

Two Year Bible Trek  
Week 63  
Jeremiah 1-23

**Key Concepts:** The key concept in the opening portion of Jeremiah is that even when God is preparing to punish Judah there is still a glimmer of hope that God will save some of God's people.

**Stories:** We begin with a short introduction, then we move to Jeremiah's call, declarations of Judah's evil ways, a call to repentance, a warning about a foe from the north, a reminder of why God will punish the nation, a warning not to trust in the Temple as a sign of God's protection, an extended series of oracles, a call to live by the Covenant, Jeremiah's first personal lament, God's lament, allegories concerning Judah, the shame to come upon Jerusalem, a series of laments including the destruction of Jerusalem, Jeremiah's second personal lament, Jeremiah's personal life as part of the story, a few images of hope, Jeremiah's third personal lament, accusations about Judah and the Sabbath, Jeremiah's fourth personal lament, the persecution of Jeremiah, Jeremiah's fifth and sixth personal laments, and finally another series of oracles.

**Brief Summary:** Jeremiah was a prophet who lived and worked at the very end of the life of the nation of Judah. He witnessed the nation's decline and fall. Thus his ministry is very much tied up in real life historical events, about which he preached. The issue with Jeremiah however, much as with Isaiah, is that his pronouncements are neither sequential in terms of his ministry nor are they grouped by theme. What this means is that we sort of jump from one idea or concern to another without any real connection in-between. This can be seen in the list of stories above. That being the case we will look at some of the themes that arise in this section.

The first theme is Judah's apostasy. Much as with Israel before them, Judah had forgotten all that God had done for them. God planted them as "a choice vine, wholly pure seed" yet they had become "degenerate and a wild vine." They declared that they would not serve God while at the same time worshipping at the feet of all the other gods. What is interesting is that even though the people worshipped other gods, when times were tough it was to YHWH that they turned.

The second theme is punishment. God made it clear through the prophet that there would come a time or reckoning and that time had arrived. Jeremiah speaks of the foe from the north (meaning Babylon) whom God is sending to destroy the nation. The destruction of Judah would bring great shame upon the people and the utter destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

The third theme has to do with the people's belief that because they had the Temple and the ritual sacrifices that they would be safe. Jeremiah declared that they could take no comfort in the Temple because the people had made it a den of robbers (meaning they violated God's laws and then believed that they would be secure in the Temple because of the rituals performed there).

The fourth theme deals with Jeremiah's laments. No other prophet allows us to witness their interior struggles as does Jeremiah. We listen to Jeremiah struggle with the abuse and anger that is heaped upon him. Even though he only pronounces what the Lord tells him to speak, he suffers at the hands of the people and despairs of life itself.

The fifth theme has to do with God's desire to restore the people. Though there are only brief glimpses of this restoration, they are not absent. God will not completely abandon God's people.

1. How are Jeremiah's prophecies similar to those of other prophets whom you have studied?
2. Why do you suppose God is going to punish Judah as severely as is proclaimed?
3. How might we place our hope in the church as these people in the Temple?