



Jeremiah 34-45

Study written by Holli Worthington

Day 1-

Pray: Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you and help you understand God's word (Ps. 25:5). Ask him to open your eyes to see God as he has revealed himself in his word (Ps. 119:18) and to soften your heart so that you will be satisfied by his love (Ps. 90:14) and treasure him above all else.

Read: Jeremiah 34-45 (You might want to listen to this on YouVersion Bible app in the NLT)

Day 2- Jeremiah 34-35

Chapters 34 and 35 are about two contrasting stories—one of selfish disobedience and the other of faithful obedience.

1. When God brought his people out of slavery in Egypt and made a covenant with them, what did he command his people to do according to 34:13-16?

-How did the people respond to the command according to 34:15-17a?



The Rechabites were a clan descended from Jonadab (or Jehonadab) who, a couple hundred years earlier had helped Jehu purge the Northern kingdom of Judah from Baal worship (2 Kings 10). For reasons not explained Jonadab and his tribe adopted a rather austere nomadic way of living out their faith. His descendants carried on that lifestyle living separately from mainline culture.

2. In 35:1-2 God directs Jeremiah to act out another scene in order to deliver his message. What is Jeremiah to do this time?

3. What did the Rechabite's ancestor, Jonadab, command them to do according to 35:6-7?

-How did the Rechabites respond to the command according to 35:8-10?

4. What is the result of the Rechabites obedience according to 35:18-19?

5. What was the purpose of this acted out prophecy according to 35:13-14?

Scholar's Note: "There is no comment at all on the rights or wrongs of the Rechabites' way of life. It is neither commended nor denounced in itself. The text is not written to set the Rechabites before us as a model to emulate – either in their rejection of cities and agriculture or in their refusal to drink wine...The lesson lies solely in the contrast between their unflinching commitment to obedience to the rule laid down by their human ancestor, and Judah's casual and careless disobedience to the covenant established by their God."¹



In verses 13 and 14 of chapter 35 we see the purpose of Jeremiah's acted out prophecy when God says, "*Come and learn a lesson about how to obey me.*" (NLT) The Rechabites honored and revered their ancestor, who was a mere human, by obeying him almost two centuries after he lived. As opposed to the people of Judah who disobeyed their creator and king— their covenant God—because they loved themselves significantly more than they loved him.

- ❖ What areas of disobedience do you struggle with?
- ❖ What attitudes about God are revealed in your heart when you are disobedient?
- ❖ 1 John 5:3 says, "*For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.*" Jesus says

in John 14:21a, “Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me...” How does knowing that obedience and love are linked give you insight into your life with God?

- ❖ When you fail to be obedient, how does it help your heart to remember that Jesus was perfectly obedient in thought, motive and actions and if you have trusted him as your Savior, his perfect record of obedience is credited to you?

- ❖ God held up faithful, obedient people as an example to inspire and spur his disobedient people to obedience. Who in your life can you look to as an inspiring example of a faithful, obedient Christian? (John Piper recommends reading books about faithful Christians of the past and present in order to help stir up our own affection and obedience for God. Consider incorporating some of these stories of heroes of the faith into your reading selections: George Mueller, Charles Spurgeon, Nate Saint, Elisabeth Elliott.)

Day 3- Jeremiah 36 and 45

From chapters 34 and 35, where the complete destruction of Jerusalem was imminent, we go back in time several years to the reign of Jehoiakim.

6. What did God instruct Jeremiah to do in 36:2?

-How comprehensive was this task to be?

-What was the purpose of this task according to 36:3?

8. Describe all that Jeremiah asked Baruch to do according to 36:4-8.

Scholar's Note: "Baruch belonged to a family that was high in the king's service. He was the brother of Seraiah, a staff officer of the royal family (51: 59). For that reason he had access to the kind of inner government circles that had rooms in the temple complex (10) and in the royal palace (12– 15). He was also an educated man and a professional scribe, trained for the kind of work described here and in chapter 32. And he had chosen to serve Jeremiah – a decision that was politically dangerous."²

7. Approximately nine months later, Baruch had finished his task and read the words of the LORD to all the "pious" people who had come to Jerusalem to proclaim a fast before God. We see only one person named Micaiah responding to the reading. What was his response according to 36:11-13?

8. How did the second group of listeners respond when Baruch read them the scroll according to 36:15-19?

9. According to 36:23-26, describe exactly how the king responded when he was read the scroll.

-How would you interpret this kind of reaction?



In this chapter of Jeremiah we see three kinds of responses to God's word—an apparent no response from the so-called church people, a response of fear and action from the officials, and from the king and his servants a foolish lack of fear and humility along with a defiant and shockingly deliberate attempt to obliterate God's word.

God's word is living and active (Heb. 4:12) and demands a response. Biblical commentator Ray C. Ortland Jr. has said that every time someone hears the word of God and doesn't respond, their heart grows a little harder.³ To not respond in humility and repentance is to respond in hardhearted rejection.

- ❖ Good advice: “Strive as much as possible not to walk away from God’s word without having at least one truth move your affections.”⁴ What else can you do in your personal Bible reading time and when you hear the word of God preached and taught to help make sure you do not leave those times completely unaffected?

- ❖ We are so spoiled with the availability we have to God’s word that it is easy for us to take it for granted, but spend a minute marveling at the fact that we have God’s very words of self-revelation written down in a book that he has preserved throughout thousands of years so that we could read it and know him.

- ❖ If you have not yet responded to God’s loving call, put forth in his word, to turn from your sins and come to him for forgiveness and salvation, please don’t risk another layer of hardness taking over your heart; humble yourself now and respond to God’s merciful hand reaching out to you.

Picture and Ponder: “This is a rare insight into the earliest processes that led to us having a Bible at all. Here is scripture in the making...The message of Jeremiah’s words, and its authority as God’s word, will not depend on the living presence of the human spokesperson, but will be transferred and carried by the written word, the scriptures – written, copied, translated and read within the community of faith. The Bible is God’s idea – not just the human construct of religious people preserving their sacred writings for posterity... Even kings and bonfires cannot stop it.”⁵

10. According to 36:32 Baruch rewrote the entire scroll again- plus some. Jump ahead to chapter 45 where we see Baruch suffering as he had to relive word by word the terrible judgment of God that was coming to his friends, family and to his homeland. In 45:4 God then compares his pain to Baruch’s. (the *I* in verse 4 is emphasized in the Hebrew) Why do you think God’s pain was more acute than Baruch’s?



“Baruch came from an influential family of noble birth. He was the grandson of Mahseiah (cf. 32:12), governor of Jerusalem in Josiah's reign (cf. 2 Chronicles 34:8). His brother had been chief chamberlain in the court of Zedekiah (cf. 51:59).”⁶ It seems that Baruch may have had some ambition for himself, and who can fault him coming from his high achieving family. But God apparently did. God told him to stop seeking great things for himself (45:5). God wanted him to look at his ambition in light of God’s redemptive plan for humankind. Baruch didn’t realize it, but as a mere scribe or secretary he was serving God’s eternal purposes even if it didn’t seem like it at the time. Reflect on these Scriptures:

Mark 10:43-44 “But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.”

Matthew 10:42 “And if you give even a cup of cold water to one of the least of my followers, you will surely be rewarded.”(NLT)

1 Corinthians 12:22-27 “In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually the most necessary. And the parts we regard as less honorable are those we clothe with the greatest care. So we carefully protect those parts that should not be seen, while the more honorable parts do not require this special care. So God has put the body together such that extra honor and care are given to those parts that have less dignity. This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other. If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad. All of you together are Christ’s body, and each of you is a part of it.”(NLT)

Psalms 115:1 “Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!”

- ❖ Have you considered that serving God in what may seem like a small way is vital to the body of Christ?

- ❖ Do you tend to look at your service to God as an isolated act or as part of God’s bigger picture? What are some possible ways God might use your service to him in his grand plan of redemption?

- ❖ How does contemplating the fact that Jesus left the glory of heaven to come to earth as a servant and lay down his life for you, help you serve others sacrificially?

Day 4- Jeremiah 37-39



Nebuchadnezzar installed King Zedekiah on the throne after he had deported the true king- Jehoiachin to Babylon. Zedekiah was constantly vacillating back and forth between loyalty to Babylon or Jerusalem. His fear, indecision, and ultimately not trusting God's word cost him his life.

11. What evidence do you see that Zedekiah's interest in God and his word is only superficial and self-serving? (Notice all the contradictions)

(37:2-3)-

(37:17-18, 21) (38:5,10)-

(38:14-20) (39:1-10)-

For Discussion: In what ways do you see a superficial interest in God happening in our culture?



As you reflect on your own life do you see any areas where your walk with God is superficial?



Zedekiah hedged all his bets and covered all his bases, trying to be in everyone's good graces. He was afraid and desperately trying to preserve his life, but ultimately fear of man won out over fear of God and it cost him his life. Instead of trusting in God, he trusted his own foolish plans of how best to go about surviving the Babylonians. He was afraid of surrendering like God had told him to do because he was afraid of his own people and how they would deal with him. His worst fears paled in comparison to what finally happened when he refused to obey God.

We can be just like Zedekiah. So afraid of certain outcomes that we manipulate, and orchestrate to avoid our fears instead of keeping our eyes on God, trusting and following him, and letting him be in charge of the outcome.

- ❖ Think back to a time when you found yourself manipulating or orchestrating a situation; what was it you were hoping in or what were you worshipping at that moment?

- ❖ Proverbs 29:25 says, “The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe.” When we live for the approval of others, fear their rejection, are controlled by their expectations, when they “make” us feel jealous, insecure, or anxious this is what the Bible calls *fear of man*. What truths about God will help you combat the *fear of man*?

- ❖ Jesus said, “...whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake, will save it.” (Luke 9:24) God’s ways so often go against our own logic. When we lay down our fears, desires, reputation, or whatever it is we are desperately trying to preserve, at Jesus’ feet, it feels so risky, but in reality why is it the safest place for them?

12. Why did the officials beat and imprison Jeremiah according to 37:13-15?

13. How did Jeremiah show uncommon courage in 37:16-17?

14. After Zedekiah has Jeremiah moved from the dungeon, where he was first imprisoned, to the court of the guard where Jeremiah continued to speak the word of the Lord, he was taken yet again, this time to be executed by a slow agonizing death. Why did the officials want Jeremiah dead according to 38:1-4?

15. Ebed-melech rescued Jeremiah from the mud filled cistern where Jeremiah would have died (38:7-13). In 39:18 we are shown the substance of Ebed-melech's resourceful rescue operation and the reason he was rewarded. Why did God save Ebed-melech?

Day 5- Jeremiah 40-45 (No reflecting on a theme this week—too many chapters to cover!)

16. The final siege lasted for 18 months; now all Jeremiah's words have come to pass and Jerusalem is utterly destroyed. What happens to Jeremiah according to 40:1-6?

Scholar's Note: King Nebuchadnezzar appoints Gedaliah as governor over the completely conquered territory of Judah. Gedaliah was from a godly family who has faithfully supported Jeremiah. We have already seen his family members Ahikam, in chapter 26, who saved Jeremiah from being killed, and Gemariah, in chapter 36, who tried to stop King Jehoiakim from burning the scrolls.

17. In chapter 41 we see Gedaliah murdered by Ishmael who was an extended part of the royal family and a royal officer. Ishmael takes captive the people who are left in the land, including Jeremiah. Then the people are rescued by Johanan who decides to take them all to Egypt because of the havoc that Ishmael caused by murdering Gedaliah. Before they go what do they do according to 42:1-4?

-What are their intentions according to 42:5-6?

-What is God's answer in 42:9-10?

-How is God's mercy and complete sovereignty shown to his people in 42:10-12?

17. What are your thoughts about how the people responded in 43:1-7 to God's answer to their prayer?

18. The remnant that refused to trust and obey God and stay put in Judah, settled in Egypt, made their lives there and soon spread out to at least four areas (44:1). Here in 44:2-14 Jeremiah makes his last prophecy which sounds all too familiar. Even as they are experiencing the consequences of their sin at that very moment as fugitives in Egypt, what shocking reply do the people give in 44:16-17?

Digging Deeper: Read the following verses:

Romans 1:18, 21-24 "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth...For although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him but they became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen."

-How do Paul's words in Romans help explain the irrational choices of the remnant who disobeyed God and settled in Egypt and worshiped idols even though they had seen God's judgment of sin in Judah?

¹ Wright, Christopher J. H. The Message of Jeremiah (The Bible Speaks Today Series) (p. 365). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.

² Ibid.

³ Ortland, Ray C. Jr. Isaiah God Saves Sinners (Preaching the Word Series) General Editor R. Kent Hughes, Crossway Books

⁴ Ware, Bruce "Advice For Another Year of Bible Reading", Jan. 2016

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/advice-for-another-year-of-bible-reading>

⁵ Wright, Christopher J. H. The Message of Jeremiah (The Bible Speaks Today Series) (p. 365). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.

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