

Jeremiah

The Book of Jeremiah presents the life and ministry of one of Judah's greatest prophets as he preaches to his once-mighty nation, now teetering on the brink of disaster. For more than 40 years, Jeremiah proclaims an unpopular message—"Repent or perish." His sermons go unheard by his headstrong countrymen, who do their best to silence Jeremiah once and for all. Opposed, hated, and imprisoned, the heartbroken prophet lives to see the cruel Babylonians carry away Judah's citizens.

FOCUS	JEREMIAH'S SERMONS						JEREMIAH'S EXPERIENCES																
DIVISIONS	Judah in Jeopardy	Judah in Idolatry	Judah in Rebellion	Judah in the Potter's Hand	Judah in a Leadership Crisis	Judah in Opposition	Hope Amidst Judgment	Before the Fall	During the Fall	After the Fall	Gentiles in Judgment	Fall of Jerusalem											
	1	6	7	10	11	15	16	20	21	25	26	29	30	33	34	36	37	39	40	45	46	51	52
TOPICS	Judgment					Hope	Judgment																
	Preaching						Portrayal				Prophecy												
PLACE	Persia to Jerusalem											Babylon											
TIME	42 Years (626-584 B.C.)																						

Daily Walk, Volume 45, Number 8, August 2022

Content is © 2022 by Walk Thru the Bible, Inc. Contents may not be reproduced in any form unless authorized in writing by the publisher. Printed in the U.S.A. All Scripture quotations are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by Biblica. Used by permission.

Judah in Jeopardy of Judgment

Key Passage: Jeremiah 1, 5

CHAPTER 1	CHAPTERS 2-3	CHAPTERS 4-6
Messenger of Judgment	Message of Judgment	Means of Judgment
Jeremiah's Call	Jeremiah's Cry	Judah's Conqueror

OVERVIEW God has patiently sent warning after warning through His prophetic spokesmen in an attempt to turn Judah from her hard-hearted ways. Now for the last time, God sends an ultimatum through a tender man of steel, Jeremiah. With tear-filled eyes the prophet from Anathoth tells the people exactly what they need to hear: God can bear the sins of the nation no longer. Even now, the gathering clouds of Babylonian conquest can be viewed on the horizon by those with eyes to see and a heart to repent.

YOUR DAILY WALK Working with people is not so difficult. All you need is inexhaustible patience, unfailing insight, unshakable stability, and a tremendous amount of experience.

God could have chosen to do His work another way, but He didn't. He chose to use people. People like Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, you. God asked Moses to walk boldly into the court of Pharaoh and announce, "Let My people go!" Moses said, "I won't." God asked Isaiah to volunteer for an important mission. Isaiah said, "Woe is me!" God asked Jeremiah to prophesy to a rebellious nation. Jeremiah said, "I can't." Yet for each individual, God supplied a tailor-made program of training and encouragement to prepare His messenger to deliver His message.

What message is God asking you to deliver for Him today? And what is your response to His assignment? Have you answered, "I can't"—or "I won't"—or "I will"? As you begin your study of Jeremiah's life and ministry, take one of your "can'ts" or "won'ts" and turn it into a "will." In the last five minutes of your quiet time today, write a short note to God expressing your desire to be used by Him. Then watch Him work in you and through you.

INSIGHT *Deaf Ears in the Palace*

Jeremiah's ministry spanned the reigns of five kings in Judah: Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah. All but Josiah were wicked kings who opposed or ignored the prophet's words.

*There are
no trivial
assignments
in God's
work.*

Judah in Idolatry

Key Passage: Jeremiah 9–10

CHAPTER 7	CHAPTER 8	CHAPTER 9	CHAPTER 10
A Last Appeal	A Leaderless People	A Desolate Land	A Sovereign Lord
Judah's Shame			God's Glory

OVERVIEW The malignancy of idolatry and hypocrisy has permeated every segment of Judah's national life, from the families (7:18) to the counselors (8:9), from the leaders (10:21) to the prophets and priests (8:10). Thinking that their privileged position as God's chosen people will ensure their immunity from God's wrath, they continue in a pattern of worthless worship. Because of their rebellion and indifference, their homeland will one day be reduced to a heap of ruins—a thought that reduces Jeremiah to a river of tears.

YOUR DAILY WALK Make a list of some of the things you have reason to take pride in. Which item on your list gives you the greatest sense of satisfaction?

Do you know there is something God wants you to glory in? To "pop your buttons" in pride over? To derive an "ego boost" from every time you think about it? It isn't your bank account, your muscles, or your mind. It's your relationship with Him.

"This is what the LORD says: 'Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,' declares the LORD" (9:23-24).

Your personal relationship with the God of creation should be your source of greatest pride. But before you can enjoy that kind of relationship, you must first experience it through personal faith in His Son, Jesus. Turn to John 5:24 and read about the relationship that you can glory in today and every day.

INSIGHT *Shiloh's Demise Recorded in the Digs (7:12)*
 Shiloh, present-day Seilun, was the place where the ark resided in the days of Joshua (Joshua 18:1; 1 Samuel 1:3). Shiloh was forsaken by God (Psalm 78:60) and destroyed by the Philistines in approximately 1050 B.C., probably after the battle of Ebenezer (1 Samuel 4:10-11).

As a neglected garden tends toward weeds, so the faithless life tends toward ungodly chaos.

Judah in Rebellion

Key Passage: Jeremiah 12

CHAPTERS 11-12	CHAPTER 13	CHAPTERS 14-15
Disregarding the Covenant	Demonstrating Judah's Sinfulness	Detailing God's Judgment
Accusation	Application	Anticipation

OVERVIEW Through the prophet Jeremiah, God brings a stern accusation against His people: “They . . . have broken the covenant I made with their forefathers” (11:10). To shock the nation into realizing the seriousness of their sin, God commands Jeremiah to provide them with two object lessons: the ruined underwear and the wine jars. God’s judgment will be swift and severe, involving drought, invasion, and exile. As Jeremiah laments over the fate of his nation, God promises him personal strength and protection as he carries out his prophetic ministry of doom.

YOUR DAILY WALK Make a list of the five people who, in your opinion, are the most popular personalities in the world today. Then ask yourself this question: How did they get where they are today? By being righteous? Serving God? Working hard? Getting big breaks? Keeping the law? Breaking the law?

Now read Jeremiah’s complaint to God in 12:1—“Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all the faithless live at ease?” In other words, why do the ungodly prosper while the righteous are persecuted?

Unless the rich man’s heart is full, he is poor.

Long before Jeremiah’s day, Job raised the same question. So did Asaph (Psalm 73). So did Habakkuk. And God’s answer to each of them was basically the same: Consider the fate of the wicked. Their lifestyles and their seeming prosperity are attractive. But in the light of their eternal destiny, are you willing to trade places?

Never forget the sure outcome of those outside of Christ. Make a list of five blessings you are experiencing as a child of God that those who do not belong to Christ know nothing about. Now thank God for the true riches you enjoy.

INSIGHT *A Ruined Homecoming in Anathoth*

Jeremiah’s rude reception in his hometown is a grim reminder that “only in his hometown and in his own house is a prophet without honor” (Matthew 13:57)—the same kind of treatment that Jesus received (John 1:11).

Judah in the Potter's Hand

Key Passage: Jeremiah 16–17

CHAPTER 16	CHAPTERS 17-18	CHAPTER 19	CHAPTER 20
Hope in the Lord	Heart of the Matter	Hand of the Potter	Hurt of the People
Consolation	Controversy	Clay Pot	Complaint

OVERVIEW Frequently God asked His prophets to do unusual things to illustrate the message they were bringing, but that was all part of being God's mouthpiece to a wayward people. In today's section, Jeremiah is not allowed to marry or to attend funerals or feasts. Visually, Jeremiah is showing the people that they too will lose their personal freedoms when the day of judgment finally arrives. Attempting to emphasize the coming calamity, the prophet smashes a clay pot at the feet of the leaders. But the response Jeremiah receives is discouragingly predictable. In place of the repentance he seeks, there is only rejection on the part of the people—a sure sign that judgment is near.

YOUR DAILY WALK Though few homemakers would enjoy the prospects of a dirt floor in their kitchen, there is one thing to be said in its favor: You don't worry about it getting dirty. However, it is equally true that no matter how much you clean it, your dirt floor will always be just as dirty as the day it was "installed."

What is true of dirt floors is equally true of the human heart. The more you "scrub" it, the worse it becomes. Jeremiah delivers the bad news: "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (17:9).

But there is good news too. The Lord is a heart specialist (17:10). He is in the business not simply of repairing hearts, but of replacing them with new hearts that desire to know Him, love Him, and serve Him. Have you experienced a spiritual heart transplant in your life? If not, the Master Surgeon stands waiting to give you new life, hope, and a real purpose for living. Talk to Him right now. Tell Him you want to "believe in [my] heart . . . [and] be saved" (Romans 10:9). On the basis of His Word, that is exactly what will happen.

The heart is a triangle that only the Trinity can fill.

INSIGHT Now You Know . . . and Wish You Didn't

Today's reading contains the first recorded mention of where Judah would spend her years of exile, and who would lead the nation there. Can you find them? (Hint: Look in chapter 20.)

Judah in a Leadership Crisis

Key Passage: Jeremiah 23

CHAPTERS 21-22	CHAPTER 23	CHAPTER 24	CHAPTER 25
False Kings	False Prophets	Captive Nation	Condemned Nation
National Judgment		International Judgment	

OVERVIEW Judah’s downfall can ultimately be traced to the failure of her leadership—those wicked shepherds who plundered rather than protected the flock. In the midst of a dirge of doom upon the nation’s false kings and prophets, Jeremiah prophesies the coming of the Messiah who will restore justice and righteousness. Exile is inevitable, but there is hope. In 70 years the deported will return to Judah, while their captors will feel God’s wrath.

The most dangerous of all false doctrine is one seasoned with a little truth.

YOUR DAILY WALK Have you ever heard someone claim that they have spoken audibly with God and have an authoritative word from Him? Or have you heard someone say, “God told me this”? With the ever-growing number of cults and “isms” today, how can you be certain who truly is speaking for God?

In Jeremiah’s day the people were plagued with false prophets who claimed to know God’s mind. Though these deceivers didn’t have TV, radio, or the Internet to help propagate their statements, they still managed to lull the nation into complacency.

Jeremiah’s warnings concerning false prophets are timely indeed. The next time you encounter someone who claims, “God told me . . .,” apply this twofold test: (1) Does his life match his words? (23:13); (2) Does the Bible back up his statements? (23:21-22). If not, watch out! Read and remember 1 John 4:1-6. Don’t just accept what someone says, but learn to “test the spirits” in order to develop a discerning mind that won’t be deceived.

INSIGHT *No Secret About the Seventy (25:11-12)*

The duration of the Babylonian Exile was a matter of public record. In fact, as the result of reading Jeremiah’s prophecy of the 70 years, Daniel, in Babylon, began to pray specifically that God would restore the people to the land (Daniel 9:1-3). God knows the end from the beginning.

Judah in Opposition to Jeremiah

Key Passage: Jeremiah 26–27

CHAPTER 26	CHAPTER 27	CHAPTER 28	CHAPTER 29
A Plot Against the Prophet	A Yoke Upon the Prophet	A Prophecy Against the Prophet	A Letter from the Prophet
Extermination	Exile	Hananiah	Hope

OVERVIEW Preachers usually hope for some kind of response after delivering their message, and Jeremiah is no exception. But in his case the audience’s response is breathtaking—literally! After hearing his appeal for repentance, they rise up in unison and declare, “This man should be sentenced to death” (26:11). Arrested and tried by a murderous crowd, Jeremiah’s life hangs in the balance until he is vindicated. But the message must go forth. Donning a wooden yoke, Jeremiah stresses the importance of Judah and her neighbors surrendering to (rather than revolting against) Babylon, for to do otherwise is to court certain death. Discredited by Hananiah, a prophet of false hope, Jeremiah pens a letter to the recent deportees urging them to settle down in Babylon.

YOUR DAILY WALK “I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances” (Philippians 4:11). Do you recognize those words? They aren’t the declaration of the plaster saint, or the meaningless small talk of feather-bedded royalty. Rather, they are the carefully reasoned statement of Paul—a man who had been beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, imperiled, and impoverished. Yet, he had learned the secret of being content, regardless of the circumstances.

Jeremiah was much like Paul. On trial for his life, slandered by a fellow prophet, faced with a howling mob demanding his blood, Jeremiah calmly went about delivering his God-given message of judgment and doom. He lived above his circumstances, not under them, in his walk with God.

Write the following words on a slip of paper, carry them with you today, and read them often: “Sometimes the Lord calms the storm; more often He lets the storm rage and calms the child.” Now relax in the Lord.

INSIGHT *The Babylonian Exile—Slavery or Something Else?*

The Hebrew exiles in Babylon were not slaves but deportees who were free to live as they pleased (29:4-9). Some became wealthy merchants and others attained high places in court.

Those who truly aspire to be Christlike should not be surprised when the mob comes to crucify them.

Hope Amidst Judgment

Key Passage: Jeremiah 32

CHAPTER 30	CHAPTER 31	CHAPTER 32	CHAPTER 33
Judah's Protection	Judah's Promise	Jeremiah's Purchase	God's Promise
Calamity	Covenant	Confidence	

OVERVIEW It's always darkest just before the dawn, and Jeremiah's prophecy is no exception. The opening lines of chapter 30 paint the bleakest picture yet of Israel's coming calamity. The pinnacle of the nation's age-long sufferings will be a unique period of tribulation called "a time of trouble for Jacob" (30:7). But the bleakness of judgment will give way to the glory of restoration and blessing. The people will be replanted in their homeland (31:4-6); their mourning will be turned to joy (31:12); and God will make a new covenant with them (31:31-34). As a sign of his confidence in the promises of God, Jeremiah buys a field—knowing full well it would soon fall into Babylonian hands.

YOUR DAILY WALK Are you building a life on God's promises, or merely building a file full of them? Are you taking them to heart, or just reading over them?

There are more than 7,000 promises buried in the Bible, most of which are targeted for you. But once you find a promise, don't just write it down, memorize it, or file it away. Act on it. Rest in it. Let it change your life.

Jeremiah received a promise from God. His nation, though faced with the prospect of being swept away by a Babylonian tidal wave, would not be annihilated. God would bring them back. So Jeremiah bought real estate at a rock-bottom price, as if to declare to his nation, "I'm standing on the promises of God! He will restore us!"

Pick a promise from God that you may have read, filed away, and maybe even memorized—but never claimed. Now act on it!

INSIGHT *A Mother's Tears*

Rachel, the mother of Joseph and Benjamin, is pictured weeping for her sons and the attempt that was made to destroy the promised lineage. Many years later other women of Ramah wept as Herod slaughtered their children in an attempt to kill the promised Messiah (Matthew 2:17-18), a fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy (31:15).

The possibilities of prayer run parallel with the promises of God.

PROFILE OF Three Prophets

This month you'll encounter three men with strikingly different credentials: a country preacher-turned-prophet (Jeremiah), an exiled priest (Ezekiel), and a teenager-turned-government-servant (Daniel). Though different in their backgrounds, they share one common passion: to speak fearlessly and faithfully the message that God has entrusted to them. Notice the who, what, when, where, and why behind the message and ministry of these great prophetic spokesmen.

WHO	JEREMIAH PROPHET OF TEARS	EZEKIEL PROPHET OF VISIONS	DANIEL PROPHET OF DREAMS
WHAT	Message of Destruction	Godly Wedding	Godly Warning
WHEN	Before the Exile (626-584 B.C.)	During the Exile (592-570 B.C.)	During the Exile (605-536 B.C.)
WHERE	Jerusalem	Babylon (to the People)	Babylon (to the Palace)
WHY	"I [God] will fight against you" (21:4-7).	"I will settle you in your own land" (37:11-14).	"[My] kingdom . . . will never be destroyed" (7:13-14).

Before the Fall of Jerusalem

Key Passage: Jeremiah 36

CHAPTER 34	CHAPTER 35	CHAPTER 36
A Nation's Treasury	A Family's Treasury	A King's Tyranny
Rebuke	Righteousness	Rebellion

OVERVIEW With the close of chapter 33, Jeremiah completes the written account of his preaching ministry to the rebellious nation. Throughout the rest of the book, the prophet emphasizes his personal experiences during the nation's last days. Three events point out the advanced state of Judah's decline: the broken covenant under Zedekiah, the contrasting faithfulness of the Rechabite family, and the utter rebellion of Jehoiakim in burning the scroll of the Lord.

YOUR DAILY WALK The next time you read your Bible, try this exercise. Whenever you come to a passage that points out your sin or tells you what you ought to do, tear out that page and burn it.

Ridiculous? Of course. We as believers would not do to God's Word what Jehoiakim did to Jeremiah's scroll—or do we?

Have you ever read a command in God's Word you didn't like, and just ignored it and kept on reading? That's accomplishing the same spiritual damage as the penknife-wielding King Jehoiakim.

How should you read the Bible? The key is a responsive heart. God wants His Word to change your life as it convicts you of sin and instructs you in righteousness. Ignoring God's commands is dangerous business. In fact, it would be better not to know them at all than to understand (know) them and not obey.

Is there a command from Scripture you have been avoiding? Jehoiakim learned the hard way that you cannot alter God's truth by ignoring it. Confess your sin of omission to God (James 4:17), and like the servants in John 2:5, make a fresh commitment to obedience: "Do whatever he tells you."

INSIGHT *God's Commendation of a Nonconformist Family* The Rechabites made the nomadic way of life and abstinence from drink a religious obligation (chapter 35). God commended them, not for their rules, but for their faithfulness to those rules—a striking contrast to Judah's infidelity.

If your study of God's Word does not change the way you live, either you are already perfect or not studying correctly.

During the Fall of Jerusalem

Key Passage: Jeremiah 38:1–39

CHAPTER 37	CHAPTER 38	CHAPTER 39
Jeremiah's Arrest	Jeremiah's Abandonment	Judah's Annihilation
The King's Fearfulness		The King's Fate

OVERVIEW Jeremiah endures his worst persecution during the nation's last desperate days in the Babylonian siege. First, he is arrested on suspicion of treason. Next, his enemies conspire to throw him into a muddy cistern to die. Rescued at the last minute by order of King Zedekiah, Jeremiah offers yet again his familiar advice: "Surrender!" The king refuses, sealing the destruction of Jerusalem. All the horrors that Jeremiah has so long predicted are now fully carried out by the merciless Babylonians, but Jeremiah himself is spared.

YOUR DAILY WALK Have you ever received the pessimistic advice, "Cheer up, things could be worse"? So you cheered up, and sure enough, things got worse. Jeremiah could identify with that experience. No sooner had he left the prison court of King Zedekiah than he was thrown into the dungeon pit—from the frying pan into the mire, so to speak. He no doubt prayed that things would get better, and instead they got worse. Yet, Jeremiah never wavered in his commitment to God, or in his calling to preach an unpopular message. How was that possible?

Jeremiah's faith never wavered because his focus never wandered. Imprisonment and intimidation could not take his eyes off his Sovereign. With his gaze firmly fixed on God, Jeremiah could fearlessly proclaim God's message, trusting Him to take care of the consequences.

In the midst of trials and discouragements, it's most important to check your focus. Are you looking at your problem—or your Problem Solver? Read Romans 8:37 right now, and underline the word *in*. Remember, it's not above or around all things, but *in* all things that we are more than victorious through Him who loves us.

Faith, like a muscle, grows strong by stretching.

INSIGHT *The Obscure Man Who Made a Difference (38:7-13)*

It was not a Jew but an Ethiopian eunuch who persuaded the king to rescue Jeremiah from sure death in the cistern. For his faithfulness, Ebed-melech was promised personal safety during the fall of Jerusalem (39:15-18) and received an eternal memorial in God's Word.

After the Fall of Jerusalem

Key Passage: Jeremiah 42-43

CHAPTERS 40-41	CHAPTER 42	CHAPTER 43	CHAPTERS 44-45
Gathering Around Gedaliah	The Plan	Escaping into Egypt	
		The Execution	The Aftermath
Safely in the City	Disaster Through Disobedience		

OVERVIEW Jeremiah’s ministry does not end with the fall of Jerusalem. Given carte blanche by the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar, Jeremiah chooses to cast his lot with Gedaliah, the governor appointed to oversee Jerusalem. But after Gedaliah’s brutal assassination by Ishmael, the Jewish remnant disregards God’s specific command and flees into Egypt, taking Jeremiah along. This prompts Jeremiah to predict Egypt’s destruction and the Jews’ discipline at God’s hands.

There is no more difficult prayer to pray than “Thy will be done.”

YOUR DAILY WALK It’s a common practice for coin and stamp collectors (numismatists and philatelists, if you want to be a name-dropper!) to buy merchandise “on approval.” That is, the company will send samples of coins or stamps through the mail. The buyer looks them over, keeps the ones he wants to buy, and returns the rest. If you don’t like what you get, you just send it back.

Sometimes we as Christians view God’s will that way. We ask, “Lord, show me what You want me to do.” And when He does, we decide whether we want to do all of it, part of it, or none of it.

After the fall of Jerusalem, the survivors came to Jeremiah and asked him to pray for them. They wanted to know God’s will “on approval.” They were looking for God to rubber-stamp what they had already decided to do: flee to Egypt. And when the answer came back “No!” they went anyway—with disastrous results.

Examine a decision you’re wrestling with in prayer. Are you seeking God’s will “on approval,” or are you willing to go wherever He guides? Read Proverbs 3:5-6; then decide.

INSIGHT In Tahpanhes “The Word of the Lord Came” Tahpanhes (43:8-13) has been linked with a site about 10 miles west of the Suez Canal. In 1886, Sir Flinders Petrie uncovered the ruins of a large castle, in front of which was a great open platform of brick work, the very place according to Petrie where it is likely Jeremiah hid the stones predicting Egypt’s downfall.

Captivity of Jerusalem

Key Passage: Jeremiah 52

CHAPTER 46	CHAPTER 47	CHAPTER 48	CHAPTER 49	CHS 50-51	CHAPTER 52
Discipline of God upon . . .					
Egypt	Philistia	Moab	Ammon	Babylon	Jerusalem
Judah's Foes					Judah's Fall

OVERVIEW In a last, far-reaching sweep of his prophetic pen, Jeremiah outlines the judgments to come on many of the ungodly nations of the world: Egypt, Philistia, Moab, Ammon, and Babylon. All will feel the sting of God’s chastening hand. Even Babylon, the mighty conqueror of God’s people, will eventually fall. The final chapter of the book, like the final brush strokes of a dark and dreary painting, portrays the fall of Jerusalem in all its stark horror. But the book closes on a significant note of hope as the heir to Judah’s throne enjoys kindly treatment at the hands of his Babylonian captors.

YOUR DAILY WALK Immunity to disease is wonderful. But there are some immunities you would be wise to avoid.

One such immunity is typically—and tragically—found among those who regularly sit under the teaching of God’s Word. Sunday by Sunday in church, or day by day in your private walk with God, conviction comes as God’s truth “hits home” in your life. You promise to change—but don’t. Later, conviction returns. Again you know what needs to happen—but somehow you never get around to it. And after a time, you begin to see conviction as an end in itself. “Immunity” has set in.

Think back over the way God has spoken to you through the life of Jeremiah this month. Then ask this question: “How many areas of my life about which I’ve been convicted have I actually attempted to change?” Choose one neglected area to work on today. Don’t allow spiritual immunity to rob you of spiritual vitality.

The recognition of sin is only the beginning of salvation.

INSIGHT Tracking the Action through Jeremiah

KING	REIGN	CHAPTERS IN JEREMIAH
Josiah	641-609 B.C.	1-10, 18-20
Jehoiakim	609-598 B.C.	11-17, 22-23, 25-26, 35-36, 45-48
Zedekiah	597-586 B.C.	21, 24, 27-34, 37-39, 49-51
Exile	586 B.C.	40-44, 52

Wailing Without a Wall

Key Passage: Lamentations 3

CHAPTER 1	CHAPTER 2	CHAPTER 3	CHAPTER 4	CHAPTER 5
Jerusalem Deserted	Jerusalem Destroyed	Triumphant Hope	Jerusalem Defeated	Jerusalem Distressed
Defeat		Victory	Defeat	

OVERVIEW Lamentations describes the funeral of a city. It is a tear-stained portrait of the once-proud Jerusalem, now reduced to a pile of rubble by the invading Babylonian hordes. In a five-poem dirge, Jeremiah lays bare his emotions. A death has occurred; Jerusalem lies barren. Jeremiah, traditionally acclaimed as the author of Lamentations, writes his lament in acrostic or alphabetical fashion. He progresses verse by verse through the Hebrew alphabet, literally weeping from A to Z. Then, in the midst of this terrible holocaust, Jeremiah triumphantly cries out, “Great is your faithfulness!” (3:23). In the face of death and destruction, with life seemingly coming apart at the seams, Jeremiah turns tragedy into a triumph of faith. God has never failed him in the past. God has promised to remain faithful in the future. In the light of the God he knows and loves, Jeremiah finds hope and comfort.

YOUR DAILY WALK It’s a strange paradox that while the pages of Scripture are soaked with the tears of Jeremiah, David, Hezekiah, the Lord Jesus, and a host of others, crying today is often looked upon as a sign of weakness.

Psalm 56:8 tells us that God puts our tears in a bottle and keeps track of them in a book. He must have a shelf of bottles labeled “Jeremiah’s Tears.”

*Put my
tears in
Your bottle
(Psalm 56:8
HCSB).*

Stoic insensitivity is nothing to be proud of. A man or woman with God’s heart for people can’t help but get emotionally involved. If you’ve never done so, ask God to break your heart for people—to give you the kind of compassion that caused Jeremiah and Jesus to cry over the city of Jerusalem.

INSIGHT Jeremiah’s Two Glimpses of Jerusalem’s Fall



Ezekiel

Eleven years before the actual downfall of Jerusalem (586 B.C.), Ezekiel had already been exiled to Babylon. The first part of his prophecy stresses the completion of God's judgment against Judah, culminating in the destruction of the holy city. But once Jerusalem's walls have been breached and its citizens marched into exile, Ezekiel's tone changes to one of hope and consolation. God will one day restore His nation in such a way that all nations will know that He is the Lord.

FOCUS	INWARD					OUTWARD		ONWARD															
DIVISIONS	Ezekiel's Vision	Jerusalem's Signs	Condemnation for Idolatry	Condemnation for Leaders	Parables	Pronouncements	Judgment on Judah's Enemies	Judgment on Egypt	New Shepherd	New Life	New Temple	New Worship											
	1	3	4	6	7	11	12	15	16	19	20	24	25	28	29	32	33	36	37	39	40	43	44
TOPICS	Predicting Jerusalem's Fall					Announcing the Fall		Promising Restoration															
	Judgment Near					Judgment Now		Hope Ahead															
PLACE	Babylon																						
TIME	About 22 Years (592-570 B.C.)																						

Ezekiel's Vision and Call

Key Passage: Ezekiel 1–2

CHAPTER 1	CHAPTER 2	CHAPTER 3	CHAPTER 4	CHAPTER 5	CHAPTER 6
Ezekiel's Vision	Ezekiel's Position	Ezekiel's Preparation	A Besieged Homeland	A Shaved Head	A Saved Remnant
The Call of Ezekiel			The Fall of Jerusalem		

OVERVIEW While Jeremiah is in Judah prophesying the downfall of Jerusalem, his younger contemporary Ezekiel is in Babylon proclaiming the same message to the first group of his exiled countrymen. Unlike Jeremiah, Ezekiel bathes his harsh sermons in a soothing note of consolation. God's chastening is designed to prevent and correct apostasy in the nation, that His people might know that He is God. But before Ezekiel is ready to begin his strategic ministry, he needs a fresh glimpse of the greatness of his God. Only then is he ready to begin the task of visualizing the coming calamity for a spiritually-blind people.

YOUR DAILY WALK Put on a pair of dark glasses, look across the room, and describe what you see. Now remove the dark glasses and try again. Which did you find easier?

If you're going to describe to a sightless person the objects around you, then you'd better first have a clear picture of your surroundings. Otherwise, your description will be no better than your limited view. Ezekiel was given the task of describing to a band of spiritually blind Jews the Person and program of their God. But before he was qualified to do that, Ezekiel needed his own spiritual eyesight checked to gain a clear, fresh perspective of the great and glorious God he was called to represent.

How well do you know the God you represent? Look at God through Ezekiel's eyes as you read today's section, and write down each attribute of God that you find. Get a fresh glimpse of God, and you'll get a fresh motivation to serve Him.

INSIGHT *A Call to Duty*

"In the thirtieth year" (1:1) probably refers to Ezekiel's own age and in the normal course of events would have been the year he took up his duties as a priest in the temple. But Ezekiel's priestly call could not be denied because of deplorable conditions or because Jerusalem was hundreds of miles away. God made Ezekiel His messenger to the exiles to warn the remnant of His people.

Do you pray often enough that you can recognize God's voice?

Condemnation for Idolatry

Key Passage: Ezekiel 10–11

CHAPTER 7	CHAPTER 8	CHAPTER 9	CHAPTERS 10-11
Certainty of Judgment	Cause of Judgment	Command of Judgment	Consequences of Judgment
Doom	Defilement	Death	Departure

OVERVIEW In chapters 4–6, Ezekiel sees a vision of Jerusalem’s fall. In today’s section you will read another word picture as Ezekiel describes the calamity about to descend upon Jerusalem. The idolatrous population will be slaughtered, the city will be burned, God’s glory will depart from the temple, and Judah’s leaders will stand by helplessly. Although the outlook is bleak, the uplook is still as bright as the promises of God, for the Holy One of Israel declares: “I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh” (11:19).

YOUR DAILY WALK Use it or lose it. “Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him” (Matthew 13:12).

Any way you state it, the principle remains the same: Spiritual privilege always brings spiritual responsibility. God expects you to use the spiritual blessings He has entrusted to you.

Tragically for the nation of Judah, the privilege of enjoying God’s presence became a mark of national pride, but the people never took seriously their responsibility to walk in holiness and righteousness. As a result, the glory of God departed from the temple and eventually from the nation. Because the people had not fostered their relationship with God, they forfeited their fellowship with Him.

In the margin, write several spiritual privileges you enjoy today (freedom to study God’s Word, to worship, etc.) and a corresponding responsibility each privilege brings. Then put into practice the lesson that Judah never learned: When it comes to your spiritual privileges, use them—don’t lose them.

*God’s glory
was gone
but His love
never left.*

INSIGHT God’s Glory—Going, Going, Gone

Notice how the removal of God’s glory from the temple was gradual, moving from between the cherubim to the threshold of the temple (9:3; 10:4), then up from the midst of the city to the Mount of Olives (11:23) before disappearing completely.

Condemnation for False Leaders

Key Passage: Ezekiel 14–15

CHAPTER 12	CHAPTERS 13-14	CHAPTER 15
Worthwhile Demonstration	Worthless Leader	Worthless Vine
Sign of the Prophet	Sins of the People	

OVERVIEW Like Jeremiah, Ezekiel is asked by God to illustrate his messages in some rather unusual—and highly picturesque—ways. In an attempt to capture the attention of the people, Ezekiel picks up his “suitcase” and crawls through a hole in the wall to picture the coming exile for the nation of Judah. Then he lashes out at the false prophets and idolatrous elders of the land, piling up evidence upon evidence of Judah’s rebelliousness. Clearly, the nation is a fruitless vine, profitable for nothing. As a result, both Judah’s enemies and Judah’s God have set their faces against that nation.

YOUR DAILY WALK Think back to the last time you spent an entire day taming the shrubbery around your house. Perhaps you found yourself pruning, gathering, and burning overgrown foliage that was long overdue for a trim. Do you remember the feeling of success when you hauled away or burned the last of those useless vines and sticks?

Now put yourself in God’s place for a moment. For generations you have been working with a stubborn and rebellious nation—looking for the fruits of righteousness, but finding only useless vines. You have repeatedly sent your prophets, but their messages have fallen on deaf ears. Finally, your patience has been exhausted. It is no longer time to prune tenderly or wait patiently; it is time to pluck up and cast down—the painful price of persistent fruitlessness.

What kind of vine have you been for God in the last six months? If you had to label your life, would it read “needs pruning,” “needs patience,” or “needs pulling down”? Remember that fruit-bearing is not just a good idea; it is the reason God has put us here.

INSIGHT *Here a Sign, There a Sign, Everywhere a Sign* Throughout the Book of Ezekiel you will find 10 dramatic actions that Ezekiel uses to heighten the impact of his message. Today’s section contains two such signs, both found in chapter 12. The others are located in chapters 4-5, 21, 24, and 37.

*In Matthew
7:16, Jesus
tells us that
we’ll be
known by
our fruit.*

Parables of Judgment

Key Passage: Ezekiel 18

CHAPTER 16	CHAPTER 17	CHAPTER 18	CHAPTER 19
Pride and Harlotry	Babylon and Egypt	Fathers and Sons	Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin
Two Sins	Two Eagles	Two Generations	Two Princes

OVERVIEW Ezekiel continues to expand on the twin themes that have dominated his message: the great rebellion of God's people, and the harsh reprimand that is coming. Like an adulterous woman, the nation has played the prostitute (16:15) in her relationship with God. Her leaders have broken their covenants with Babylon and have turned to Egypt in a vain search for security. In the light of such waywardness and weakness from Judah's leaders, judgment cannot be far away.

YOUR DAILY WALK Which of the following have you been tempted to use as an explanation for an action in your life of which you were not proud?

- _____ a. "The devil made me do it."
- _____ b. "There was nothing else I could do."
- _____ c. "My parents used to do the same thing all the time."
- _____ d. "Everybody's doing it these days."
- _____ e. "I was wrong, and I take full responsibility."

According to chapter 18, any explanation other than "e" is contrary to what the Bible teaches. Search as you might, you will find no loophole out of personal responsibility for your actions. You cannot blame the devil, your circumstances, your parents, or your peers. God will hold you alone accountable for your choices in this life—whether good or bad, right or wrong.

When you stumble and fall because of wrong choices or actions, in which direction are you tempted to point the finger of blame? Outward (at others)? Upward (at God)? Or inward (at yourself)? Find a mirror and stand before it as you talk to God about being accountable for your actions. It will remind you that the responsibility lies not with your parents or your peers, but with you.

INSIGHT *Justice in the Balance with Mercy*

Lest you think God takes pleasure in inflicting pain on sinful people, don't overlook 18:21, 23, 32. God finds no delight in bringing retribution upon the wicked but desires repentance and restoration.

The closest a person ever comes to perfection is when he fills out a job application.

Pronouncements

Key Passage: Ezekiel 21–22

CHAPTER 20	CHAPTER 21	CHAPTER 22	CHAPTER 23	CHAPTER 24
Israel's Past	God's Part in Judgment			Ezekiel's Partner
Summary	Sword	Smelter	Sisters	Sign

OVERVIEW Lest Judah think that God is judging her impulsively on the basis of present sins, Ezekiel retreats into the nation's past and catalogs the numerous periods of rebellion. God has been patient with the people down through the centuries, but now their cup is full and judgment must come. As God wields the sword of judgment and prepares the smelting furnace of His wrath, it is clear that Judah is about to meet the same fate that befell her sister Israel: strong discipline for stubborn rebellion.

YOUR DAILY WALK Thought for the day: Parents who are afraid to put their foot down usually have children who step on their toes.

Discipline has been defined as “that painful reproof that everyone needs but no one wants.” It is the price you pay for failing to learn your lesson the first time, either as a child of your parents or as a child of your Heavenly Father. No parent enjoys disciplining a wayward child. But there is something even more painful than disciplining a child, and that is repeatedly disciplining that child for the same offense. Why? Because discipline has only achieved its goal when it produces a change of conduct. Tears of remorse may show a contrite heart, but unless followed by acts of repentance, the discipline has failed to achieve its goal.

Where is God bringing divine discipline in your life today? What response is God looking for out of your momentarily painful experience? Ponder and complete this sentence: “Because I know that discipline, though painful, will be unprofitable until I respond correctly, today with God’s help I will show that I have learned my lesson by _____.”

INSIGHT Parables, Old Testament Style

You are probably familiar with Jesus’ parables in the Gospels. But did you know the prophet Ezekiel employs parables as well? In today’s reading you will find two parables, and in chapters 15–19, Ezekiel uses five others—a total of seven in all. See how many you can find.

God will go to any lengths to bring us to acknowledge who He is.

Judgment on Judah's Enemies

Key Passage: Ezekiel 28

CHAPTER 25	CHAPTERS 26-27	CHAPTER 28
Judgment on Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia	Judgment on Tyre for . . .	
	Its Pride	Its Proud Leader
East and West	North	

OVERVIEW Ezekiel has spent 24 chapters describing the disobedience of God's people and the resulting discipline they are to experience. He now turns his attention to the east, west, north, and south of Judah to aim his verbal missiles of judgment at the neighboring nations. Because their sins are as abhorrent to God as those of Judah, their people will be punished in similar fashion.

YOUR DAILY WALK Pride has been called "the only disease known to man that makes everyone sick except the one who has it." Chapter 28 is the description of a proud king and what happened to him as a result of his pride. Before you dismiss these verses as interesting but impractical, consider this: Pride is perhaps the most slippery of temptations to cope with. You may not have a problem with pride and be proud of it, and in the process, you have just developed a pride problem.

Intelligence, beauty, money, possessions, family, position—each can represent a potential danger area. Notice the three proud steps of the king of Tyre that led to his downfall: (1) Pride began in the heart, when the king of Tyre let his beauty (or intelligence, or money, or position) become the focus of his life; (2) it moved to his head where his wisdom became corrupted; and (3) it ended in disaster as the king of Tyre was cast down from his privileged position. Three steps: conceit, corruption, and condemnation.

Knowing those three steps, map out a strategy for dealing with a possible pitfall of pride in your own life. Identify the danger area; confess any proud thoughts to God; commit your talents to God's service; and don't let Satan's subtle scheme (that tripped up the king of Tyre) become your undoing as well.

INSIGHT North, South, East, West—Zap, Zap, Zap, Zap! Ezekiel follows the points of the compass as he delivers his messages of judgment upon Ammon, Moab, Edom (east), Philistia (west), Tyre (north), and Egypt (south) in chapters 25-32.

Pride is a paradox. It makes some people look ridiculous and prevents others from doing so.

Judgment on Egypt

Key Passage: Ezekiel 30–31

CHAPTER 29	CHAPTER 30	CHAPTER 31	CHAPTER 32
Egypt's Demise	Egypt's Desolation	Pharaoh's Downfall	Pharaoh's Dirge
Judgment on Egypt			

OVERVIEW Ezekiel's last and greatest prophecy regarding Judah's neighbors is reserved for Egypt. Unlike the other nations already mentioned, Egypt will not be utterly destroyed but will be reduced to "the lowliest of kingdoms" (29:15). Historically, though invaded and plundered by Nebuchadnezzar, Egypt has continued to exist as a nation. But to this day it has never again regained its former glory or influence in world affairs. Ezekiel's prophecies are delivered in the form of six visions that cover a period of more than 16 years.

YOUR DAILY WALK One of the greatest evidences for fulfilled prophecy is a present-day map of the world. If you have a map, atlas, or globe, glance at it as you read on.

Though God promised to tear His people from their homeland and punish them for their persistent disobedience, He also promised to restore them to the land. Can you find Israel on your map?

God promised to utterly destroy Israel's neighbors for their sins of pride, idolatry, and indifference to Israel's plight. Can you find the nations of Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, or Tyre on your map?

The justice and mercy of God are either good news or bad news, depending on which of the two you are in line for. He promises to raise up those who are humble and repentant (mercy), and He promises to bring down those who are proud and arrogant (justice), (see 1 Peter 5:5-6). One glance at a map of the world should tell you He means what He says.

INSIGHT *The Time to Turn Is Now*

"Say to them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?' "(Ezekiel 33:11). That question is applicable not only to the exiles, but to us as well. Since God has provided salvation through Jesus Christ, "why will you die?"

God has two hands—a right hand of mercy and a left hand of justice.

New Shepherd for Israel

Key Passage: Ezekiel 36

CHAPTER 33	CHAPTER 34	CHAPTER 35	CHAPTER 36
Duty of Ezekiel	Denunciation of Shepherds	Doom of Edom	Delight for Israel
Watchman	Worthlessness	Wasteland	Water of Cleansing

OVERVIEW Chapter 33 is a pivotal point in this book. Chapters 1-32 are saturated with statements of sin and punishment. But from chapter 33 until the end of the book, the prophet will fashion a catalog of comfort as he scans the prophetic horizon. Beyond judgment God will gather and restore His people, and in the process will establish a new covenant with them. Glory will prevail when the groaning has ceased.

YOUR DAILY WALK Perhaps Mark Twain said it best: “Forgiveness is the fragrance that the flower leaves on the heel of the one who crushed it.” When was the last time someone came to you and asked, “Will you forgive me?” Even more important, when was the last time you asked the forgiveness of someone else?

For the nation of Judah, the promise of forgiveness is woven throughout the fabric of chapter 36. Forgiveness provides a refreshing shower for the mind and spirit. It allows you to serve God freely, wholeheartedly, and unencumbered. It is like a heavy burden being lifted from your shoulders. Forgiveness provides hope for each new day—both for the giver and the receiver.

But you, like the nation of Judah, also have a role to play: confession (1 John 1:9). Is there anything in your life you’ve been trying to hide from God? A little sin? A big sin? A recent sin? A long-neglected sin? Maybe you’ve been thinking God could never forgive you and cleanse you from that secret sin. But according to His Word, nothing is beyond the reach of Christ’s cleansing blood (1 John 1:7). He wants to remove the stain and guilt, and then renew a right spirit within you. Will you let Him?

INSIGHT *Edom—A Blessing in Passing*

You might wonder why the destruction of Edom (chapter 35) is included in today’s passage. After all, Edom was included in the “Diary of Destruction” in chapters 25-32. The answer is that the demise of Edom is part of the future blessing of Judah, the major theme of chapters 33-36 (compare Lamentations 4:21-22).

*Confession
and
repentance
lead to His
forgiveness—
every time.*

New Life for Israel

Key Passage: Ezekiel 37

CHAPTER 37	CHAPTER 38	CHAPTER 39
Restoration of the Nation Israel	Assault of Gog Against Israel	Annihilation of Gog in Israel
Provision	Protection	

OVERVIEW Two of Ezekiel's most striking prophecies make up today's section. Both the valley of dry bones (chapter 37) and the attack of Gog (chapters 38-39) reveal God's loving concern for the people of Israel. Though dead as bones, the nation would be restored to life again. And though outnumbered and seemingly defenseless, restored Israel would be supernaturally protected against Gog. All this serves to display God's incomparable glory before the watching world.

YOUR DAILY WALK Do you think that someone can be "too lost" to be saved?

If you find yourself with a long (and growing) list of "Hopeless Candidates for Salvation," then perhaps you need a fresh vision of God's miraculous, life-giving power. Read 37:1-14 thoughtfully. To whom did God give life? To a disbanded and dispersed people, exiled hundreds of miles from their homeland and convinced that God had given up on them. If God can raise up dead bones to make a new nation, what do you think He can do through you in the lives of others who are "dead in . . . transgressions and sins" (Ephesians 2:1)?

Cut out a cardboard "dry bone," write the name of an unsaved friend or loved one on it, and tape it to your bedroom mirror or car dashboard. Let it remind you that God specializes in breathing new life into lifeless bones. And pray for that person's salvation every time you are reminded.

*The
miraculous
is absolutely
basic to
Christianity.*

INSIGHT *Gog and Magog in the Pages of World History* Ezekiel 38-39 has long baffled Bible scholars. Who is Gog? Where is Magog? Is the battle Ezekiel describes past, present, or future? Revelation 20:7-10 sheds some light on the question. Your pastor, Sunday school teacher, or church librarian may be able to suggest a helpful commentary. Regardless of where and when the battle is fought, one truth remains certain: Humanity will never prevail against Israel's sovereign God.

New Temple for Israel

Key Passage: Ezekiel 40:1-4; 43:1-5

CHAPTER 40	CHAPTERS 41-42	CHAPTER 43
Israel's Glorious Temple		God's Glorious Return
Depicted	Detailed	
A New Temple for a Restored People		

OVERVIEW Twenty years after beginning his ministry, Ezekiel is once again transported in a vision to Jerusalem. On his first visit, he gloomily prophesied the destruction of that rebellious city (8:1-9, 17-18). Now he joyfully goes to measure the dimensions of the rebuilt temple. Ezekiel's attention to detail underscores God's intent to carry out what He has so specifically promised. In the middle of Ezekiel's calculations, he witnesses the thrilling return of God's glory to the temple.

YOUR DAILY WALK What comes to mind when you hear the phrase "God's glory"? It's one of those concepts in Scripture, like love and grace, that is easy to discuss and often difficult to understand.

What exactly is God's glory? As described by Ezekiel, it is a visible sign of God's presence—a brilliant, indescribable, blinding light that fills the whole temple (43:5). But is there more to it than that? Someone has well said that glory is an outward display of an inward reality. In God's case, His glory is a visible sign of His invisible attributes: power, majesty, holiness, perfection.

Where is God's glory visible today? In the lives of His children—in your life. Paul challenges his readers to reflect God's glory in their daily activities to a watching world. How? By submitting to the Holy Spirit's control and by allowing Him to transform their lives into the likeness of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). Are you letting your light shine so that others may see the glory of God in you (Matthew 5:16)? Pick one area of your personal life (such as study habits or use of free time) where God's glory can be made visible, and let your light shine.

*The sight of
God's glory
humbles
us, just as
stars vanish
when the
sun appears.*

INSIGHT **Trouble with Ezekiel? Join the Club!**

The closing chapters (40-48) of Ezekiel's prophecy contain many difficult passages. The rabbis of the Talmud (the official writings of Jewish interpretation and tradition concerning the Old Testament) remarked that only the prophet Elijah would be able to explain fully the challenging terms and truths that appear in the Book of Ezekiel.

New Worship for Israel

Key Passage: Ezekiel 48

CHAPTER 44	CHAPTER 45	CHAPTER 46	CHAPTER 47	CHAPTER 48
Stipulations for the Priests	Support for the Priests	Sacrifices by the Priests	Sizing up the Land	Splitting up the Land
Settling the Worship			Settling the Land	

OVERVIEW Having discussed in detail the new temple, Ezekiel now turns to a new worship that will take place there. As in the past, Israel will rely heavily on the priests, Levites, sacrifices, and feasts. Strict stipulations are laid down regarding duties and privileges in the new temple. Finally, Ezekiel describes the new divisions of the land for the tribes, priests, princes, and people of Jerusalem. The book closes with a fitting statement: “The name of the city from that time on will be: THE LORD IS THERE” (48:35). At the end of this book, as in the beginning, Ezekiel’s burden continues to be that the world might know the God of Israel, the Lord of glory and holiness.

YOUR DAILY WALK Think back over the 48 chapters of Ezekiel. Then complete these three sentences based on your impressions and observations from your study of the book:

Ezekiel was _____.

God is _____.

God’s program for His people is _____.

Now imagine that you have just died and gone to heaven. One of the first people you meet is an aged prophet named Ezekiel. (You know it is Ezekiel because he still has a yardstick in his hand.) He asks you, “What is the most important truth you discovered in my book?” What would you tell him?

Right now, thank God for the timely truths you have learned from the timeless Book of Ezekiel. Then share one lesson from Ezekiel’s prophecy with two other people this weekend. It may surprise them to learn that a prophet from the past can speak to their needs today.

*God will
seldom seem
closer than
you allow
Him to come.*

INSIGHT *The Lord Is Here, There, and Everywhere*

The concluding statement of Ezekiel, “THE LORD IS THERE” (48:35), becomes the recurring theme of John in the Book of Revelation. God’s abiding presence becomes the chief joy of those in the new heaven and new earth (21:3-4, 7, 22-23; 22:3-5).

Daniel

Taken captive as a youth, Daniel is used by God as “the prophet in the palace” during the 70-year period of Judah’s exile in Babylon. Confronting pagan kings with God’s worldwide rule, Daniel sets forth dreams and interpretations of dreams that unfold the world’s history from Daniel’s day far into the future—from here to eternity. But Daniel is more than a man of the future. He is also a man of faith, taking a courageous stand for God.

FOCUS	JUDGMENT UPON THE GENTILES				HOPE FOR THE JEWS			
DIVISIONS	Daniel's Friends in the Furnace		Daniel's Faith in the Lions' Den		Beasts, Kings, and 70 Weeks		Previews of Israel's Future	
	1	3	4	6	7	9	10	12
TOPICS	Convincing Gentiles of God's Power				Convincing Jews of God's Purpose			
	Daniel Interprets Others' Dreams				Angels Interpret Daniel's Dreams			
PLACE	Babylon/Persia							
TIME	At Least 70 Years							

Daniel’s Friends in the Furnace

Key Passage: Daniel 1

CHAPTER 1	CHAPTER 2	CHAPTER 3
Daniel’s Friends and Food	Daniel’s Foretelling of Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream	Daniel’s Friends in the Fiery Furnace
Introduction	Historic Panorama	Historic Preservation

OVERVIEW Daniel lives and prophesies at the beginning of a unique period in world history—a time when Gentile nations rather than God’s chosen people are dominant in the world. Cast away temporarily in judgment, the Jews must play spectator as God demonstrates His power before Gentile kings and kingdoms, showing that He is sovereign over all nations, not just His chosen nation. Daniel’s ministry in Babylon spans at least 70 years. During that time he watches the reins of power pass from Babylon (Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar) to Media (Darius) to Persia (Cyrus), culminating in the invitation by Cyrus for the Jews to return to their homeland and rebuild their city and temple. Today’s section contains three familiar incidents from Daniel’s life: his early days in the king’s service, his interpretations of the king’s dream, and his three friends in the fiery furnace.

YOUR DAILY WALK Three times in the book, Daniel is described as “highly esteemed.” His life abounds with examples of godly behavior and outstanding character traits. As you begin your reading, start a notebook of “Godly Traits in Daniel’s Life.” List them day by day, and jot down ideas on how to build them into your own life.

*True godliness
is what breeds
the quarrel
between God’s
children and
the wicked.*

INSIGHT *Three Strikes and You’re Out!*
The books of Daniel and Ezekiel take place during the Babylonian Exile, the 70-year period of Jewish captivity and “transplanting” to Babylon after the destruction of Jerusalem. Actually, the downfall of Jerusalem came in three stages. In 605 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar overpowered the city and took back choice hostages, among them Daniel and his three friends (Daniel 1:1-6). In 597 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar returned to quell a rebellion; he then took 10,000 more captives, among them King Jehoiachin and the young prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:1-3; 2 Kings 24:8-20). Finally, in 586 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar besieged the city, destroyed the temple, and reduced the Jewish community to rubble (Jeremiah 52:1-11).

Daniel's Faith in the Lions' Den

Key Passage: Daniel 6

CHAPTER 4	CHAPTER 5	CHAPTER 6
Disciplined in the Pasture	Weighed in the Balance	Protected in the Lions' Den
Nebuchadnezzar	Belshazzar	Daniel

OVERVIEW Today's section shows the sovereignty of the God of Israel in the affairs of people and nations. Because of Nebuchadnezzar's great pride, he is "put out to pasture" to live like the cattle of the field. When his reason returns to him, he voices a testimony of praise to the One who is God of heaven and earth. His grandson Belshazzar sees the hand of God (literally!) in a different way. In the midst of a drunken feast, God's finger writes Belshazzar's death sentence on the palace wall. That very night, Darius conquers Belshazzar and the kingdom of Babylon falls. During the reign of Darius, God displays His power of protection in Daniel's life by shutting the lions' mouths.

YOUR DAILY WALK The little girl was only weeks old when she contracted an eye disease. Her parents took her to a physician, and in the process of treatment the doctor accidentally prescribed the wrong medication. As a result, the girl became permanently blind. Yet in spite of her blindness, she composed more than 8,000 hymns during her lifetime.

Toward the end of Fanny Crosby's life, a friend asked, "Do you ever feel any bitterness toward the doctor?" She replied, "No, it may have been a mistake on the doctor's part, but not on God's part." Fanny Crosby's God was the God of Daniel—the God in perfect control of all things in heaven and earth.

Is Daniel's God your God? Do you have that same confidence in a sovereign Lord that sustained Fanny Crosby? Find a hymnal, turn to the author index, and select two or three hymns written by Fanny Crosby. Then prayerfully read some of the stanzas penned by a woman of God whose faith was unshakable. Does this testimony of praise express what is on your heart?

*God grants
with each
burden the
strength
to bear
it—seldom
more, never
less.*

INSIGHT Not a Seal of Approval

Darius and his lords sealed the lions' pit, which was to have been Daniel's tomb, to prevent outside interference. Hundreds of years later Pilate also sealed a tomb to prevent human interference with Jesus' body. But a mere earthly king's seal cannot stop the power of Almighty God.

Beasts, Kings, and 70 Weeks

Key Passage: Daniel 9

CHAPTER 7	CHAPTER 8	CHAPTER 9
The Lion, Bear, Leopard, and Beast	The Ram, Goat, and Little Horn	The Prayer, Angel, and Explanation
Daniel's Vision: History Foretold		

OVERVIEW Today's section contains prophecies of breathtaking scope. Interestingly, much of what Daniel prophesied is explained right in the passage. Watch for keys to the interpretations of the various beasts and animals as you read through these chapters. Chapter 9 is a record of Daniel's prayer for himself and his countrymen, based on the truth he encountered while reading the prophecy of Jeremiah. In response to Daniel's prayer, God sends the angel Gabriel to give Daniel added insight into coming events.

YOUR DAILY WALK One night a soldier was caught creeping back to his quarters from the nearby woods. Taken before his commanding officer, the soldier was charged with communicating with the enemy. The man pleaded that he had gone into the woods to pray alone. "Then you'd better start praying now!" roared the officer. "You've never needed it so much!" Expecting certain death, the soldier knelt and poured out his soul in eloquent prayer. "You may go," said the officer when the soldier had finished. "I believe your story. If you hadn't drilled so often, you wouldn't be doing so well under fire."

How well do you pray "on the spot"? Have you learned through practice and persistence to communicate often with your Heavenly Father? Standing side by side with Daniel's confidence in God was his communication with God. The two are inseparable, for to trust God is to talk to Him, and to talk to God is to trust Him all the more.

How often have you talked to God in the last 24 hours? If the answer discourages you, try this. Tape the words "Pray Now" to the face of your watch or to your phone. Then, as often as you are reminded, talk to your Heavenly Father. You'll find your love for Him and your trust in Him growing with each passing hour.

INSIGHT *Correlating the Creatures of Chapters 7-8*

It may help you in your reading of chapters 7-8 to remember that the leopard and the goat represent Greece, while the bear and the ram represent Medo-Persia.

*Does your
life affirm
the reality
of your God,
or refute it?*

Previews of Israel’s Future

Key Passage: Daniel 12

CHAPTER 10	CHAPTER 11	CHAPTER 12
Daniel’s Prayer and an Angel’s Visit	Persia and Greece in Israel’s Future	Punishment and Reward in Israel’s Future
Preparation	Prophecy	Preview

OVERVIEW You may find comfort in knowing even Daniel didn’t understand everything that was revealed to him in his visions (12:8). (While you’re at it, glance at 2 Peter 3:15-16 and notice that Peter had the same trouble with some of Paul’s writings.) Don’t be overly concerned about the parts of today’s reading you don’t understand. Instead, like Daniel, worry about the parts you do understand! In Daniel’s final visions he sees a titanic struggle between kings from the south and north vying for control of “the Beautiful Land” (11:41) in a climactic “time of distress” (12:1). Though the final chapter of world history is not revealed to Daniel (12:9), the outcome is sure: purifying judgment.

YOUR DAILY WALK It does seem strange, but Daniel—God’s great prophetic mouthpiece during the exile—probably knew less about his visions than you do.

Looking back over the course of history as it has transpired, with the great world powers all carefully documented by secular historians and archaeologists, you can match leaders and nations with parts of Daniel’s visions in a way that Daniel never dreamed possible. Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome—much of their history was foretold centuries before from the mouth of a godly government servant in Babylon.

Add to that the additional insight of the New Testament, and you have a sharper picture of the future course of this world than did any Old Testament prophet. What a responsibility—to “correctly [handle] the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

INSIGHT *Final Score: Daniel—100, Critics—0*
Chapter 11 contains more than 100 specific prophecies of historical events that literally came true. It is little wonder that some critics attempt to place Daniel 200 years later in order to undermine the miraculous character of his prophecies.

No biblical subject matter holds more practical implications than prophecy.

TRUSTING WITH THE

Heart of a Child

Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel—in all circumstances, these men trusted God as a child trusts in a loving father.

Funny how God doesn't look for flamboyant lifestyles accented with bells and whistles. He doesn't look for those who are successful and self-sufficient. He looks for the one who will acknowledge his or her sin and repent of it. He looks for the person who will come with the faith of a little child, believing that only Jesus can save from sin.

The final criterion God will use when we stand before Him is not appearance, material wealth, or worldly success. He will get right to the heart of the matter: "Have you acknowledged that you are a sinful person who has fallen short of My standard? Have you accepted Christ's work on your behalf? Have you trusted in Jesus as your Savior?"

The Bible describes this step of faith: "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. . . . Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:9-10; 13).

To belong to God's family, you must, by faith, personally accept Jesus Christ as your Savior. So whether you're 5 or 95, or any age in between, you can come to God with the believing heart of a little child. There's no other way.

If you want to begin a personal relationship with Jesus, call 1-888-NeedHim.