PrayerLifeMatters Bible Study

JEREMIAH

CONTEXT, OUTLINE, READING PLAN AND PRAYER

Free study guide | Scripture quotations NKJV
prayerlifematters.com

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Jeremiah lived through the darkest years of Judah's history and spoke the word of the Lord when almost no one wanted to hear it. His book is honest, painful and full of hope. This guide gives you the history leading into Jeremiah, a map of how the book is arranged, the themes to watch for, a four week reading plan, reflection questions and a way to turn what you read into prayer. All dates are approximate. Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version.

HOW TO READ THE PROPHETS

The prophetic books are not arranged like a diary. Oracles spoken years apart sit next to each other. Historical narratives interrupt poetry. Later chapters may return to earlier crises. Jeremiah especially mixes theme and history: temple sermons, personal laments, foreign oracles, and the story of the siege are grouped for meaning, not always by calendar order.

Read for the voice of the Lord first. Then ask:

- Who is speaking, and to whom?
- What covenant faithfulness or unfaithfulness is in view?
- What judgment is announced, and what hope remains for a remnant?
- What prayer does this awaken in you for the church today?

CONTEXT LEADING UP TO JEREMIAH

WHERE ISAIAH LEAVES US

Isaiah ministered during the Assyrian crisis. He saw Jerusalem delivered from Sennacherib (approximately 701 BC), yet he also told Hezekiah that Babylon would one day carry away the treasures of the king's house (Isaiah 39). Jeremiah is the prophet who lives to see that word fulfilled.

KINGS OF JUDAH IN JEREMIAH'S DAY

- **Manasseh** (approximately 697 to 642 BC): the longest reign and the deepest idolatry. Scripture says his sins sealed the coming judgment (2 Kings 24:3 and 4).

- **Amon**: continues his father's evil and is assassinated.
- **Josiah** (approximately 640 to 609 BC): a godly reformer. The Book of the Law is found in the temple and the land is cleansed of idols. Jeremiah is called in Josiah's thirteenth year. Josiah dies at Megiddo fighting Pharaoh Necho.
- **Jehoahaz**: reigns three months before Egypt removes him.
- **Jehoiakim** (approximately 609 to 598 BC): proud and violent. He burns Jeremiah's scroll (Jeremiah 36).
- **Jehoiachin** (also called Coniah): reigns three months before being taken to Babylon (approximately 597 BC).
- **Zedekiah** (approximately 597 to 586 BC): weak and fearful. He consults Jeremiah in secret yet will not obey. Jerusalem falls in his eleventh year.

THE RISE OF BABYLON

Assyria collapses (Nineveh falls approximately 612 BC). Egypt tries to fill the gap, but Nebuchadnezzar defeats Egypt at Carchemish (approximately 605 BC). Babylon now rules the region. Deportations from Judah follow in approximately 605 and 597 BC, and Jerusalem and the temple are destroyed in approximately 586 BC.

Jeremiah's hardest message is that Babylon is the Lord's instrument of discipline. Resisting Babylon by trusting in the temple, in Egypt or in false prophets is resisting the Lord. Yet the same prophet announces that the discipline has an end, and that the Lord will make a new covenant with His people.

THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH: BIG SHAPE

Jeremiah means roughly “Yahweh exalts” or “Yahweh establishes.” He is a priest from Anathoth, called as a youth (approximately 627 BC), and serves through the fall and into the early exile years (into approximately 580 BC). His scribe is Baruch.

ARRANGEMENT NOTE

Do not expect strict chronology. Early oracles, temple sermons, personal “confessions,” narratives about kings, the scroll story, the Book of Consolation, oracles against the nations, and a historical appendix are arranged for theological force. When a date appears in the text, mark it. When none appears, follow the theme.

SELECTED NKJV PASSAGES

Jeremiah 1:5

> “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.”

Jeremiah 7:4

> Do not trust in these lying words, saying, “The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these.”

Jeremiah 29:11

> For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Jeremiah 31:31

> “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah”

Jeremiah 31:33

> But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

(Note on 29:11: the letter is to exiles in Babylon. The “future and a hope” is covenant faithfulness after discipline, not a slogan for every personal wish.)

KEY THEMES TO WATCH FOR

- Covenant faithfulness and the call to return
- False security in the temple, the city, or foreign alliances

- True and false prophets
- The honest anguish of a faithful servant
- The sovereignty of God over kings and empires
- The word of the Lord that stands when kings burn scrolls
- A righteous Branch from David's line
- A new covenant written on the heart
- Hope beyond exile

SECTION BY SECTION OUTLINE

1. THE CALL (CHAPTER 1)

Word of the Lord in Josiah's thirteenth year. Jeremiah is appointed over nations to root out, pull down, build and plant. Two visions: almond branch (the Lord watches over His word) and boiling pot from the north (invasion).

Practical note: call narratives fuel consecration prayers. Fear of faces is answered by the Lord's presence.

2. EARLY WARNINGS AND COVENANT LAWSUIT (CHAPTERS 2 TO 6)

Israel forsook the fountain of living waters for broken cisterns. Return is offered. Disaster from the north is announced. A people without knowledge of the Lord cannot stand.

3. THE TEMPLE SERMON (CHAPTERS 7 TO 10, WITH PARALLELS IN 26)

Do not trust lying words about the temple. Shiloh is the warning: the Lord abandoned His place once before. Idolatry, injustice, and child sacrifice provoke wrath. Chapter 26 shows priests and prophets seeking Jeremiah's death for this message; officials spare him.

Practical note: this confronts religious confidence without repentance. Vital for prayer ministry that loves the house of God yet refuses empty form.

4. BROKEN COVENANT, PERSONAL LAMENTS (CHAPTERS 11 TO 20)

Covenant words recalled. Plots from Anathoth. Jeremiah's "confessions": honest anguish, questions, even curses on the day of his birth, yet he cannot hold in the word. It is like fire in his bones. The potter's house (18). The broken flask (19). Stocks and shame (20).

Practical note: these laments give language for weary intercessors. Faithfulness can feel like failure while remaining obedience.

5. KINGS, PROPHETS, AND THE YOKE (CHAPTERS 21 TO 29)

Messages to Zedekiah and the house of David. Oracles against Jehoiakim and Coniah (Jehoiachin). False prophets promise peace. The good and bad figs (24). Seventy years for Babylon (25). The yoke: submit to Nebuchadnezzar; Hananiah breaks the wooden yoke and faces judgment. Letter to the exiles (29): build houses, seek the peace of the city, wait for the Lord's thoughts of peace.

6. THE BOOK OF CONSOLATION (CHAPTERS 30 TO 33)

This is Jeremiah's great hope section.

- Restoration of Jacob
- Rachel weeping, then reward for her work
- The new covenant: law within, knowledge of the Lord, forgiven iniquity
- Jeremiah buys a field while the city is under siege (32): faith acts on the promise of return
- The righteous Branch; everlasting covenant of day and night as a pledge

Practical note: for PrayerLifeMatters, chapters 30 to 33 are a deep well for rededication, healing of the remnant, and new covenant prayer.

7. SIEGE, FALL, BARUCH, AND THE SCROLL (CHAPTERS 34 TO 45)

Covenant broken over Hebrew servants. The Rechabites' obedience contrasts Judah's. **Chapter 36:** Jeremiah dictates; Baruch writes and reads; Jehoiakim burns the scroll column by column; the word is rewritten and expanded. Jeremiah imprisoned, then thrown into a cistern; Ebed Melech rescues him. Jerusalem falls. Gedaliah is appointed and murdered. Remnant flees to Egypt against the word of the Lord, dragging Jeremiah with them. Chapter 45: a personal word to weary Baruch.

8. ORACLES AGAINST THE NATIONS (CHAPTERS 46 TO 51)

Egypt, Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Damascus, Kedar, Elam, and a long oracle against Babylon. The nation that judged Judah will itself be judged.

9. HISTORICAL APPENDIX (CHAPTER 52)

Parallel to 2 Kings 24 to 25: siege, burning of the temple, exile counts, and Jehoiachin's later elevation in Babylon. The book ends with a quiet mercy note inside judgment.

LAMENTATIONS: A BRIEF BRIDGE

Lamentations is traditionally linked with Jeremiah: five poems grieving Jerusalem's fall. It teaches holy mourning, confession of sin, and hope that the Lord's mercies are new every morning. Read it after Jeremiah 52 if you want the emotional aftermath. Keep Isaiah and Jeremiah as your main path for now.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Chapters 1 to 10

1. In Jeremiah 1 the Lord answers Jeremiah's fear with His presence and His word. Where do I need to hear "do not be afraid of their faces"?
2. Jeremiah 2:13 speaks of broken cisterns. What have I been drinking from instead of the fountain of living waters?
3. In the temple sermon (chapter 7), the people trusted a building rather than obeying the Lord. What religious habits could I be trusting in place of a living walk with God?

Chapters 11 to 29

1. Read one of Jeremiah's laments in chapters 15 or 20. What does it teach about bringing honest pain to God while staying faithful?
2. At the potter's house (chapter 18), what does the clay teach about God's freedom to reshape a life that yields to Him?
3. How can I tell the difference between a true word and a word that only promises peace (chapters 23 and 28)?
4. The exiles were told to build, plant and seek the peace of Babylon (chapter 29). How do I live faithfully where God has placed me while I wait?

Chapters 30 to 52

1. Jeremiah bought a field while the city was under siege (chapter 32). What act of faith is the Lord asking of me in a hard season?

2. What does the new covenant in Jeremiah 31 promise that the old covenant could not produce on its own?
3. Jehoiakim burned the scroll, yet the word was written again (chapter 36). How does that strengthen my confidence in God's word today?

PRAYER APPLICATION

Jeremiah gives you a pattern for prayer that holds honesty, repentance and hope together.

1. **Receive your call (Jeremiah 1).** Thank the Lord that He knew you before you were formed. Surrender your fear of people to Him.
2. **Return to the fountain (Jeremiah 2).** Confess the broken cisterns you have dug. Ask the Lord to be your source again.
3. **Repent from false security (Jeremiah 7).** Ask the Spirit to show you where you trust forms instead of obedience, and turn from it.
4. **Pour out your heart (Jeremiah 15 and 20).** Bring your weariness and questions to God honestly. Then declare that His word is like a fire in your bones.
5. **Yield to the Potter (Jeremiah 18).** Invite Him to reshape anything in you that is marred.
6. **Seek the peace of your city (Jeremiah 29).** Pray for the place where God has planted you, its leaders and its families.
7. **Pray the new covenant (Jeremiah 31 to 33).** Ask Him to write His law on your heart. Call to Him, and ask Him to show you great and mighty things.

A simple prayer from Jeremiah

Lord, You knew me before I was formed. Forgive me for forsaking You, the fountain of living waters, and for digging cisterns that hold no water. Search me and turn me back to You. I yield to You as clay in the Potter's hand. Thank You for Your thoughts of peace toward Your people. Write Your law on my heart, and let me know You. Amen.

FOUR WEEK READING PLAN

Aim for steady immersion, not speed. Adjust if the Spirit slows you on a chapter.

Week 5: Call and Temple

- Day 1: Jeremiah 1

- Day 2: Jeremiah 2 to 3
- Day 3: Jeremiah 4 to 6
- Day 4: Jeremiah 7 to 8
- Day 5: Jeremiah 9 to 10
- Day 6: Jeremiah 11 to 12
- Day 7: Rest or reread 1 and 7

Week 6: Laments and Kings

- Day 1: Jeremiah 13 to 15
- Day 2: Jeremiah 16 to 17
- Day 3: Jeremiah 18 to 20
- Day 4: Jeremiah 21 to 23
- Day 5: Jeremiah 24 to 26
- Day 6: Jeremiah 27 to 29
- Day 7: Review; note false prophet patterns

Week 7: Consolation and Siege

- Day 1: Jeremiah 30 to 31
- Day 2: Jeremiah 32 to 33
- Day 3: Jeremiah 34 to 36
- Day 4: Jeremiah 37 to 39
- Day 5: Jeremiah 40 to 42
- Day 6: Jeremiah 43 to 45
- Day 7: Rest or pray through the new covenant texts

Week 8: Nations and Appendix

- Day 1: Jeremiah 46 to 47
- Day 2: Jeremiah 48 to 49
- Day 3: Jeremiah 50
- Day 4: Jeremiah 51
- Day 5: Jeremiah 52
- Day 6: Optional: Lamentations 1 to 3
- Day 7: Optional: Lamentations 4 to 5; write a one page summary of what the Lord highlighted

PRACTICAL READING NOTES FOR PRAYER PREPARATION

1. Read aloud. Prophets were heard before they were studied.
2. Keep a simple journal: date, chapter, one word from the Lord, one prayer response.
3. When you hit oracles against nations, pray for specific nations by name without turning the text into headlines.
4. Do not skip the hard chapters to reach comfort. Comfort lands deeper after judgment is faced.
5. Let Isaiah 6 and Jeremiah 1 shape your own yes before you craft public prayers.
6. When a passage feeds a video or prayer, stay with the text’s own burden. Do not force a theme the chapter is not carrying.
7. Cross check historical notes in 2 Kings 15 to 25 and 2 Chronicles 26 to 36 as you go.

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