORD upon his calling.¹¹

Video:

For context on the larger book of Jeremiah, **watch “Read Scripture: Jeremiah,”** by *The Bible Project*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RSK36cHbrk0>

Close in prayer

Father God, thank you for your immense, deep, boundless love for us and for your creation. Thank you for your righteous anger at sin. Thank you for your Son, Jesus Christ, who has come to make all things new. Teach us by your Spirit not to stray but to keep to your path of life. Through Christ our Lord we pray. Amen.

⁹ Jeremiah 20:9.

¹⁰ “Jeremiah,” <https://www.biblica.com/resources/scholar-notes/niv-study-bible/intro-to-jeremiah/> ; Jeremiah 31:31-34.

¹¹ Jeremiah 1:8