

Jeremiah



Six discussion guides in Jeremiah
for small groups or self study

All Saints Church, Hoole
April – July 2020

Jeremiah : Fire in the heart

“Is not my word like fire,” declares the LORD, “and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?” (23:29)

Contents

Background to Jeremiah			p.2
1. Hearing - Hearing God’s call			
Jeremiah 1:1-19	April 28 th /29 th /30 th		p.3
<i>Open to God - Praying altogether, everywhere</i> Wednesday 6 th May			
2. Discerning - Discerning between truth & deception			
Jeremiah 7:1-29	May 12 th /13 th /14 th		p.7
3. Moulding – God’s shaping work in our lives			
Jeremiah 18:1-23	May 26 th /27 th /28 th		p.11
<i>Open to God</i> - Wednesday 3 rd June			
4. Praying - Praying with honesty			
Jeremiah 20:1-18	June 9 th /10 th /11 th		p. 15
5. Engaging - Living as a blessing in our community			
Jeremiah 29:1-23	June 23 rd /24 th /25 th		p. 19
<i>Open to God</i> - Wednesday 1st July			
6. Restoring - Promises of renewal for the future			
Jeremiah 31:1-14, 31-34	July 7 th /8 th /9 th		p.23
Home group summer celebrations	July 21 st /22 nd /23 rd		

Jeremiah : Fire in the Heart

Jeremiah came from a family of priests (Jer 1:1) and might have expected to become one himself. Instead, God called him to be a prophet: to call God's wayward people to turn from their sins and return to obey God's ways.

Jeremiah's ministry began in 626 BC at a time when society was deteriorating economically, politically and spiritually. God's law (the Law of Moses) was disobeyed and discarded; to the point where children were even being offered to idols as human sacrifices. As tragic events were about to unfold, Jeremiah's task was to pronounce judgment – to declare that God had rejected Judah (for the present) “through their own fault” (17:4) and nothing could now save them from the punishment they so fairly deserved. Subsequently, he also prophesied about their 70 year exile in Babylon, and their eventual return to the land of Judah. (*Other prophets of this period were Nahum, Zephaniah, Habbakkuk, Daniel & Ezekiel.*)

Jeremiah comes across as a gentle and compassionate character. Throughout his ministry he was often in great agony because of the hard message he had to deliver. However, he never swerved from the course that God had set for him. He was mocked cruelly and persecuted severely, but he never deviated from his position. As a prophet and witness for God to an unsympathetic and rebellious audience, there was enormous pressure on him to change, to compromise, to quit and to hide - yet he never did. God kept His promise to be with him and make him “a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall” (1:18)

The chapters in Jeremiah are not arranged in chronological order. It is an anthology; and the different accounts have messages consistent with one another.

We need to recognise that the thundering message of judgement in much of this book comes *not* because God is a short-tempered despot shouting angry curses at people who break His rules, *but* because He cares so intensely for the people He has created and whom He wished to lead into blessing. God saw clearly how their rebellious ways were ruining their lives and their society. In the message of His judgment we find the message of His love: “I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving kindness.” (Jer 31:3)

The truths in Jeremiah have much to teach us in our present turbulent times. Will we take on, in however small measure, the mantle of Jeremiah – to call society and individuals back to a better way - the way of obedience to God and to the Lordship of Christ?

1. HEARING - Hearing God's call

Jeremiah 1: 1-19

Think : What is the worse job you can think of?

What are some excuses you might use to try and get out of doing it?

Background

When God's call came to Jeremiah in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign (626 BC), he was about 20 years old. His ministry lasted 40 years during the most confused and chaotic period of Israel's entire history, through the reigns of one good king and then 4 very wicked ones.(1:2-3) As a prophet, his role was to expose the sins of the people and call them back to faithful obedience to God's ways. He was strongly aware both of being chosen by God, and of being very inadequate for the task.

1. God takes the initiative to call Jeremiah. What does God emphasize? (v5)

2. How does God respond to Jeremiah's reservations about being His prophet? (vs 6, 7-10)

3. What do you think would have been the worst part of the assignment God has given Jeremiah? What would have been the best?

4. God showed Jeremiah 2 visions to strengthen and equip him for his task.
 - How would the first vision (vs 11-12) do this?

 - How would the second vision (vs 13-16) do this?

5. In verses 17-19 God tells Jeremiah that it is time to speak His word, but also that his message will not be well received. However, what does God promise to do for Jeremiah?

Hearing God's call for ourselves

(Choose one or more of the questions below to reflect on, and apply)

6. Every believer has been called and chosen by God. But before we do anything *for* Him, we need to be secure in our relationship *in* him.

Below is an example of turning the truths of the Bible into a reflective meditation.

- Identify which verses in this chapter are being referred to, and
- perhaps add your own thoughts as well.
- Share your reactions with someone else – give them a call, and chat about it.

You may like to use this as a basis of your own prayer to God.

God, my loving Creator, You **formed me**;

- Your call upon my life stretches back to my mother's womb.

God, my gracious Father, You **know me**;

- you know every single detail of my background & experience
- you know how I am feeling and thinking right now.

God, my loving Lord, you have **given me** specific work to do for You.

- You overrule my protests about my inability and inexperience
 - You know better than I, how weak I am;
- You expect my obedience;
- You promise to be with me, to rescue me & to strengthen me.

You are not promising me an easy life,

You are not promising me a "successful" ministry by the world's standards.

(Jeremiah's wasn't).

But.....

You are promising me victory in the battle;

You are promising that however long & hard it may be, I shall come through;

You are promising that if I speak Your word, I can be sure You will bring it to pass – for you do not make empty promises or give empty warnings;

You are promising your personal presence with me – now and for ever.

This is enough for me: for I know better than Jeremiah what “God with me” (Emmanuel) means.

Thank you for calling me to be Your child and Your messenger.

No one can ask for a greater, more wonderful, calling.

Thank you, Lord. Amen.

7. Jeremiah was “appointed” by God to be a prophet to the nations (v5).

Your calling might not seem as important as Jeremiah’s, but God does have a unique and original role for each one of us

What has God “appointed” you to do, or to be, at this present time of your life?

Some ideas :-

- praying for others
- being a carer
- supporting and encouraging someone
- being a listener
- involvement in your neighbourhood
- providing a Christian example in your family
- serving your church community in some new capacity
- spend more time reading and studying His messages to you in the Bible
- ?

8. Like Jeremiah we are good at pleading inadequacy in order to avoid living at the best that God calls us to be. What reasons are you most likely to use to resist God's call on your life? ("I am too young"; "I am too old"; "I have too many anxieties in my own life right now")

How can we become more open to hearing both God's call and God's reassurances, to us? How can we help each other to do this?

If we look at ourselves and are absolutely honest, we are always inadequate. The excuses we make are plausible and possibly factual – but they are excuses all the same. God does not send us into the exciting and dangerous life of faith because we are qualified; He chooses us in order to qualify us for what he wants us to be, and to do.

(Eugene Peterson, Run with the Horses, p 50)

Conclusion

God called Jeremiah to a painful ministry, but with that great burden, He gave Jeremiah a great gift – the gift of Himself. Through Jeremiah, God would bring His message of love – a hard love and a demanding love - but love nevertheless. Through all the proclamations of judgment, there is a commitment of love on God's side. He would judge his people for their sin and rebellion, but God promised them a future on the other side of judgement and sin. (32:40-42)

Our world is much like Jeremiah's – society is in turmoil, the future looks bleak and international tensions are high. We also need to hear God's call – the call to an intimate relationship with Himself, and out of that relationship to stand firm and declare His ways, His hope, His love.

God calls his people to be 'prophetic' voices in our various walks of life.

Read and re-read the promises of God in this chapter in the days ahead. Remind yourself that He knows you and that He promises to be with you. Turn from fear to faith in Him.

2. DISCERNING – between truth and deception

Jeremiah 7: 1-29

For starters : You ask someone “How are you?” and they reply, “I’m fine.”

How do you tell whether they are being honest?

OR : Can you think of an experience when someone *said* the right words to you, [Eg. “Well done.” “I’m sorry.” “I love you.”] but you sensed something was lacking? How did it make you feel?

Background

In chapters 2-6, Jeremiah has been declaring God’s warnings because the people had turned from sole allegiance to Him and were worshipping baal, ashtoreth, chemosh and the other gods and goddesses of the heathen nations around them. Key aspects of his message are summarised in what is called the “temple sermon” which we look at here.

Read Jeremiah 7:1-11

1. The crowd streaming into the temple to worship God would have looked good. But what does God see?

What message from God does Jeremiah declare?

2. In what deceptive words were these worshippers trusting? Why would these words have been appealing?

“The people stood in the holy place and spoke the current religious clichés and supposed that everything was just fine. They were in the right place, and they said the right words – but *they* were not right. There had been reform, and it was necessary, but it was not enough. The outside was reformed, but the inside was not. *They had lived for so long on the basis of outward appearance that they had no feel for inward reality.*”

(Run with the Horses, Peterson, p64,66)

3. What changes does God want to see in His people?

4. In verse 11, God declares that he is watching.

If God were to tell you that he was especially watching you,
and also watching your church,
what do you think He would see and say?

[NB. God also mentioned 'watching' (shoqed) in 1:12 in the vision of the almond (shaqed) branch.]

Read 7:12-15

Jeremiah sent the people to the ruins of Shiloh. This was one of the most famous holy places in their history; the place where they first came to worship after their deliverance from Egypt and 40 years of wilderness wandering. Shiloh was where the tabernacle was set up, where the revered ark of the covenant was kept and where prophet Samuel spoke his words of counsel.

5. What is emphasized in these verses?

What lesson did God want to teach them from what happened to Shiloh?

Read 7:16-29

v18 The "Queen of Heaven" (Ishtar) was a Babylonian goddess of war, sexual love and fertility, whose worship involved abominable obscenities.

6. Why is God so upset with their so-called worship?

What does this say about His relationship to His people?

7. According to this passage, who is most harmed by the worship of idols?
Have you seen the truth of this from the lives of people you have known?

Discerning between truth and deception for ourselves

(Choose one or more of the questions below to reflect on, and apply)

8. Have you ever heard someone say, “But why did this happen? They went to church and were good people”.

Is this sentiment similar to what the people of Israel were doing – somehow expecting their temple attendance to protect them from disaster? Is this treating God like an insurance policy?

9. Our public worship can sometimes have the tendency to put the emphasis on outward forms rather than inner substance. How do we ensure we don't just “go through the motions” when we go to church?

Prayerfully reflect and ask God -

- how has suspension of church services forced me to rethink how I worship You?
- what have I most missed about worshipping with other people?
- has my worship sometimes been more about outward form than inner substance?

Write out your thoughts as a prayer :-

10. What does God want from His people?

How might this be demonstrated in your actions and attitudes this week?
(vs 5-7,23).

11. God was extremely angry that whole families were involved in idolatrous worship (vs17-19). What can we do to see that

- our individual families worship in a way that is pleasing to God
- our church family worships in a way that is pleasing to God

Summary

Jeremiah addresses those who are coming to the temple to worship, who claimed to be “believers”. The LORD told him to speak against the people and their leaders for ignoring God and His laws and for assuming that, because God had given them the temple and the covenant and they outwardly observed the set religious rituals, God was bound to protect them. Jeremiah saw this as false hope when the nation was full of idolatry and moral corruption. His message is that obedience, not tradition and ritual, was the essence of true faith.

In many western towns and cities there are empty, neglected or re-purposed churches. These are like Shiloh - places where God was once worshipped, but no more. Let us use these as reminders that God sees through empty or insincere worship, even though it may look to others like the genuine thing.

3. MOULDING – God’s shaping work in our life.

Jeremiah 18:1-18

For Starters : Take and hold any handmade pottery item that you have. Look at it carefully. What do you notice? What makes it special?

OR - Do you know someone who has had to wear braces to straighten their teeth? How was their experience of having metal and rubber bands in their mouth to pull their teeth into shape?

Introduction

In 7th century Israel, the potter’s house was a fixture in every community. The potter’s work was necessary for the maintenance of everyday life. God thus calls Jeremiah to go to where the necessary, everyday work was taking place and to take note of what He was saying through it.

Recall that the first word that Jeremiah heard from God was, “Before I **formed** (“*yatzar*” in Hebrew) you in the womb I knew you.”(1:5). Now Jeremiah is sent to the house of the “*yotzer*”, the potter. The play on words points to the message God wants to deliver to Jeremiah and to the people.

Read Jeremiah 18:1-10

1. As Jeremiah watches the potter working at his wheel, what does he see?
2. What message does God give to His people through this picture of the potter and the clay?
3. What does this reveal about - the character of God?
- what God requires?
4. Can you think of a time when you have been aware of God’s shaping hand on your life? Share your story: call a friend and talk about it, or write it down and e-mail it to your small group.

Read Jeremiah 18:11-18

5. In what ways did the people of Judah resist being moulded by God?

What was God's response?

6. Jeremiah had to pay a price for allowing God to mould him. He was criticized, slandered, discounted, plotted against, and jailed (20:1).

What are your feelings (fear... excitement ...hesitation ...or...?) as you reflect on this picture of God as a Potter, who is desiring to shape you and mould you ?

7. What experiences have you had of trying to mould another person towards maturity in Christ?

What feelings did their responsiveness, or their resistance, create in you?

Thinking further about God's shaping work in our lives

(Choose one or more of the following questions to ponder and apply)

8. God is the one who shapes us. Make a list of the "shaping forces" in your life at present. Reflect on how these circumstances are affecting your mind and heart, and shaping your character.

9. In the space below, sketch a picture of the Potter and the clay – giving your own interpretation of God’s work in your life.
Alternatively , write a poem or reflection of being as clay in God’s hands.

10. What are some ways that present day believers (including yourself) resist being moulded by God?

God as a Potter - to reflect further on this theme, look up
Isaiah 29:16; 45:9(10-12), 64:8;
Romans 9: (20), 21;
2 Cor 4:7

Summary

God is in the business of shaping us (and not just our teeth, but our whole being!). His aim is to make us like Jesus. Just like the potter with the clay, God kneads and presses, pushes and pulls, to form us for His eternal purposes.

God doesn't give up, doesn't throw away what is spoiled, but keeps starting over again; all the while seeking to shape us into a people for His glory.

Eugene Peterson describes being a Christian as "being thrown on the potter's wheel and shaped into something useful and beautiful. And when we are not useful or beautiful, we are reshaped. Painful, but worth it." (p81)

When I submit my life to God, I become a container, into which His love and salvation and mercy are poured, in order to be shared. God's shaping hand – the shape of creation and the shape of salvation - is upon the shape of my life

Sing !

Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me;
Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me.
Break me, melt me, mould me, fill me –
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

Spirit of the living God, move among us all;
Make us one in heart and mind, make us one in love:
Humble, caring, selfless, sharing –
Spirit of the Living God, fill our hearts with love.

4. PRAYING – praying with honesty

Jeremiah 20:1-18

For Starters: Are you someone who wears their heart on their sleeve, or someone who is the opposite? How do you feel about this aspect of your personality?

OR : Why do some people like to read gossip columns and to have inside information about public figures?

Background

Jeremiah prophesied that Judah would be destroyed because they had turned away from the LORD and embraced other gods (19:15). They had so hardened themselves against the Lord that all hope was gone. This message made Pashur, the assistant to the high priest, furious and he had Jeremiah beaten and publicly humiliated.

In this passage we listen to Jeremiah as he prays and discover what he was really like when alone with God.

Read Jeremiah 20: 1-10

1. What contrast do you notice between the impression Jeremiah gives outwardly (vs 3-6) and his emotions inwardly (vs 7-10)? What does this tell you about him?
2. What does Jeremiah mean in his outburst in verses 7-8? Are you more surprised, or shocked, or encouraged by this?

You pushed me into this, God,
and I let you do it.
You were too much for me.
And now I'm a public joke.
They all poke fun at me.
(The Message v7)

3. Despite his inner struggles and anguish, Jeremiah never stops sharing God's message. What is the reason for his persistence? (v9)
(see also Acts 4:20; 2 Cor 5:14 and Amos 3:8 - below)

“The lion has roared – tremble in fear!
The Sovereign LORD has spoken –
I dare not refuse to proclaim his message!” (Amos 3:8)

Read Jeremiah 20:11-18

4. Verse 11 starts with “But....”. What change in perspective occurs in verses 11-13?
5. How can the truth of “But the LORD is with me” change your perspective on the worries, struggles or despondency that you are facing at the present time?
6. From verse 14 we see Jeremiah plunge back into gloom and despair. This same mixture of faith and despondence is seen in 15:10, 15-21.
- to what extent do your prayers sometimes follow a similar pattern of ups and downs?
 - what have you learnt about prayer from listening to Jeremiah talking to God?

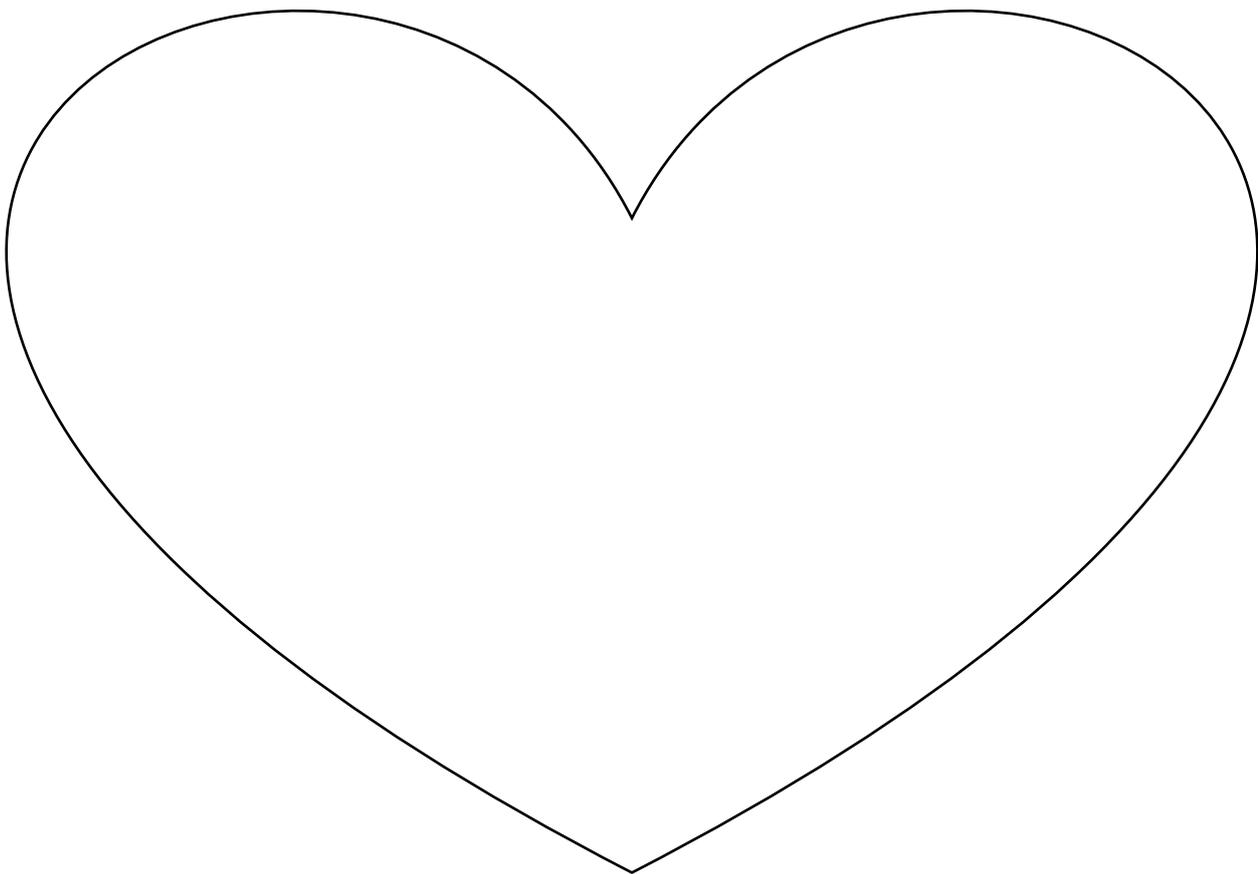
“Our anger can be a measure of our faith. Believers argue with God; skeptics argue with each other.”

Run with the Horses, E Peterson, p103

Thinking further about praying with honesty

(Choose one or more of the following questions to ponder and apply)

7. Talk to God about the concerns on your heart– however large, trivial or unreasonable they may seem to you even as you voice them.
- You may find it helpful to write them into the heart below.
 - Then, allow time to listen for God’s response.



8. What hope did Jeremiah have despite his discouragement and despair?
What hope do I have?

9. During this time of turmoil and crisis in our country and around the world, we have in Jeremiah's prayers – his anguish and his tears - words which we can use to express our confusion, pain and need. Jeremiah identified with other people, confessing sin on their behalf. He also prayed for his own life and protection (15:15), and for relief and salvation from his troubles (17:14)

Look up Jeremiah's prayers – write down some points you find helpful. (Focus on the ones in bold, if you have less time.)

Chapter 8:18 – 9:3

10:19 -25

11:18-20

Chapter 12: 1-4 (God's reply vs 5-6)

Chapter 15:10-18 (God's reply vs 19-21)

Chapter 17:14 -18

18:19- 23

Summary

Jeremiah tells God that he is scared, lonely, hurt and angry. His mood swings up and down, he goes from grief to praise and back. If our emotions as believers sometimes seem to touch rock bottom, we can reflect that Jeremiah has been there before us - and has survived.

Like Jeremiah, we may sometimes feel, "Why did I ever come out of the womb?" (v18). For Jeremiah, and for each of us, the answer is the same – it is because God has a special purpose for my life and has designed me to fulfil it (Jer 1:4-5 ; Psalm 139:13-16). We need to look beyond our feelings and circumstances to see the greatness and wisdom of God, and hold on to His faithfulness.

5. Engaging – Living as a blessing in our community

Jeremiah 29:1-23

For Starters : What has been your experience of moving to a new place where you didn't know anyone and where you had to start life afresh – perhaps a home in a new location, a new job, or a new place of study? How did you feel?

Background

A large proportion of the people of Israel were taken into captivity in 587 BC, forced to travel 700 miles across the desert to Babylon, into a new and unfamiliar culture. Sometime after this, God directed Jeremiah (who was still in Jerusalem) to send a letter to these exiles to tell them how they were to live in Babylon. False prophets (Hananiah, Ahab, Zedekiah) had been telling the people what they wanted to hear – namely, that their exile would soon be over (28:3,11). God wanted them to know that this was not true, and that they needed to get on with their lives – to put down roots and to build relationships in Babylon.

Read 29:1-14

1. Imagine the situation the exiles faced when they arrived in Babylon. Put yourself in their place: how do you think they would have been feeling?
2. Jeremiah reminded them that it was the LORD who had sent them to Babylon (v4). What instructions does he give them in verses 4-9?

3. Why was it necessary for the exiles to receive this message from God via Jeremiah?

Read what Eugene Peterson has said about the experience of being in exile :

“Inner experiences of exile take place even if we never move from the street on which we were brought up. Whenever we find ourselves in circumstances where we don’t want to be, or with people we don’t want to be with, - we experience ‘exile’.

The essential meaning of exile is that we are where we don’t want to be.

We then face decisions on how we will respond to these ‘exile’ conditions.

We can say ‘I don’t like it: how can you expect me to throw myself into what I don’t like? That would be hypocrisy.’

Or we can say, ‘I will do the best with what is here. For more important than the circumstances of this place, is the God of this place. God is here with me.

It is just as possible to live out the will of God in this place as anywhere else.’

Will we live on the basis of what we don’t have, or what we do have?”

- from ‘*Run with the Horses*’

4. Think of a time when you have felt like an exile in a strange country.

(Perhaps you need to think no further than social distancing, self - isolating, or being in quarantine due to Covid-19.

Or, look back at your answer to the *Starter* question.)

- What emotions and/or reactions did you experience?
- How did your relationship with God change during that time?

5. Read verses 10-14 again. What reactions would you expect from the exiles in Babylon when they heard these words?

6. Jeremiah 29:11 is often quoted as a verse to encourage us, but often without reference to its original context, which was the promise of a 70 year wait for the answer from God that they wanted!
Nevertheless, what is there in verses 10-14 to encourage us, as we seek to remain faithful to God over the long haul?

Read Jeremiah 29: 15-23 (An optional extra)

In Babylon, it would have been tempting for the first wave of exiles to pin their hopes a quick return to life (in Jerusalem) as they had previously known it. After all, Jerusalem was still intact, still inhabited, and possessed of the temple and a Davidic King. In both Babylon and Jerusalem there were false prophets stirring up false hope. These verses contain another message from Jeremiah, exposing the false prophets in Babylon.

7. Why is God declaring such a harsh future for

- all those remaining in Jerusalem (15-19)
- the false prophets in Babylon (20-23)?

Thinking further about Living as a blessing in our community

(Choose one or more of the following questions to ponder and apply)

8. In times of crisis, like the Covid-19 pandemic, our thoughts can turn to survival and escape, not to good citizenship. How does Jeremiah's call to opt-in to society and not to opt-out, act as a challenge?

9. "Seek me with all your heart" (v13) is God's call to each one of us.

- How well are you doing with this?
- What help or support would enable you to do this better? (what steps can you take to get this?)

10. What are you like when, either

- you have to spend extended time with people you don't like, in a place you don't like?
- you can't spend time with the people whom you **do** want to be with?

Express your feelings honestly to God in prayer. Ask Him to show you how to be His channel of blessing in the trying situation you find yourself in.

Summary

The image of living in 'exile' appears again in the New Testament. Christians are "exiles", called to live exemplary lives, seeking the welfare of their society which does not put God or righteousness at the top of its agenda.* We live in our "Babylon" for 70 years (roughly a lifetime) and are called, as the exiles were, to make it a good place to live for everyone; to build community; to care for the needy; and to increase its (and not just our) prosperity and well being. This is a part of building the kingdom of God.

(*1 Peter 2:11-17; Hebrews 13:14)

6. Restoring - promises of renewal in the future

Jeremiah 31:1-14, 31-34

For Starters: How does a time of difficulty or deprivation enable you to enjoy something you previously took for granted? Think of a few examples. They can range from the simple (such as being able to breathe through your nose again after a heavy head cold) to the significant.

Background :

In chapters 30-31, Jeremiah has a God-given dream in which God promises to restore His people to the land (30), and to Himself (31). This glorious hope of a restored, united nation was still in the future, since the first official return from exile was not until 537 B.C. But God did act as He had promised.

For us, looking back, we can see how the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, brought even greater fulfilment of these blessings. Yet for us too, the complete fulfilment of these promises lies ahead, as we wait for the second coming of Christ.

Read Jeremiah 31:1-14

1. What do these verses reveal about God's attitude towards His people?

2. Look at the description of the future that is promised -

- What actions and activities will resume?
- What types of people are included?
- What words and phrases convey joy?

3. “They will be like a well-watered garden...” (verse 12b)

- What does this image convey to you?
- Illustrate this in the space below with a drawing or using words (or a combination of both).
- Share this illustration with a friend via Whatsapp, or some other means.

4. In this passage, God promises to do many things for His people. Which promise is most meaningful to you, and why?

*In 31:15-20, the LORD calls for weeping over the rebellious northern kingdom (“Ephraim”) to cease, because His love will cause **even** Ephraim to repent and return, and to be included amongst those whom the LORD Almighty rebuilds.*

In His graciousness, the Lord will make the way back to Him clear (v21) and will rebuild not just the fabric of the land, but the spiritual lives of the people who have returned (vs 25 ff).

Read Jeremiah 31:31-34 (Quoted in Hebrews 8:8 – 12)

5. Describe the covenant that God will make with his people. How is this covenant 'new' and different from the one their ancestors had?

6. Jeremiah describes a time when all disciples will be taught directly by God. This is something also mentioned by Jesus. (John 6:45; 14:26)
Although we still need godly and mature Christians to guide us in our understanding of God and how to live a life that honours Him, can you recall examples of being taught/prompted/guided by God through your personal relationship with Him through the Holy Spirit ?

Thinking further about Promises of Renewal in the Future

(Choose one or more of the following questions to ponder and apply)

7. The old covenant tried to control conduct, but the new covenant changes character, so that people can love the Lord and one another, and want to obey God's will. The foundation of this new covenant is the work of Jesus on the cross.

How can the truth of God being able to make things new, sustain you through everyday living?

8. What aspects of your future would you feel more secure about if you keep your mind focussed on God's faithfulness (as seen in the book of Jeremiah) rather than the fear of the unknown?

9. Reflect on these passages in Jeremiah that you have studied:

- How has God been speaking to you through His Word? Were there particular verses that gave you hope, that challenged you to action, or gave a new perspective on your circumstances?

Write them down in the box below.

- Now, encourage a friend by sharing this with them – send a note through the post, speak on the phone, or use social media.

Conclusion

For 40 years Jeremiah faithfully declared the LORD's messages to a nation whose response to Him was skin deep. God had to use extreme means to purge the waywardness from the people whom He loved so deeply - He sent them into exile, He removed all the trappings of religion they had falsely relied on, and so enabled them to recognise their sin and turn back to Him. God's promise of return and renewal in Jeremiah chapter 31 is described as a reunion (8), security (10), a great deliverance (11), abundance (12), merrymaking (13) and feasting (14).

The truths in the book of Jeremiah have much to teach us in our present turbulent times. Will we take on, in however small measure, the mantle of Jeremiah – to call individuals and society back to a better way - the way of obedience to God and to the Lordship of Christ?

*“And I can't stop! If I say I'll never mention the LORD or speak in his name, **his word burns in my heart like a fire.** It's like a fire in my bones! I am weary of holding it in!”*

Jeremiah 20:9 NLT.