



JEREMIAH

A 12-WEEK STUDY

Matthew S. Harmon



J. I. Packer

THEOLOGICAL EDITOR

Dane C. Ortlund

SERIES EDITOR

“This series is a tremendous resource for those wanting to study and teach the Bible with an understanding of how the gospel is woven throughout Scripture. Here are gospel-minded pastors and scholars doing gospel business from all the Scriptures. This is a biblical and theological feast preparing God’s people to apply the entire Bible to all of life with heart and mind wholly committed to Christ’s priorities.”

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KNOWING THE BIBLE

J. I. Packer, Theological Editor
Dane C. Ortlund, Series Editor
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Genesis	Ecclesiastes	John	Colossians,
Exodus	Isaiah	Acts	Philemon
Leviticus	Jeremiah	Romans	Hebrews
Joshua	Daniel	1 Corinthians	James
Ruth, Esther	Hosea	2 Corinthians	Revelation
Ezra, Nehemiah	Matthew	Galatians	
Psalms	Mark	Ephesians	
Proverbs	Luke	Philippians	

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S E R I E S P R E F A C E

KNOWING THE BIBLE, as the series title indicates, was created to help readers know and understand the meaning, the message, and the God of the Bible. Each volume in the series consists of 12 units that progressively take the reader through a clear, concise study of that book of the Bible. In this way, any given volume can fruitfully be used in a 12-week format either in group study, such as in a church-based context, or in individual study. Of course, these 12 studies could be completed in fewer or more than 12 weeks, as convenient, depending on the context in which they are used.

Each study unit gives an overview of the text at hand before digging into it with a series of questions for reflection or discussion. The unit then concludes by highlighting the gospel of grace in each passage (“Gospel Glimpses”), identifying whole-Bible themes that occur in the passage (“Whole-Bible Connections”), and pinpointing Christian doctrines that are affirmed in the passage (“Theological Soundings”).

The final component to each unit is a section for reflecting on personal and practical implications from the passage at hand. The layout provides space for recording responses to the questions proposed, and we think readers need to do this to get the full benefit of the exercise. The series also includes definitions of key words. These definitions are indicated by a note number in the text and are found at the end of each chapter.

Lastly, for help in understanding the Bible in this deeper way, we would urge the reader to use the ESV Bible and the *ESV Study Bible*, which are available online at www.esvbible.org. The *Knowing the Bible* series is also available online. Additional 12-week studies covering each book of the Bible will be added as they become available.

May the Lord greatly bless your study as you seek to know him through knowing his Word.

J. I. Packer
Lane T. Dennis

WEEK 1: OVERVIEW



Getting Acquainted

Jeremiah was born into a priestly family and raised in the small town of Anathoth (1:1), located in the tribal allotment of Benjamin, a few miles north-east of Jerusalem. God called him to be a prophet while still a young man, in 627 BC (1:2, 6), and set him “over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant” (1:10). His repeated calls for repentance and his criticism of Judah’s kings led to a life of significant persecution. Yet for more than 40 years Jeremiah spoke the word of God to the southern kingdom of Judah as it ran headlong toward God’s judgment of exile¹ in 587/586 BC.

God’s condemnation of Judah’s idolatry takes place on the stage of world history. The Babylonians were God’s instrument of judgment on Judah for repeatedly breaking the covenant² (21:8–10), but they too must pay for their wickedness (50:1–51:64). None of the surrounding nations will escape the Lord’s judgment on all the earth (46:1–49:39). Yet those who turn from their sins and trust in the Lord will be saved, Jew and Gentile alike (3:6–4:4).

God’s message through Jeremiah, however, was not one solely of judgment, but of hope as well. In fact, the bleakness of Judah’s sin sets the backdrop for the beauty of God’s promised salvation through a righteous Branch from the line of David who will not only reign in righteousness but will *be* our righteousness

WEEK 1: OVERVIEW

(23:5–6). Days will come when God will make a new covenant in which he will forgive sin and write his law on the hearts of his people (31:31–34).

Jeremiah shows us that the Lord truly abounds in steadfast love and faithfulness, while at the same time he remains perfectly just by punishing sin (compare Ex. 34:6–7). Through judgment God will save a faithful remnant and establish a new covenant with them through a descendant of David. (For further background, see the *ESV Study Bible*, pages 1363–1368; available online at www.esvbible.org.)

Placing It in the Larger Story

Jeremiah served during a significant transition in salvation history. Although his ministry began during the reign of the last faithful king (Josiah), he eventually saw God fulfill his long-standing promise of judgment on Judah for its covenant unfaithfulness. But it was during these dark days that God promised not only to bring a remnant back to the land but also to institute a new covenant through a faithful Davidic king. These promises find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ, the Son of David who established a new covenant through his death and resurrection.

Key Passage

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” (Jer. 31:31–34)

Date and Historical Background

Jeremiah’s ministry spanned more than 40 years, from his call to be a prophet in 627 BC through the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 and extending into the early years of the exile. His scribe Baruch recorded Jeremiah’s messages and prophecies, likely compiled in their final form by 550 BC. King Josiah (640–609 BC), the last faithful king, instituted a number of reforms, but they were

not enough to turn Judah from the path of destruction. Caught in the power struggle between Egypt and Babylon, Judah struggled to maintain its independence. In 605 BC Babylon took the first wave of exiles (including Daniel and his friends; Dan. 1:1–7), and deported a second group in 597 (including Ezekiel; Ezek. 1:1–3). The final straw came in 587/586 BC, when Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem, destroyed the city and its temple, and took a large number of exiles back to Babylon. Jeremiah was among those left in Jerusalem. But when a group of Judeans killed the Babylonian-appointed governor, Gedaliah, those responsible fled to Egypt, taking Jeremiah and Baruch with them against their will. Jeremiah continued his prophetic ministry there, prophesying against the sins of Judah, Egypt, Babylon, and other nations, and presumably he died there as well.

Outline

I. Introduction (1:1–19)

- A. Jeremiah's historical setting (1:1–3)
- B. Jeremiah's call and message (1:4–16)
- C. God's promised protection of Jeremiah (1:17–19)

II. Israel's Covenantal Adultery (2:1–6:30)

- A. Israel as a faithless spouse (2:1–3:5)
- B. Israel's need to repent (3:6–4:4)
- C. The coming disaster (4:5–31)
- D. Judah's unwillingness to repent and its consequences (5:1–31)
- E. God's rejection of his people (6:1–30)

III. False Religion and an Idolatrous People (7:1–10:25)

- A. Judah's improper reliance on the temple (7:1–8:3)
- B. Judah rejects God's Torah (8:4–17)
- C. Judah's deceit (8:18–9:9)
- D. Jeremiah's grief (9:10–26)
- E. Judah's idolatry (10:1–16)
- F. Judah's future exile (10:17–25)

IV. Jeremiah's Struggles with God and Judah (11:1–20:18)

- A. Jeremiah's surprise (11:1–12:17)
- B. Jeremiah's lament (13:1–15:21)
- C. Jeremiah's renewal (16:1–17:18)
- D. Jeremiah's burden (17:19–18:23)
- E. Jeremiah's suffering (19:1–20:18)

WEEK 1: OVERVIEW

- V. Jeremiah's Confrontations (21:1–29:32)**
 - A. Judah's kings (21:1–23:8)**
 - B. False prophets (23:9–40)**
 - C. Judah's people (24:1–25:38)**
 - D. False belief (26:1–29:32)**
- VI. Restoration for Judah and Israel (30:1–33:26)**
 - A. Restoration (30:1–24)**
 - B. New covenant (31:1–40)**
 - C. Return to the Promised Land (32:1–44)**
 - D. Davidic covenant (33:1–26)**
- VII. God's Judgment on Judah (34:1–45:5)**
 - A. God's faithfulness and Judah's infidelity (34:1–35:19)**
 - B. Rejection of God's word (36:1–32)**
 - C. Jerusalem's last days (37:1–39:18)**
 - D. Judah's futile rebellion against Babylon (40:1–41:18)**
 - E. Judah's futile rebellion against God (42:1–45:5)**
- VIII. God's Judgment on the Nations (46:1–51:64)**
 - A. Egypt (46:1–28)**
 - B. Philistia (47:1–7)**
 - C. Moab (48:1–47)**
 - D. Many nations (49:1–39)**
 - E. Babylon (50:1–51:64)**
- IX. Conclusion: The Fall of Jerusalem (52:1–34)**
 - A. Jerusalem's fall and Zedekiah's blinding (52:1–11)**
 - B. Destruction of the temple (52:12–23)**
 - C. Exiling of the people (52:24–30)**
 - D. Continuation of the Davidic lineage (52:31–34)**

As You Get Started

Based on your current understanding of Jeremiah, what are some of its key themes? Are there particular passages or verses that come to mind when you think about the book?

Take some time to read through 2 Kings 22–25, which records events during the lifetime of Jeremiah. Write down some observations about key events, the leaders of Judah, and its people.

What aspects of Jeremiah are you most looking forward to studying? Are there any specific questions that you hope to have answered through this study?

As You Finish This Unit . . .

Take a few minutes to ask God to bless you with increased understanding and a transformed heart and life as you begin this study of Jeremiah.

Definitions

- ¹ **Exile** – Several relocations of large groups of Israelites/Jews have occurred throughout history, but “the exile” typically refers to the Babylonian exile, that is, Nebuchadnezzar’s relocation of residents of the southern kingdom of Judah to Babylon in 586 BC (residents of the northern kingdom of Israel had been resettled by Assyria in 722 BC). After Babylon came under Persian rule, several waves of Jewish exiles returned and repopulated Judah.
- ² **Covenant** – A binding agreement between two parties, typically involving a formal statement of their relationship, a list of stipulations and obligations for both parties, a list of witnesses to the agreement, and a list of curses for unfaithfulness and blessings for faithfulness to the agreement.



THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH recounts the prophet's faithful preaching of God's righteous judgment against sin in the face of opposition and persecution. Despite impending wrath, Jeremiah's message always reminded Israel of the faithfulness of God.

In this 12-week study, Matthew Harmon walks through Jeremiah's prophecies, showing readers how God's righteous judgment serves as a backdrop for the beauty of his promised salvation through Jesus Christ.

ABOUT THE *KNOWING THE BIBLE* SERIES

Over the course of 12 weeks, these studies explore books of the Bible and:

- Ask thoughtful questions to spur discussion
- Show how each passage unveils the gospel
- Tie the text in with the whole story of Scripture
- Illuminate the doctrines taught in each passage
- Invite you to discover practical implications
- Help you better understand and apply God's Word

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