



# The Bible Challenge

A daily guide to reading the Bible in a year

The prophet is clearly insecure in his young age. However, he does not speak out of his own authority but as a mouthpiece for the Lord. Jeremiah would confront rebellious kings, false prophets, and wicked priests and peoples. Yet, he was just an instrument. The Lord says to Jeremiah: "I have put my words in your mouth."

His call is to be a "prophet to the nations". The first nation he will be sent to is the nation of Israel, specifically Judah!

## 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.

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

*"I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. Israel was holy to the LORD.... "What wrong did your fathers find in me that they went far from me, and went after worthlessness, and became worthless"*

*Jer. 2:2-4*

## Prophecies of Judgment on Judah (2-25)

The general tone of this section is judgment. Like an adulterous wife, Israel and Judah have forsaken their Lord and God to chase after false gods and idols. The prophet begins with a condemnation of Israel (2:1-3:5) but then turns to Judah. (3:6ff)

*She saw that for all the adulteries of that faithless one, Israel, I had sent her away with a decree of divorce. Yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but she too went and played the whore.<sup>9</sup> Because she took her whoredom lightly, she polluted the land, committing adultery with stone and tree. Jer. 3:8-9*



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The Israel and Judah are called to repentance lest the judgment of the Lord break forth. In chapters 3:11-4:4, the prophet then challenges the Judah to learn from the humiliation of Israel and call the Lord in the repentance of true faith.

*For thus says the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem:*

*"Break up your fallow ground,  
and sow not among thorns.  
<sup>4</sup> Circumcise yourselves to the LORD;  
remove the foreskin of your hearts,  
O men of Judah and inhabitants of  
Jerusalem; lest my wrath go forth like fire,  
and burn with none to quench it,  
because of the evil of your deeds." Jer. 4:3-4*

I looked on the earth, and behold, it was without form and void; and to the heavens, and they had no light.  
Jeremiah 4:23

The Lord desires to restore, however without repentance, he will bring disaster. (4:5-6:30) The disaster will be an un-creation of Jerusalem and Judah. (4:23-27)

The prophecy is of destruction, however it will not be ultimate. The Lord promises that the "land shall be a desolation; yet I will not make a full end." (4:27; see 5:18) The reason this destruction is coming is because of the utter failure of Jerusalem and its people to repent of their sins fully. Indeed, not one man can be found who does justice and seeks truth. (5:1)

One of the reasons for their failure to repentance is false prophecy and false security. The prophets cry "Peace, Peace when there is no peace." (6:14) They have falsely healed the surface anxiety but not addressed the root of the anxiety--their sin and idolatry. Likewise, they have false security in the Temple of the Lord:

*Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel:  
Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let  
you dwell in this place. <sup>4</sup> Do not trust in these  
deceptive words: 'This is the temple of the*



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*LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.' "For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly execute justice one with another,<sup>6</sup> if you do not oppress the sojourner, the fatherless, or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own harm,<sup>7</sup> then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your fathers forever. Jer. 6:3-7*

They have trusted in "deceptive words" (6:8) They should listen to the call to repentance and fear judgment rather than allow themselves to be comforted by false assurances from false prophets. Deliverance follows repentance not simply the proclamation of "We are delivered!" all the while the sins and rebellion continue! (7:10)

*"O Jerusalem,  
Jerusalem, the city that  
kills the prophets and  
stones those who are  
sent to it! How often  
would I have gathered  
your children together  
as a hen gathers her  
brood under her wings,  
and you were not  
willing!<sup>38</sup> See, your  
house is left to you  
desolate.*

- Matt. 23:37-38

## **Jeremiah's grief (8:18-9:26)**

The prophet has occasion where he laments over the fate and hardness of heart of the people. He has a pastor's heart. Yet he also sees the unrighteousness and lack of repentance. Judah has forsaken the covenant of the Lord. This grieves the heart of the prophet. It grieves the heart of the Lord. (9:10)

Jesus would take this posture of Jeremiah and the Lord as he stood over the city of Jerusalem at the garden of Gethsemane and wept over the hardness of the people of God and the coming judgment on the city. (Matt. 23:37-38)

## **The Destruction Appears Inevitable (10:1-17:13)**

The Prophet delivers sermon after sermon declaring the coming judgment and calling for repentance. The state of the people is one of entrenched rebellion. They are like a leopard who cannot change his spots! Their hearts are hell bent.

*"The heart is deceitful above all things and  
desperately sick; who can understand it? I the  
Lord search the heart and test the mind, to give  
every man according to his ways, according to  
the fruit of his deeds" --Jeremiah 17:9-10*



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## Restoration is Possible with Repentance (18)

While the prophecies of Judgment on Israel seem predetermined and fated, the Prophet reveals that they all can be avoided with a change of heart.

*The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: 2 “Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will let you hear my words.” 3 So I went down to the potter's house, and there he was working at his wheel. 4 And the vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to do.*

*5 Then the word of the Lord came to me: 6 “O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done? declares the Lord. Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. 7 If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, 8 and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I intended to do to it. 9 And if at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, 10 and if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will relent of the good that I had intended to do to it.*

*11 Now, therefore, say to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: ‘Thus says the Lord, Behold, I am shaping disaster against you and devising a plan against you. Return, every one from his evil way, and amend your ways and your deeds.’*

*12 “But they say, ‘That is in vain! We will follow our own plans, and will every one act according to the stubbornness of his evil heart.’*