

THE WHOLE BIBLE

JEREMIAH

This Bible study, one of 66 studies covering the entire Bible, is made up of one-page lessons covering short sections of the book. The electronic format (student's and leader's guides) allows adaptation to individual needs.

Benefits of one-page lessons:

- Hand out only what you need, relative to the length of the class session and how much content you wish to cover. Taken at a steady pace, a page can be covered in about 20 minutes.
- See at a glance all the material that pertains to the section being covered. Use the discussion questions as your basic outline and draw in material from the "Look" and "Apply" sections as you wish.

Suggestions for using these lessons:

- Teach an entire book, or teach just part of a book.
- Use a single lesson sheet for a "19 Minute" style Bible study.
- Use a single lesson sheet as a meeting opener, either as a devotion or a short Bible study.
- Build your own Bible studies. The possibilities are endless. For example:
 - Assemble all the lessons on the penitential psalms, psalms of praise, or David's early years.
 - Assemble sections that deal with predestination, and teach the pertinent passages in their context.
 - Study all references to mountains, cities, nations, etc., pointing out their importance in the lives of God's people.

Note: The appropriate pages in The People's Bible commentary volumes are referenced. However, the authors were given the freedom to develop their own studies, so these lessons are not, in a strict sense, study guides to those volumes.

We pray these lessons will help God's people grow in faith and in service to his kingdom.

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Jeremiah 1

God calls Jeremiah to be a prophet

(The People's Bible, Jeremiah, Lamentations, pages 10-14)

Look

- Verses 1-3 *“Jeremiah”*—He was a priest by birth and was born about 3 miles northeast of Jerusalem in the village of Anathoth. He began his ministry in 627 B.C., the 13th year of the reign of King Josiah, Judah’s last godly king. Jeremiah served until Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 B.C. during the reign of Zedekiah. Even though Josiah was a godly king, by this time the people of Judah for the most part had hardened themselves against the Lord and the Lord was going to punish the nation. Jeremiah would witness that punishment and would serve as God’s prophet to the remnant who still believed.
- Verse 11 *“Almond tree”*—The Hebrew word for “almond tree” comes from a root meaning “to be awake, watchful.” It was given this name because it was the first tree to wake up and blossom to signal the coming of spring.

Discuss

- When did the Lord choose Jeremiah to be his prophet? (verses 4,5)
Before Jeremiah was conceived, the Lord set him apart as a prophet to his people.
- In verses 6-9 the Lord prepared Jeremiah to be his prophet. How did he do this?
First he silenced Jeremiah’s protests. Jeremiah could be confident, for God was sending him and God would give him words to speak. God would also be with Jeremiah and rescue him from harm. Finally, the Lord touched Jeremiah’s mouth, and at the same time, he put words in Jeremiah’s mouth.
- God gave Jeremiah two basic tasks (verse 10). How would he fulfill each task?
Jeremiah’s work was to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow. He would accomplish that by prophesying God’s judgment on Judah and other nations of the world. He would also build and plant. Watch for the many beautiful prophecies of the last days of God’s grace on Israel and on the nations of the world.
- God gave Jeremiah two simple visions that summarized his work. What did each of these visions symbolize?
 - The almond tree (verses 11,12) The buds on the almond tree meant that spring was coming soon. Jeremiah would tell Israel that God’s judgment on the nation was also coming soon.
 - The boiling pot from the north (verses 13-16) The boiling pot that was tipped so that its contents would pour out toward the south symbolized the fact that enemies would come from the north and destroy Jerusalem. Though Babylon and Assyria were actually located east of Judah, they always invaded from the north.
- Jeremiah would face some brutal opposition from the Jewish leaders. What does God promise him? What warning does God give him?
God warns him not to become afraid or God would terrify him before his enemies. God promises to fortify Jeremiah. He would protect him and give him a bold and fearless spirit as he faces his opponents. May God give all his people such a spirit.

The Lord called Jeremiah, gave him his life’s work, and made him a fearless prophet.

Jeremiah 2

Judah's twin sins

(The People's Bible, Jeremiah, Lamentations, pages 15-23)

Discuss

1. What had been God's relationship with Israel in the years after Israel left Egypt?
God established a loving relationship with Israel when he brought his people out of Egypt. Although they fell many times, they still rejoiced when the Lord defeated their enemies, and under Moses and Joshua they followed the Lord.
2. In view of all that he did for his people, what question does the Lord ask the Israelites in verse 5? (verses 4-8)
He asks the Israelites what fault they found in him that they turned and began worshipping idols.
3. In verses 8-13 the Lord asks the Israelites a simple question, yet one that puts them to shame. What question is that?
Have any of the other nations changed gods in "midstream"? How could the Israelites, who had seen their Lord do so many great things, do something that even idol worshipping nations would find foolish, even though their gods had never done anything for them?
4. What does Jeremiah mean that Israel has become plunder? (verses 14-19)
To punish his disobedient people God withdrew his protection and permitted the Israelites' enemies to oppress them. He wanted to show them how bitter it was when they forsook the Lord.
5. In verses 20-25 the Lord uses graphic language to describe Israel. What does he say about it? Note especially verses 23 and 24. What impression does this language give us?
It is like a wild donkey, a female, who goes looking for males to mate with. This points out Israel's licentiousness in playing a prostitute and going after other gods.
6. In the rest of this chapter, the Lord asks the Israelites some probing questions designed to illustrate their guilt. Can you find them?
They rejected the Lord but came to him when their idols didn't help them (verses 27,28). They charged God for not helping them, even though it was they who strayed from him (verse 29). They said that the Lord was lacking in his care for Israel (verse 31). Israel was his bride. Can a bride forget her wedding clothes (verse 32)? Why have you changed your ways, going from trusting me to abandoning me for others (verse 36)?

Apply

7. Read the Savior's letter to the church in Ephesus (Revelation 2:1-7). How does the Lord describe there the same sin Jeremiah denounces in 2:1-9 of his prophecy? What makes us susceptible to this same sin? What is the cure for it?
The church in Ephesus had lost its original love for God. We've had the gospel for so long. Repentance is the cure.
8. What sinful alliances is the church today tempted to enter?
The lure of ecumenical unions and the appeal of quick-fix methods are dangerous temptations that the church today faces.

Jeremiah began his ministry of tearing down by exposing Jerusalem's twin sins—forsaking the spring of living water and digging its own worthless cisterns.

Jeremiah 3:1–4:4

“Return to me”

(The People’s Bible, Jeremiah, Lamentations, pages 23-29)

Look

- 3:1 *“Would you now . . .”*—The King James Version translates the last part of this verse like this: “Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the LORD.” Such a plea for Israel to return to him seems to fit the context (verses 12-14) better than a threatening question.

Discuss

1. What awful picture of Israel’s spiritual life did the Lord paint in 3:1,2?
God had married Israel, but Israel had played the prostitute.
2. What two-faced attitude did the Israelites have toward the Lord? (3:3-5)
God’s people continued to act as though they loved him even as they worshiped idols.
3. Why was Judah more guilty than the Northern Kingdom of Israel? (3:6-11)
In the days after Solomon, Israel broke free from Judah. Judah’s kings taught the Israelites to commit idolatry. The Lord punished them by leading them into captivity. Judah was committing idolatry too. It had seen what God did to Israel and did not take it to heart. Judah not only failed to learn from Israel’s fall but added hypocrisy to its idolatry.
4. The Lord wanted his people to return to him in repentance and faith. He wanted their love and obedience. Yet throughout their history, they remained rebels. Sprinkled throughout these books, though, are visions of a time when the Lord himself would put in them a spirit of faith and obedience. These are stronger than a call to faith and obedience, stronger even than expressions of God’s love. They speak of a time when God himself would give them a new spirit of repentance and faith. Point out some statements in verses 13-18 that do just that.

God said he would choose some to return to him. He would give them shepherds after his own heart. They would no longer serve God according to the Old Testament law. Rather, Jerusalem would be seen by all the nations as God’s throne, and all nations would come to it to find the truth. Judah and Israel would be released from captivity. All of this is God’s doing.
5. In the final verses of chapter 3 and the first verses of chapter 4, we hear the people of Israel mourning for their sins. God urges them to repent and to circumcise their hearts, lest he destroy them. This section looks ahead to the days of the Messiah. Whose work led the people of Jesus’ day to accept him and his ministry?

John the Baptist continued Jeremiah’s work and prepared the way for the Lord. He led the people to realize their sins, to repent, and to receive the Lamb of God as their Savior.

Apply

6. Many commentators refer the promises in 3:15-19 to a future millennial kingdom. Read Amos 9:11,12 and compare that with Acts 15:12-18. When will the Old Testament prophecies about a time of glory be fulfilled?

In Acts chapter 15, James tells us that the Old Testament promises of Israel’s restoration are fulfilled in the New Testament church.

Jeremiah began his work of building up. He pointed Judah forward to the days of the Messiah.