



# BOOKS OF THE BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS

by WAYNE PALMER

## J E R E M I A H



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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Book of Jeremiah focuses on God's Word of Law and Gospel and the stubborn disobedience of the people of Judah and their kings. It exposes those sins with powerful law and judgment, prophesying the defeat of Judah at the hands of Babylon and the Babylonian exile. But it shows God's incomparable grace, patience, and mercy as He reaches out to His people over and over again, providing a way to survive as His people. Even after the destruction of Jerusalem, He promises that after seventy years in exile the Jews will be permitted to return and rebuild Jerusalem.

## **AUTHORSHIP**

The Book of Jeremiah was written by the prophet Jeremiah around 628–580 BC.

## **PURPOSE**

Jeremiah teaches us that God will judge and punish unrepentant sin, but He is patient and long-suffering, offering protection and salvation through the promised Christ.

## **OUTLINE**

Jeremiah can be divided into the following parts:

1. The Call of the Prophet (Chapter 1)
2. Warnings and Exhortations to Judah (Chapters 2–35)
3. Suffering and Persecution of the Prophet (Chapters 36–38)
4. The Fall of Jerusalem and Related Events (Chapters 39–45)
5. Judgment against the Nations (Chapters 46–51)
6. Second Historical Appendix (Chapter 52)

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

# THE CALL OF THE PROPHET— JEREMIAH 1

Before recording his divine call to be a prophet, Jeremiah introduces himself and explains the historical context for his ministry.

**Read 1:1–3.**

**Q 1: What is notable about the kings during whose reigns Jeremiah prophesied?**

A 1: Jeremiah began his work as prophet during the reign of Josiah, the last godly king of Judah. It continued through the reigns of Josiah's three sons and a grandson, the fall of Jerusalem, and among the survivors afterward.

While Jeremiah was still a young man, God commissioned him to be His prophet. He informed the prophet that his would be a difficult ministry of calling for stubborn Judah to repent. God encouraged him with two visions and several promises of protection.

**Read 1:4–19.**

**Q 2: Why is Jeremiah so intimidated when God calls him?**

A 2: Jeremiah is very young, from a small country town. But God tells him simply to speak and promises to uphold his words.

**Q 3: What is implied in God's statement, "They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you" (v. 19)?**

A 3: Jeremiah will definitely face resistance and persecution. He will warn Judah of God's judgment—and those to whom God sends him will refuse to listen, to the point of being killed or carried off in exile. But God will make Jeremiah stand firm and prevent his enemies from destroying him. As the book unfolds, we see God's protecting hand shielding His prophet over and over again.

**Q 4: Name some different ways we face the same opposition in our Christian lives.**

A 4: When we stand firm on God's Law, His will for human life on His earth, we will face opposition, especially when we warn people of their sinful behavior. God does not want us to remain silent and let Satan easily claim their souls; instead, we are to speak up in genuine love and concern for them with patience and gentleness.

# WARNINGS AND EXHORTATIONS TO JUDAH—JEREMIAH 2–35

## EARLIEST PROPHECIES— JEREMIAH 2–6

Much of Jeremiah plays out like a court trial where God is laying out charges against Judah. Look for the imagery God is using to help the people of Judah understand the seriousness of their sin.

**Read 2:1–3:5.**

**Q 5: What imagery does Jeremiah use to depict Judah’s unfaithfulness to God?**

A 5: He uses the imagery of an unfaithful bride—who would face capital punishment under Mosaic Law. Unfaithfulness in marriage is a powerful symbol because we can easily understand the wrath God feels when we fail to fear, love, and trust in Him above all things.

A hundred years before the time of Jeremiah, the Northern Kingdom was conquered and destroyed by Assyria while God spared Judah and its king, Hezekiah. Jeremiah urges the people of Judah not to think of themselves more highly than they should.

**Read 3:6–4:4.**

**Q 6: How does God use the imagery of sisters to try to turn Judah to repentance?**

A 6: The people of Judah felt superior to Israel because Israel’s open idolatry led to it being carried off into exile. God describes the two nations as sisters. He points out Israel’s faithlessness, but then shows that Judah learned nothing from its sister’s fall, which should have led to a recognition of its own sinfulness. Jeremiah uses this imagery of sisters to show Judah that God still cared about them—and He was giving them time to repent so they would not suffer captivity.

**Q 7: How might we be tempted to commit this same sin in our day?**

A 7: We can easily feel smug and superior to unbelievers. But when our hearts are unrepentant and our confession is shallow and superficial, we deserve more wrath than they.

After exposing that Judah’s unfaithfulness is worse than Israel’s, Jeremiah points to God’s judgment, which is coming quickly toward them in the form of the nation of Babylon. Look for the two terrifying images God uses to portray the Babylonian armies.

**Read 4:5–18.**

**Q 8: What two images does God use to depict the Babylonians and stir His people to fear and repentance?**

A 8: He first uses a lion that has risen from its thicket and is heading into their village. Then He describes a whirlwind or tornado—an approaching storm that brings utter devastation.

**Q 9: How might those same images move us to godly fear and repentance?**

A 9: They remind us that Judgment Day is coming upon the whole earth, a day of devastation and everlasting punishment for those who do not repent and trust in Christ.

Jeremiah is called the weeping prophet because he shares the anguish he feels when he considers the needless destruction his people are bringing upon themselves by their sins.

**Read 4:19–31.**

**Q 10: How does Jeremiah’s own anguish show us the heart of God?**

A 10: God truly loves all the people He made. He desires for each of us to repent and live through Christ Jesus. Jesus demonstrated this same anguish when He wept over Jerusalem after His triumphal entry (Luke 19:41).

God challenges Jeremiah to go through the streets of Jerusalem and find one person who does justice and seeks truth that might pardon the city and spare it of judgment.

**Read 5:1–13.**

**Q 11: What does Jeremiah find as he searches Jerusalem?**

A 11: No matter whom he looks at—rich or poor, low or high social standing—all have turned away from God. They swear by God’s name, but they swear falsely, giving no thought to God and His ways.

**Q 12: What warning can we take from this?**

A 12: We can easily get swept away with the social status or standing of certain people (athletes, artists, politicians, the wealthy) and think they are exempt from God’s judgment. But none of us are. We all fall somewhere in that spectrum between the poorest and the wealthiest, the lowest and the highest in society’s estimation.

Jeremiah addresses two particular sins nearly all those of Judah are committing. He wants them to repent and return to God.

**Read 5:14–31.**

**Q 13: What two sins does Jeremiah address in this passage?**

A 13: He addresses (1) their refusal to give up worshiping false gods and (2) their abuse of the weak and powerless.

**Q 14: What warning does Jeremiah threaten if they don't stop mistreating the helpless among them?**

A 14: They will become weak and powerless and suffer the savage abuse and mistreatment of the Babylonians as they are taken into captivity.

**Q 15: Where do you see weak and powerless people being abused?**

A 15: Again God warns about the danger looming out of the north—the Babylonians. But the people of Jerusalem refuse to listen or turn from their evil ways.

**Read chapter 6.**

**Q 16: What contrast do verses 16 and 17 show between God's mercy and Judah's defiance?**

A 16: God offers to bring rest for their souls, but they refuse to walk in His way. He advises His people to listen to the warning of the prophets as they would listen to the signal trumpet from the watchmen warning of an invading army—but they refuse to listen.

**Q 17: How can we fall into this same pattern of disobedience and defiance?**

A 17: When we justify our sins and disobedience, we do not feel the need to repent and run to Christ.

## THE TEMPLE MESSAGE— JEREMIAH 7–10

Jeremiah attacks two more deep-seated spiritual problems in Judah—insincere worship and regarding the temple as a good-luck charm that made Jerusalem immune from destruction. Notice Jeremiah's words in verse 11; Jesus will speak those same words when He cleanses the temple in Matthew 21:13.

**Read 7:1–29.**

**Q 18: Why does God forbid Jeremiah to pray on behalf of the people of Judah?**

A 18: God's time of grace is finished. Now they must bear the punishment for the sins they commit. For this reason, we do not

pray for the dead: their hour of grace has passed; they are either in heaven through faith, or hell.

**Q 19: When might we be guilty of these same sins?**

A 19: We're guilty when we warm a pew in the church, but our heart is far away, relishing an unrepented sin to which we cling.

Next Jeremiah sees the grievous sin arising from Judah's insincere worship—child sacrifice. In 8:1, the word *bones* is repeated over and over. If you read that verse aloud, dwelling on the word *bones*, it will sound like a funeral bell tolling the death of Judah and Jerusalem.

**Read 7:30–8:3.**

**Q 20: What could make the Jews do something as diabolical as sacrificing their children?**

A 20: Their idolatry started small and got big. Child sacrifice arose when their situation got drastic and they felt they needed to make a huge sacrifice to win the god's favor.

**Q 21: Describe a sinful habit that starts small but grows extremely sinful and destructive.**

A 21: Examples include going from experimentation with marijuana to full-blown drug addiction; internet pornography that leads to affairs that destroy marriages; abusing animals that leads to abusing humans.

Jeremiah confronts the stiff necks and hardened hearts of the people of Judah, as well as their religious and political leaders. Set on a self-destructive course of evil, they refuse to open their eyes and consider the wrath of God they are bringing on themselves.

**Read 8:4–17.**

**Q 22: What does God mean in verse 8 when He says that “the lying pen of the scribes has made it [the Law of the LORD] into a lie”?**

A 22: The priests and teachers of the Law misrepresented the Scriptures, much as the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day taught it as a book of rules by which a person could earn heaven. They convinced the people that God was pleased with their conduct and encouraged them to carry on in their sins.

**Q 23: What notice can we take from this in our own lives?**

A 23: Instead of justifying our behavior based on what other people do, we need to examine ourselves in the light of God's Law that we may see if we are walking correctly.

Reading God's stern condemnation of sin, it can become easy to forget His heart of love and mercy. In the next section, we see our heavenly Father's heart breaking for His wayward children who are heading toward disaster.



**Read 8:18–9:26.**

**Q 24: If God loves the people of Judah so much, why doesn't He give them more time to repent?**

A 24: In every generation since the exodus, God sent prophets to warn His people of their sin and turn them to faith. Delaying judgment now would only harden them in their unbelief and tighten Satan's grip on them. The only way to reach them was to allow devastating judgment to fall on them—their misery might open them to the Holy Spirit's work of creating repentance and faith.

**Q 25: How might this explain why God allows us to pass through difficult times in our lives?**

A 25: God often permits us to suffer the consequences of our foolish choices so we repent and realize the danger of our sinful path.

**Q 26: What caution must we keep in mind in such circumstances?**

A 26: Not every evil that we suffer in our life is a punishment or correction from God for some wrong we have done. Sometimes—like Jesus—we suffer from the hatred of evildoers.

Jeremiah exposes the complete folly of God's people who worship, sacrifice to, and pray to idols that were once trees standing in a forest.

**Read chapter 10.**

**Q 27: What are some ways we make other gods for ourselves?**

A 27: It is easy to laugh at the people of Judah falling down before chunks of wood covered with gold. But consider how committed we can be to sports, wealth, sex, friendships, power, science, medicine, and the like. We also put our confidence in our own gods that are powerless to save us from harm, death, and eternal destruction in hell.

## COVENANT AND CONSPIRACY— JEREMIAH 11–13

When Joshua conquered the Promised Land, the tribes gathered at Shechem to renew their covenant with God. They promised the Lord alone would be their God, and He promised to guide, protect, and provide for them (Joshua 24). Jeremiah explains how they conspired to break that covenant.

**Read chapter 11.**

**Q 28: Why is intentional sin more dangerous than forgetfulness or momentary weakness?**

A 28: Intentional sin involves a conscious decision to break our covenant with God. There is a great danger that we will harden our hearts, ignore our conscience, resist the Holy Spirit, and become secure in our sin over time.

Jeremiah prays about a difficult test to his faith. Perhaps you have felt this same way.

**Read 12:1–4.**

**Q 29: What is Jeremiah's complaint?**

A 29: God permits people who pretend to be faithful but are clearly disobeying God and exploiting others to prosper and doesn't call them to account.

**Q 30: How would you answer someone who made this same complaint about God to you?**

A 30: Don't let someone else's behavior shake your faith; just keep your focus on God and His promises in Jesus Christ.

The Lord answers Jeremiah's complaint.

**Read 12:5–17.**

**Q 31: Why has the Lord delayed punishment for these hypocrites?**

A 31: In grace, He is giving time for the Holy Spirit to work through His Word by the prophets to create repentance and faith. But there is a limit to His patience. If they do not repent, they will be swept away.

God uses a fresh, new loincloth as an object lesson for Judah.

**Read 13:1–11.**

**Q 32: What was the lesson of the loincloth?**

A 32: The ruined state of the loincloth over time reveals the effects of unrepented sin in a believer's heart. In time, the former believer is ruined and God will treat him or her as we treat worthless rags.

God gives Jeremiah a parable for the people of Judah. As an empty jar must be filled with wine, Judah's unrepented rebellion has filled the Lord's wrath completely.

**Read 13:12–14.**

**Q 33: In what way is drunkenness a powerful symbol of sin's effects and God's judgment?**

A 33: Drunkenness makes a man stagger and stumble and renders him unable to defend himself. It is a dreadful thing to think of God's wrath let loose on sinners without His mercy moving Him to feel pity or compassion. But if we stubbornly, persistently reject the salvation won for us by Jesus Christ, what else is left for us?

Judah's rebellion has become part of their nature, dooming them to exile.

**Read 13:15–27.**

**Q 34: How is Baptism a remedy to the effects of sin and rebellion?**

A 34: Sin is ingrained in our hearts. But working through Baptism, the Holy Spirit moves us to confession and faith. He gives us a new heart like Jesus' heart.

## THE DROUGHT—JEREMIAH 14–15

Jeremiah describes the devastating effects of a drought God has brought upon Jerusalem because of the people's stubborn, unrepented sins.

**Read 14:1–12.**

**Q 35: What is Jeremiah's response when God tells him not to pray for the welfare of the people of Jerusalem?**

A 35: Like Abraham in Genesis 18:22–33, Jeremiah does not give up, but keeps praying for the people of Judah who have been led astray by the deceptive promises of the false prophets.

**Q 36: What can encourage us to pray for stubbornly unrepentant people who hurt us?**

A 36: We are encouraged by remembering that God loves all people and does not desire anyone's eternal destruction. Instead, He laid the sins of all humanity on Jesus so forgiveness is available to all.

Jeremiah expresses frustration over false prophets who contradict the Lord's message of punishment for unrepentant sinners and promise peace.

**Read 14:13–22.**

**Q 37: What is the great danger of this false teaching?**

A 37: It reinforces their unrepentance and convinces them God is okay with their sinful lifestyle, when in reality they are pushing away God's grace and kindling His wrath against them.

**Q 38: Name some examples of false teachings that promise peace for unrepentant sin.**

A 38: One example is churches that support same-sex marriage.

God responds to Jeremiah's prayer for the people of Judah and Jerusalem.

**Read 15:1–9.**

**Q 39: Why is it significant that God mentions Moses and Samuel?**

A 39: Several times during the forty years in the wilderness, God threatened to destroy the nation of Israel (Exodus 32:7–14; Numbers 14:11–24), but Moses interceded and turned away God's wrath. Likewise, when the Israelites demanded a king, Samuel prayed and turned away God's wrath (1 Samuel 12:16–25). But Judah's unrepentant sin is so much worse now, it demands God's

just punishment—not even Moses or Samuel could cause Him to relent.

**Q 40: What should this remind us about Judgment Day?**

A 40: On that day, nothing will turn away God’s wrath against unrepentant sinners. God will judge them justly.

The stubborn resistance and opposition of the people of Judah wears Jeremiah down. In discouragement, he lays out his troubled soul to God.

**Read 15:10–21.**

**Q 41: Why did the people of Jerusalem hate Jeremiah so much?**

A 41: Because the people were unrepentant and secure in their disobedience, Jeremiah could only preach stern, unrelenting Law and judgment. Speaking of God’s love and mercy would only make them more secure in their sin.

**Q 42: How can a Christian find encouragement to witness in such a hostile environment?**

A 42: Reading God’s Word daily and receiving the Sacraments in regular worship helps maintain our heavenly perspective. Likewise, being active in Bible study gives us family members and friends with whom to share our frustrations as well as give and receive encouragement.

## DISASTER AND COMFORT— JEREMIAH 16:1–17:18

Jeremiah is instructed not to grieve those who die of the famine. This demonstrates what will happen when Jerusalem is captured. The dazed exiles will be dragged away from Jerusalem leaving their dead loved ones unburied.

**Read 16:1–13.**

**Q 43: What kind of disaster is so devastating and perilous that survivors are unable to grieve lost loved ones?**

A 43: Some examples are refugees caught in war zones; victims of genocidal attacks; and survivors of widespread natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, or hurricanes.

Despite the devastating Babylonian invasion and the impending exile, God will make His grace known to all people.

**Read 16:14–21.**

**Q 44: How was God able to show grace to His people while they were captives in exile and impress the heathen nations who held them?**

A 44: Consider the first half of the Book of Daniel. God impressed the kings who held His people when He delivered His faithful servants from fiery furnaces and lions' dens.

The Lord reveals the terrible nature of Judah's sins to show He is just and right to strike them with the severe punishment they will receive at the hands of Babylon.

**Read 17:1–13.**

**Q 45: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9). What does God teach us in this verse?**

A 45: Unless God enlightens us through Law and Gospel, we cannot know just how sinful we really are. We deceive ourselves into thinking we are pretty good people and God has no reason to punish us.

As Jeremiah is attacked and slandered by those who are unrepentant, he prays for God to vindicate him and grant him justice.

**Read 17:14–18.**

**Q 46: What reaction does this passage show we should expect when we share God's Law and Gospel with people?**

A 46: The Holy Spirit will move some to repentance and faith, but others will reject His work and react harshly and vehemently. This is because God's Law has cut into their heart but they love their sin and refuse to turn from it.

## THE SABBATH AND ISRAEL'S IDENTITY—JEREMIAH 17:19–27

One of the clearest indications of Israel's spiritual health was how they observed the Sabbath. Jeremiah commands kings and commoners to stop working and keep the Sabbath.

**Read 17:19–27.**

**Q 47: How did continuing their daily work on the Sabbath harm Israel's spiritual health?**

A 47: God's Word is the source of our spiritual strength and life. Setting aside our daily work to gather for public worship lets us feed on God's promises, be reassured of His forgiveness, and go back to our daily callings with confidence.

**Q 48: What things tempt you to miss weekly public worship? Why are our earthly preoccupations unable to keep us spiritually healthy?**

A 48: Options could include sports events, weekend activities, or feeling the need to rest up from a busy week. None of these things feeds our spirit; only God's Word and Sacraments do that.

## THE POTTER AND ISRAEL— JEREMIAH 18–20

The Lord uses the example of a potter deciding how to work his clay to illustrate His sovereign authority to treat Judah however He chooses. He threatens disaster to bring them to repentance so He can spare them by His grace.

**Read chapter 18.**

**Q 49: What was the people's response to Jeremiah's message in verse 18?**

A 49: The people responded harshly, refusing to pay attention to his warnings.

**Q 50: Why is it hard for us to believe God's warning, repent, and receive His grace?**

A 50: When we don't instantly see negative consequences for our sins, it can be easy to continue in them and begin to doubt God will ever call us to account.

Jeremiah breaks a clay vessel in a valley southwest of Jerusalem, a site where the Israelites sacrificed their children to false gods.

**Read chapter 19.**

**Q 51: What is remarkable about God sending Jeremiah to preach to such criminals?**

A 51: Judah's kings, nobles, and others were guilty of not just sins but heinous crimes: executing the very children the Lord had given and entrusted to them. We might consider such crimes unforgivable, yet God stands ready to forgive them.

**Q 52: What sins and crimes have you considered unforgivable? How does Jesus' suffering for those same sins shed a new light on God's amazing grace?**

A 52: Some might consider murder, rape, or some other terrible crime, even homosexuality. But Jesus was already punished on the cross for those sins—so no such sin is unforgivable.

The religious leaders of Jerusalem respond physically to Jeremiah's loving yet stern warnings.

**Read chapter 20.**

**Q 53: How does this mistreatment of God's prophet foreshadow Jesus' passion?**

A 53: Both were mistreated by the religious authorities in Jerusalem, whose stubborn, sinful, unrepentant hearts found no place for God's Word.

## CONDEMNATION OF KINGS, PROPHETS, AND PEOPLE— JEREMIAH 21–24

Jerusalem is doomed—nothing will prevent it from falling to the Babylonians. But in mercy and compassion, God provides a way for the kings, prophets, and people to survive.

**Read 21:1–10.**

**Q 54: What means of survival did God make available to the Jewish people?**

A 54: The Babylonians would show mercy and give life to any who would surrender.

**Q 55: Why would it require great faith to surrender?**

A 55: Surrendering meant putting themselves at the mercy of a people with a reputation of great cruelty. Surrendering demonstrated trust that God would move the enemy to show compassion.

**Q 56: Describe a time you did something in faith that seemed to go against common sense.**

A 56: An example would be confronting a boss who is doing something that is wrong, or confessing responsibility for a sin or failure when you could have gotten away with it.

God challenges the king and his family to stop their evil deeds and to defend those who were being mistreated by the wealthy and powerful in Jerusalem.

**Read 21:11–22:10.**

**Q 57: What does this show about the sins for which God was going to destroy Jerusalem?**

A 57: While the great and powerful in Judah were mistreating the poor and powerless, the king and other judges failed to rule justly on behalf of the victims.

Jeremiah condemns the leaders' obsession with gaining more wealth and power at the expense of the innocent who were being exploited.

**Read 22:11–30.**

**Q 58: Why is it hard for sinners to treasure people more than things?**

A 58: Our sinful nature is so turned in on ourselves that other people often become objects whose sole purpose is to serve our selfish desires.

In contrast to the evil, selfish kings of Judah, God promises to raise up a new and righteous King—His Son, the promised Messiah.

**Read 23:1–8.**

**Q 59: What hope can Christians who are persecuted and oppressed by corrupt, selfish government officials draw from Jesus' promised return?**

A 59: The time we will be subject to evil governments is limited—we will live under Jesus' perfect reign for all eternity.

Judah's slide into idolatry and immorality was spurred in large part by the religious leaders (priests, Levites, and false prophets) who did not confront their sins and call them to repentance, but instead misled them with false assurance that God would not punish them for their sin.

**Read 23:9–40.**

**Q 60: How can you guard against Christian ministers and leaders who fail to call sinners to repent, or who give them false confidence in their good works?**

A 60: We need to be persistent in our study of Scripture and test the teachings we hear to see if they line up with Scripture.

By this point, a large group of Judeans have already been led off to captivity in Babylon (including Ezekiel and Daniel and his three friends). Jeremiah confronts the snobbish attitude of those who remain and think they are better than their exiled brothers.

**Read chapter 24.**

**Q 61: What thinking should we avoid when we see others going through a difficult trial in their lives?**

A 61: That somehow this trial demonstrates God's anger at some sin of theirs. That is what Job's friends did.



# FORETELLING THE BABYLONIAN EXILE—JEREMIAH 25–29

It is the year 605 BC. Jeremiah reminds the people that God has been sending prophets for twenty-three years—warning them of His impending judgment and calling on them to repent—but they have refused to listen. Now God’s judgment is at hand.

**Read 25:1–14.**

**Q 62: How did the people of Judah abuse God’s patience?**

A 62: Even though He gave them nearly a quarter of a century to repent, they refused to listen. And it seems the long time without suffering immediate consequences for their sinful actions confirmed them in their sin and injustice.

**Q 63: What similar danger do we face while awaiting Jesus’ second return?**

A 63: Judgment Day may seem far off, and we might be tempted to indulge our sins, thinking there is plenty of time to repent. But only God knows when the day of our death or Christ’s return will be. The wise person heeds God’s warnings instead of ignoring them.

Jeremiah illustrates the effects of God’s wrath with a cup that makes people drunk.

**Read 25:15–38.**

**Q 64: Why is drunkenness a good picture of the devastating effects of God’s wrath?**

A 64: The Jewish refugees and exiles endured great suffering, disease, hunger, and affliction. When dragged off in chains into exile, they staggered and reeled as if they were drunk.

**Q 65: How does this cup relate to Jesus’ death on the cross?**

A 65: In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will” (Matthew 26:39). In His suffering and death on the cross, Jesus completely emptied the cup of God’s wrath at all human sin.

**Q 66: What cup does Jesus now offer us instead of the cup of wrath?**

A 66: He offers the cup of the New Covenant, which holds the blood of Christ shed for the forgiveness of our sins.

Jeremiah stands in the temple courts proclaiming the coming destruction of the city and the temple if the people of Judah do not repent. The reaction of the priests, prophets, and people is not unexpected.

**Read 26:1–15.**

**Q 67: Why did the Jewish religious leaders charge Jeremiah with treason—a capital offense?**

A 67: He preached the destruction of the temple and the city. This same charge was leveled against Jesus (threatening to destroy the temple—see Matthew 26:59–62).

**Q 68: Why shouldn't we be surprised when we receive hostile responses when calling out sin and sharing the Gospel of God's forgiveness in Jesus Christ?**

A 68: God's Law is like a sword that cuts deep into our soul, exposing our sin. When people cling to their sins, they feel deep, defensive rage when their cherished sinful lifestyle is attacked.

The Jewish religious leaders bring Jeremiah before wicked King Jehoiakim for execution.

**Read 26:16–24.**

**Q 69: How is this similar to the trials of our Lord Jesus?**

A 69: The Jewish religious leaders leveled charges of capital crimes against Jesus and brought Him before the ruler Pontius Pilate to be executed.

**Q 70: How did God spare Jeremiah's life despite the wicked king who was his judge?**

A 70: God-fearing officials in Jehoiakim's court recalled a precedent set one hundred years before when the prophet Micah predicted the destruction of the temple under faithful King Hezekiah.

God gives Jeremiah a new preaching prop—a wooden yoke—and a new audience.

**Read chapter 27.**

**Q 71: What does the wooden yoke signify?**

A 71: The yoke signified that all who heard should humble themselves and serve Nebuchadnezzar, whom God had appointed to punish the nations and govern them. All those who resisted God's chosen leader would suffer the consequences.

**Q 72: What is different about the audience to whom Jeremiah preached wearing this yoke?**

A 72: These are not only the people of Judah and Jerusalem, but also envoys and representatives of small neighboring nations who came to Jerusalem to discuss allying together against the king of Babylon.

**Q 73: Describe a situation where a Christian might have to submit to an unbeliever to fulfill God's will for his or her life.**

A 73: This could include unbelieving government officials or unbelieving bosses, teachers, or professors.

The false prophet Hananiah contradicts Jeremiah, claiming that within two years King Nebuchadnezzar will return the exiled Jews and the temple furnishings.

**Read chapter 28.**

**Q 74: Where can you see a sense of humor or longing in Jeremiah's response?**

A 74: Jeremiah responded, "Amen! May the LORD do so" (v. 6). Jeremiah warns the people that Hananiah is lying. A much worse disaster is about to come: the complete destruction of the temple and the exile of most of those remaining in Jerusalem and Judah.

Jeremiah writes a letter to the exiles in Babylon who are being given false hope by false prophets like Hananiah.

**Read 29:1–23.**

**Q 75: How did these first exiles have it better than the Jews who now remained in Jerusalem?**

A 75: These exiles were settled in to Babylon. But Nebuchadnezzar will react with great fury to Jerusalem's disloyalty. His devastating siege will bring famine, starvation, disease, and death to the survivors hiding behind the walls of Jerusalem.

An opposition figure arises among the exiles living in Babylon. He sends letters to the religious leaders in Jerusalem, stirring up opposition against Jeremiah.

**Read 29:24–32.**

**Q 76: Why did Jeremiah go his way without responding to Hananiah when the false prophet broke Jeremiah's yoke in verses 10–11?**

A 76: Jeremiah did not refute the false prophet on his own authority. He waited until the Lord gave him a divinely inspired rebuttal.

**Q 77: How does this illustrate the importance of congregation members speaking up in defense of their pastor(s) and church workers and giving personal encouragement to them?**

A 77: Satan raises great opposition against pastors and other church leaders, trying to discourage, frustrate, and overwhelm them. More than anything, he wants to stop faithful ministry. It is very easy for a pastor or other leader to hear the loud voices of their few detractors and think that is the view of the congregation because those who support the pastor remain silent.

# PROMISES OF RESTORATION AND THE NEW COVENANT—JEREMIAH 30–33

Jeremiah prophesies future restoration under the coming Messiah.

**Read chapter 30.**

**Q 78: In what way will Judah’s deliverance from Babylonian captivity be like Israel’s earlier deliverance from Egyptian slavery?**

A 78: In Exodus, the Israelites were powerless to free themselves from Egypt. The exiles in Babylon will be powerless to free themselves from exile—but with a mighty hand God will set them free.

**Q 79: Why is this reassuring Gospel promise through the Messiah so relevant for us today?**

A 79: Our lives may look similar to the exiles, living in an ungodly culture, suffering from all manner of problems. Yet God’s promise is a sure encouragement as we look forward to Christ’s return.

The Lord promises to restore His people to the Promised Land after their exile.

**Read 31:1–30.**

**Q 80: How does the gracious Gospel of this section compare to the wrath God expressed through Jeremiah earlier in this book?**

A 80: God reassures His people that He still loves them despite their sin and will be gracious, merciful, and compassionate toward them.

**Q 81: What comfort does this passage give you when you think of the difficulties you are facing or have faced in your life?**

A 81: We can often feel like our sins are so grievous God could never forgive us or do good to us—but Jesus has paid for those sins so our Father freely loves us.

God promises a new covenant relationship with Israel, not like the old covenant He made with their ancestors through Moses.

**Read 31:31–40.**

**Q 82: What is different about this new covenant?**

A 82: When Christ suffered and died for our sins, our standing with God depended solely on His obedience credited to us through our Holy Spirit—given faith, not our works of obedience.

To reassure the people of Judah that God will bring them back to their land after their long exile, He instructs Jeremiah to purchase a field.

**Read 32:1–15.**

**Q 83: How would this purchase comfort the Israelites while they were living far away in Babylon?**

A 83: It was a written guarantee from God that He would faithfully keep His promise. They could look forward to the day they would return and stand in their own land again.

**Q 84: How do the Scriptures and the bread and wine of Holy Communion that we can hold in our hands give us this same reassurance of our eternal home with God?**

A 84: The Scriptures are God's very words and promises, and the bread and wine hold the very body and blood of the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ, who will return to raise us to eternal life in His glorious presence.

Jeremiah trusts God's promise of a bright future, but prays for understanding because he can see only God's wrath in the Babylonian army encircling Jerusalem.

**Read 32:16–35.**

**Q 85: Why does God start His explanation with Law and judgment?**

A 85: Jeremiah needs to remember the cause of Jerusalem's sufferings is the nation's sin.

Now God teaches Jeremiah that His grace and love are everlasting.

**Read 32:36–44.**

**Q 86: Why is it essential for God to give us new hearts?**

A 86: Our sinful nature makes it impossible for us to revere, love, and trust God as we should. Through Baptism, God has given us new hearts to love Him and cherish Him—and to rejoice in the salvation won by His Son, our Brother, Jesus Christ.

The Lord describes the striking contrast between the besieged, doomed Jerusalem filled with terror and death; and the restored, vibrant city that will be filled with life and joy.

**Read 33:1–13.**

**Q 87: How might this passage bring hope and consolation to a person dealing with grief; financial struggles; problems of physical, mental, or emotional health; or relationship issues?**

A 87: In the midst of our struggles, it may seem like we will never be freed and things will never get better. But Christ will return to this world and restore His creation, and whatever physical ill that afflicts us will be gone forever as our body is made glorious and immortal forever.

Jeremiah prophesies the joy and benefits of Jesus' messianic reign.

**Read 33:14–26.**

**Q 88: Why does God compare His promise to send the Savior with His created order of heaven and earth and day and night?**

A 88: Each day, month, year, and decade we can see the unwavering order of creation—think of the precision in the cycle of eclipses, comet appearances, and meteor showers. As dependable as the heavens are for us, God’s promises through Christ are even more dependable.

## FIRST HISTORICAL APPENDIX— JEREMIAH 34–35

While besieged by the Babylonian armies, King Zedekiah made a covenant with all the people of Judah to free their Israelite slaves as God had commanded through Moses. But when the Babylonians lifted their siege temporarily to deal with an approaching Egyptian army, the powerful Jews change their minds.

**Read chapter 34.**

**Q 89: How did the Jewish leaders show their treachery against God?**

A 89: When there was a temporary reprieve from the Babylonians, they broke their solemn covenant to never enslave their fellow Israelites again.

The Lord sends Jeremiah to a family called the Rechabites, who faithfully obey a tradition set in place by a distant ancestor.

**Read chapter 35.**

**Q 90: What lesson did the Rechabites offer the people of Judah?**

A 90: They faithfully obey a vow made by their ancestor—why don’t the people of Judah obey the commands of their God and Lord?

# SUFFERING AND PERSECUTION OF THE PROPHET—JEREMIAH 36– 38

When Jeremiah is barred from the temple grounds, God instructs him to record His words on a scroll to be delivered to King Jehoiakim. The king's officials read the scroll with fear and trembling, then bring it to the king.

**Read chapter 36.**

**Q 91: How does the king's behavior seal his fate and that of Jerusalem?**

A 91: His stubborn, persistent rejection of God's words leaves God no choice. The king's foolishness dooms his reign and his capital city.

**Q 92: What risk are we taking when we cling to a sin, such as holding a grudge, and refuse to do God's will?**

A 92: The longer we continue indulging a sin, the more self-justified we tend to get, the less we listen to our conscience's warnings, and the less repentant we tend to feel. It makes it easier for us to resist the Holy Spirit.

King Jehoiakim's reign ends, and his brother Zedekiah becomes king (37:1). Realizing the dire situation facing Jerusalem, Zedekiah sends religious leaders to ask Jeremiah what God would have them do. When the Babylonians (Chaldeans) withdraw to contend with the Egyptians and the situation eases, Jeremiah sends the king a warning.

**Read 37:1–10.**

**Q 93: Why do we often draw near to God in times of trouble, but forget about Him when the pressure or danger subsides?**

A 93: It is another symptom of the self-centeredness of our sinful nature. We quickly forget the God who gives us all things—until our own efforts and resources fail.

With the lull in the fighting, Jeremiah sets out from Jerusalem—only to be arrested and falsely accused of desertion.

**Read 37:11–21.**

**Q 94: What is amazing about King Zedekiah's private meeting with Jeremiah?**

A 94: The king is desperate. He realizes the false prophets have been lying. He meets with Jeremiah privately because he fears the leaders who hate Jeremiah. If you look closely in the next section, you will see a similarity between this king and Pontius Pilate.

Jeremiah's enemies have had enough. They demand King Zedekiah put the prophet to death.

**Read 38:1–6.**

**Q 95: Why did Jeremiah's enemies finally feel it was time to put him to death?**

A 95: Jeremiah was calling on the soldiers to surrender to the Babylonians. His enemies thought this would doom the city, which would have amounted to treason.

**Q 96: How do the king's words, "The king can do nothing against you" (v. 5), resemble Pilate's act of washing his hands in front of the Jewish crowd?**

A 96: Both men knew the right thing to do, but they did not have the strength God gives through faith to do it. They both put their own shortsighted self-interest ahead of the subjects who deserved justice.

Jeremiah is not the only believer in Jerusalem. One of King Zedekiah's officials takes courage and comes to his rescue.

**Read 38:7–13.**

**Q 97: What do you make of King Zedekiah's wishy-washy nature?**

A 97: He was a lot like Herod, who executed John the Baptist. Zedekiah respected God's prophet, but never walked out in faith to obey God the way his father, Josiah, had done.

**Q 98: What lesson does Jeremiah's rescue teach us when it looks like our lives are out of control and hopeless?**

A 98: Jeremiah may have felt doomed, expecting to die of thirst or starvation. God can step in and save us even when we can't see a way out. He already saved us through Jesus, His Son.

Despite Zedekiah having burned Jeremiah's scroll, God shows remarkable mercy to him again, providing a way for him to spare his life, his family, and his city. Sadly, the king will disobey and lose it all.

**Read 38:14–28.**

**Q 99: How do King Zedekiah's words to Jeremiah (v. 16) make us pause before declaring him a lost sinner?**

A 99: The king was at a place where he was desperate for help. He promised to spare Jeremiah's life and asked him for the truth from God.

**Q 100: What do Jeremiah's words show you about our remarkable God and Savior?**

A 100: God generously offered to spare Zedekiah, his family, and his city to grow that spark to the full flame of faith.



# THE FALL OF JERUSALEM AND RELATED EVENTS—JEREMIAH 39–45

## THE FALL OF JERUSALEM—JEREMIAH 39

The Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar returns from defeating the Egyptian army and once again lays siege to Jerusalem, just as Jeremiah had said.

**Read 39:1–10.**

**Q 101: Where do we see God’s Law and Gospel at work in the fall of Jerusalem?**

A 101: The siege devastated Jerusalem—many people died of starvation and disease. The king of Babylon ordered all the nobles and the king’s sons to be slaughtered before King Zedekiah’s eyes, then had him blinded. Yet, God spared Zedekiah’s life and the lives of a remnant from Jerusalem.

**Q 102: What important lesson does this incident set before us?**

A 102: We cannot escape God’s judgment and wrath except through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. Yet God offers us that salvation no matter what we have done.

Nebuchadnezzar gives special orders regarding the prophet Jeremiah.

**Read 39:11–18.**

**Q 103: What orders did Nebuchadnezzar give his officers about Jeremiah?**

A 103: They were to free him from his confinement, treat him well, and do whatever he told them. The Babylonians treated the prophet with more honor and respect than his own people.

**Q 104: Who was Ebed-melech?**

A 104: He was the Ethiopian who had gone to King Zedekiah when Jeremiah was lowered into the cistern to die. He secured permission to lift Jeremiah out and rescue him.

**Q 105: What encouragement can this bring to us?**

A 105: God notes the good works of His saints and cares for us in all circumstances—even when our situation seems hopeless.

# GEDALIAH AND JEREMIAH— JEREMIAH 40–41

Jeremiah is given the choice to go to Babylon and be well cared for or to stay in Jerusalem with Gedaliah, the new provincial governor for Babylon.

**Read chapter 40.**

**Q 106: What may have led Jeremiah to remain in Jerusalem rather than enjoy a more comfortable situation in Babylon?**

A 106: The Jews who remained in the land of Jerusalem and Judea after the Babylonian conquest needed a prophet. (The exiles already had Ezekiel and Daniel living among them.)

**Q 107: What danger was passed along to Gedaliah?**

A 107: Johanan, a leader of the Babylonian forces in the open country, learned of a plot by a Jewish prince (descendant of King David) named Ishmael to assassinate Gedaliah. But Gedaliah foolishly refused to believe Johanan or take the threat seriously.

Ishmael comes to Gedaliah.

**Read chapter 41.**

**Q 108: Why would Ishmael do such a foolish thing as assassinate Babylon's handpicked governor, then murder the witnesses and possible successors?**

A 108: Ishmael was moved by selfish ambition. He played on the anger and hatred of some of the survivors rather than seek peace, which was God's will for His people and their welfare.

**Q 109: How did God remove Ishmael from leadership over Jerusalem?**

A 109: When Johanan and his soldiers came in from the open country to attack him, Ishmael fled out of the country to the Ammonites.

# JEREMIAH, BARUCH, AND EGYPT— JEREMIAH 42–45

Fearful of Nebuchadnezzar's wrath at the assassination of his handpicked governor, Gedaliah, the other leaders and the people come to Jeremiah to ask what God wants them to do.

**Read chapter 42.**

**Q 110: What was God's counsel to Johanan and the people?**

A 110: The people would thrive if they remained in Jerusalem and submitted to King Nebuchadnezzar. But if they fled to Egypt for safety, they would perish.

**Q 111: Why would Egypt seem like a safer place than Jerusalem?**

A 111: They didn't trust that God could turn Nebuchadnezzar's heart to treat them mercifully.

**Q 112: When have you seen a similar fear in the Bible?**

A 112: Back in Genesis 12:10–20; 20:1–18; and 26:6–11, both Abraham and Isaac instructed their wives to lie and say they were sister and brother because they didn't trust God enough to protect them from the ungodly people whom they thought would murder them to have their beautiful wives.

Despite having vowed to obey God's Word through Jeremiah, Johanan and the rest of the royal family break their vow and move to Egypt—taking Jeremiah along with them.

**Read chapter 43.**

**Q 113: What explains the people's stubborn refusal to obey God when they had seen the capture of Jerusalem, the imprisonment of their king, and the deportation of their fellow Jews?**

A 113: Our sinful minds are so twisted we cannot think rationally. We fool ourselves into thinking we know the best course of action to take.

**Q 114: What does that teach us about the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit that leads to repentance and faith?**

A 114: The Holy Spirit breaks through the deception of our sinful minds and teaches us that our ways are wrong when they conflict with God's revealed will. Faith teaches us to trust God's wisdom, care, and love and to follow His directions—even if they don't make the most sense to our minds.

In Egypt, the Jewish fugitives return to the idolatry they abandoned during the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem.

**Read chapter 44.**

**Q 115: What rationale do the Jews give for worshiping the "queen of heaven"?**

A 115: When the nation worshiped the queen of heaven in the days of King Manasseh, the nation was prosperous. After King Josiah outlawed all idolatry, the Babylonians came. They blamed the Babylonian conquest on not worshiping the queen of heaven.

**Q 116: What examples of this superstitious kind of behavior have you seen from people?**

A 116: Examples might include people who think it rained because they

washed and waxed their car, or their favorite sports team lost the game because they were sitting in the wrong chair.

Jeremiah is not the only one feeling the pain and frustration of sharing a message that is met with rejection, ridicule, and persecution—so does his scribe, Baruch. God gives a special message of comfort and reassurance.

**Read chapter 45.**

**Q 117: Why does God advise Baruch not to seek great things for himself?**

A 117: Baruch is looking for earthly possessions and rewards. Those things will not be possible in a time of war, destruction, and loss. God promises to protect and spare Baruch's earthly life and give him a far more glorious eternity in heaven.

**Q 118: Why is it important for us to focus more on our life in heaven than our earthly life?**

A 118: When we set our hopes on acquiring earthly possessions or rewards, we can easily be disappointed and think it is no longer worth serving God—especially when the economy sinks and all our best-laid plans fail. But we can never be disappointed when we focus on the eternal rewards God promises in heaven.

# JUDGMENT AGAINST THE NATIONS—JEREMIAH 46–51

Jeremiah's words conclude with oracles against the nations around Israel.

## EGYPT—JEREMIAH 46

After the Assyrian Empire fell in 612 BC, two powerful nations battled for supremacy. At first, Egypt had the upper hand over Judah and the surrounding nations (after killing King Josiah in battle). Jeremiah now gives two poems to prophesy the outcome of their conflict with the Babylonians in the Battle of Carchemish in 605 BC.

**Read chapter 46.**

**Q 119: Why would Jeremiah give prophecies about Israel's neighbors, like Egypt?**

A 119: It was important for the Jewish exiles to see that the Lord their God was in control of all nations, guiding what happened throughout the world for the benefit of His people.

**Q 120: What would be the result of Egypt's defeat by the Babylonians?**

A 120: God would humble Egypt and break it of its worship of false gods. The surviving nation of Egypt was an important home for Jews, including Jesus and Mary when Joseph fled from Bethlehem to escape Herod's wrath after the Wise Men's visit (see Matthew 2:13–15).

## PHILISTINES—JEREMIAH 47

The Philistines were pinched between the Babylonians coming down from the north and the Egyptians moving up from the south. The southern cities of Gaza and Ashkelon fell to the Egyptians, while the northern cities were conquered by the Babylonians.

**Read chapter 47.**

**Q 121: Why should the Jews care about what happened to the Philistines?**

A 121: Throughout the time of Judges and during the reigns of kings Saul and David, the Philistines harassed and attacked the Israelites. God

wanted His people to know that He would settle all accounts at the judgment on the Last Day for the benefit of His chosen people.

## MOAB—JEREMIAH 48

The Moabites were descendants of Abraham's nephew Lot. They worshiped the idol Chemosh, and Israel adopted that idolatry.

**Read chapter 48.**

**Q 122: How did God show His grace and mercy to the people of Moab?**

A 122: He promised to punish them by defeat in battle, but to preserve their nation.

## AMMON—JEREMIAH 49:1–6

The Ammonites were also descendants of Lot. They were guilty of being hostile to the Israelites, even taking possession of some of the territory God had given the tribe of Gad.

**Read 49:1–6.**

**Q 123: What other trouble did the king of Ammon plot against the people of Judah in Jeremiah 40:13–14?**

A 123: When the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem and set Gedaliah as governor of Judea, it was the king of Ammon who sent Ishmael, one of Judah's princes, to assassinate Gedaliah.

## EDOM—JEREMIAH 49:7–22

The Edomites were descendants of Jacob's brother Esau. They were famed for their wisdom, yet were not wise enough to honor God and respect His chosen people, Israel.

**Read 49:7–22.**

**Q 124: What does God's word to Edom teach us about worldly wisdom?**

A 124: Being wise in the world's eyes is not enough. True wisdom is faith, which leans on God's wisdom and strength rather than our own.

# DAMASCUS—JEREMIAH 49:23–27

Damascus was the capital of the nation of Aram (Syria), a perpetual thorn in the side of Israel and Judah, often plotting the downfall of God's people. It fell shortly after Jerusalem fell to Nebuchadnezzar.

**Read 49:23–27.**

**Q 125: What comfort can we draw from the defeat of Damascus?**

A 125: The fall of Damascus reminds us that God keeps His promise to Abraham, "I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse" (Genesis 12:3). We can be assured that God will not let the hostility of our enemies go unnoticed. Hopefully they will repent, trust in Christ, and become our brothers and sisters. If not, they will certainly be punished.

**Q 126: What spiritual benefit did God bring to countries like Aram when they were defeated in war?**

A 126: He taught them their gods were false and undependable. When these nations heard that Jeremiah had made these prophecies before they fell in battle, they would see the wisdom of Israel's true God and, hopefully, repent!

# KEDAR AND HAZOR—JEREMIAH 49:28–33

Kedar and Hazor were settlements and villages in the desert southeast of Syria. They were occupied by descendants of Ishmael, Abraham's son by Sarah's maid Hagar (see Genesis 16). They had no city walls for defense because they trusted their isolation and felt safe from all enemies.

**Read 49:28–33.**

**Q 127: What did the fall of Kedar and Hazor teach the people of Israel and us?**

A 127: No one can escape the judgment of God except through faith in our Savior, Jesus Christ. Those who feel secure that they will face no judgment are tragically mistaken.

## ELAM—JEREMIAH 49:34–39

Elam was a nation about two hundred miles east of Babylon. They allied with Babylon in their war against Assyria and in their conquest of Jerusalem and Judah.

**Read 49:34–39.**

**Q 128: What warning does Elam's defeat send?**

A 128: Those who ally together to oppose God, His Christ, and His people will fall in defeat.

## BABYLON—JEREMIAH 50–51

Even though God sent Babylon against His people to punish their disobedience and call them to repentance, He still holds the Babylonians responsible for the savage way they plundered His people and held them captive.

**Read chapters 50 and 51.**

**Q 129: Why is it important that God did not let Babylon go unpunished?**

A 129: Babylon was God's instrument to punish Judah and all the nations in these chapters (from Egypt on). But the Babylonians also railed against God and His people (see Daniel 1–6). Prophesying that Babylon itself would fall in the future reassured God's people that He is just, kind, and compassionate toward them—though He calls them and all people to repent.



# SECOND HISTORICAL APPENDIX— JEREMIAH 52

The last sentence in chapter 51 says, “Thus far are the words of Jeremiah” (v. 64). This informs us that the final chapter is an appendix written by someone else to verify that Jeremiah’s prophecies were all true—the things he said would take place all became historical fact and reality.

**Read 52:1–23.**

**Q 130: How do these verses vindicate Jeremiah’s ministry?**

A 130: During his ministry before Jerusalem’s fall, the people of Judah rejected Jeremiah’s words, and false prophets contradicted and ridiculed him. His enemies persecuted him, put him in stocks, and even tried to put him to death.

**Q 131: When the people take God’s judgment seriously in Jeremiah’s words and repent of their sins (see Jeremiah 50:4–5), how will Jeremiah’s words bring them comfort and hope?**

A 131: Jeremiah’s prophecies are filled with Gospel as he shows God’s patience, love, mercy, and compassion. Judah suffered terribly, but God still showed them mercy, sparing a remnant, and promising to send His Son, the promised Messiah.