



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

**JEREMIAH 34-52,
LAMENTATIONS
AND OBADIAH**

Week 1

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Before You Begin Your Journey...

In today's world, we value options. We like to think that anyone, regardless of the circumstances into which they were born, can become what they want to be. No one should have to be stuck for life in an undesirable circumstance. No matter how bad things may seem, given enough resourcefulness, determination and hard work, anyone should be able to turn things around and fulfill their dreams.

This concept stems from the ideals of freedom and equal opportunity that we hold dear in the Western world. We have laws that level the ground for the disadvantaged. We offer scholarships and financial help to open the options for those who would otherwise be limited. We want to insure that everyone has choices, options and opportunities.

In the ancient world, things were much different. Options and opportunities were not as plentiful as they are today. Kings and nobles wielded absolute power. There were few life choices available to the common citizen or slave—even fewer in times of national crisis such as the one described in the latter chapters of the book of Jeremiah.

The nation of Judah had exhausted its options. As time closed in on them, their choices narrowed to captivity or death. We will read how some, feeling boxed in, tried to exercise other options, but to no avail. God counseled the people through Jeremiah to accept their state of affairs, to settle down and make the most of their captivity.

While this situation may seem remote and implausible for most of us today, we are not strangers to limited options.

There come times in each of our lives when our options narrow. We feel boxed in. We must accept the circumstances that life has handed us. We are simply forced to “deal with it.”

This narrowing of options may be because of sin or poor decisions we have made. It may be lack of planning or foresight on our part. Perhaps we missed opportunities because we did not take advantage of certain choices while there were available to us. Or we may be paying the penalty for someone else’s mistake. Or a combination of circumstances may be working against us.

Whatever the reasons for our particular *cul de sac*, God counsels us to place our trust in him. At these difficult and crucial points in our lives, we come face to face with the fact that God is ultimately our only viable option.

In the books of Jeremiah, Lamentations and Obadiah, we read of the doom that God had decreed for these ancient people who had exhausted their options because of sin. Yet in each of these books there is the bright ray of hope. In Lamentations 3:25-26 we read, “The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.”

As Christians, our salvation and hope come to us through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. May we learn to wait quietly for him when our other options seem to have disappeared.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Greg Albrecht". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends across the width of the name.

Greg Albrecht
President, Plain Truth Ministries

How to Use the CWR Bible Survey...

1—Read and study at your own pace. This is a devotional. It is designed to help you consider and ponder the great truths of God’s written revelation. It is designed to help you worship and come to know God. We plan to cover the entire Bible in 43 volumes, and while that sounds like a long time, don’t be in a hurry. Take your time! Even though each volume is divided into bite-size daily lessons, you may want to take two days on each “daily” lesson.

2—We suggest you set aside a special time for the *CWR Bible Survey* every day. We recommend allowing 30-45 minutes, but even if you can only spare 15 minutes, try to make it part of your regular schedule. You will find that the *CWR Bible Survey* will be an invaluable resource for facing your daily challenges.

3—You will need a good Bible. This might be an excellent time for you to consider purchasing a study Bible. Plain Truth Ministries has reviewed many of the study Bibles that are available, and in cooperation with Thomas Nelson and Zondervan, we are pleased to be able to offer two superb study Bibles that will be an excellent resource and help to you. Please see the back pages of this book for more details.

4—Always read the assigned passage of the daily lesson in your Bible first. Each daily lesson builds upon the portion of the Bible being covered that day. You may want to begin by praying about what God has in store for you as you read, and then look at the questions and background information.

5—Consider the format of each daily lesson. Almost every daily lesson will include:

- **Opening Up to the Word** —a section designed to help you open your mind to the teaching God has inspired.
- **Digging Into the Word**—this section will encourage you to get your nose into the Bible and think deeply about what it says.
- **Living Out the Word**—here you will be challenged to consider the practical implications for your life. How does this passage help you live?

• **Window On the Word**—will offer key insights to help you more clearly understand the daily Bible passage.

6—After you finish the daily lesson, take some quiet time. You may simply think, look out the window, take a walk, or even get down on your knees. But use this time to let this daily lesson sink in. Ask God to show you what he wants you to understand from your reading and study.

7—Consider the *CWR Bible Survey* for small groups in which you may be involved. Tell your friends about it. If you are involved in a small group that meets for prayer and Bible study, introduce your group to it. Many are seeking an easy-to-read guide to help them understand the Bible and to help them know God. The *CWR Bible Survey* can do that!

• **Abbreviations Used in the *CWR Bible Survey***—

Genesis	Ge	Nahum	Na
Exodus	Ex	Habakkuk	Hab
Leviticus	Lev	Zephaniah	Zep
Numbers	Nu	Haggai	Hag
Deuteronomy	Dt	Zechariah	Zec
Joshua	Jos	Malachi	Mal
Judges	Jdg	Matthew	Mt
Ruth	Ru	Mark	Mk
1 Samuel	1Sa	Luke	Lk
2 Samuel	2Sa	John	Jn
1 Kings	1Ki	Acts	Ac
2 Kings	2Ki	Romans	Ro
1 Chronicles	1Ch	1 Corinthians	1Co
2 Chronicles	2Ch	2 Corinthians	2Co
Ezra	Ezr	Galatians	Gal
Nehemiah	Ne	Ephesians	Eph
Esther	Est	Philippians	Php
Job	Job	Colossians	Col
Psalms	Ps	1 Thessalonians	1Th
Proverbs	Pr	2 Thessalonians	2Th
Ecclesiastes	Ecc	1 Timothy	1Ti
Song of Songs	SS	2 Timothy	2Ti
Isaiah	Isa	Titus	Tit
Jeremiah	Jer	Philemon	Phm
Lamentations	La	Hebrews	Heb
Ezekiel	Eze	James	Jas
Daniel	Da	1 Peter	1Pe
Hosea	Hos	2 Peter	2Pe
Joel	Joel	1 John	1Jn
Amos	Am	2 John	2Jn
Obadiah	Ob	3 John	3Jn
Jonah	Jnh	Jude	Jude
Micah	Mic	Revelation	Rev

JEREMIAH 34-52, LAMENTATIONS AND OBADIAH

Prophets of Doom
Prophets of Hope

Introduction to Jeremiah 34-52

See the background for the book of Jeremiah in volume 29 of *CWR Bible Survey*.

In this last portion, the siege and fall of Jerusalem is prophesied. To try to escape imminent judgment, the nation of Judah seeks protection from Egypt rather than repenting and asking God for his protection. Though many nations will rejoice when Judah falls, their own punishment is also sure. Finally, even Babylon, the great and powerful empire, will receive her judgment from God through the Medes and Persians.

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- E. Deep Conversations, 38
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II. THE FALL OF JERUSALEM, 41-45

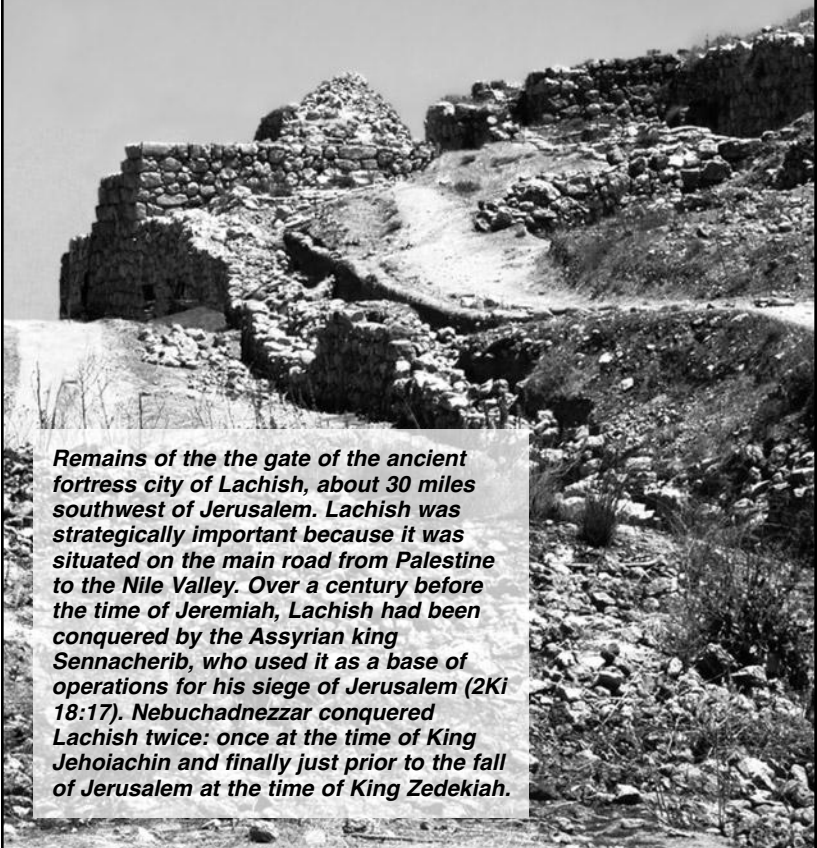
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“Then Jeremiah the prophet told all this to Zedekiah king of Judah, in Jerusalem, while the army of the king of Babylon was fighting against Jerusalem and the other cities of Judah that were still holding out—Lachish and Azekah. These were the only fortified cities left in Judah.”

Jeremiah 34:6-7



Remains of the the gate of the ancient fortress city of Lachish, about 30 miles southwest of Jerusalem. Lachish was strategically important because it was situated on the main road from Palestine to the Nile Valley. Over a century before the time of Jeremiah, Lachish had been conquered by the Assyrian king Sennacherib, who used it as a base of operations for his siege of Jerusalem (2Ki 18:17). Nebuchadnezzar conquered Lachish twice: once at the time of King Jehoiachin and finally just prior to the fall of Jerusalem at the time of King Zedekiah.

Repenting of Repentance

DAY 1

Jeremiah 34

Have you ever felt sorry for the way you treated someone and then apologized, only to later wish you hadn't? Why did you have a change of heart?

1. What special message did Jeremiah receive for King Zedekiah (vs. 2-3)?
2. What two Judean cities were still holding out against the Babylonian armies (vs. 6-7)?
3. Zedekiah made a covenant with the people of Judah (vs. 8-9) to: (a) free everyone of their debts, (b) free everyone of their taxes, (c) free all of their Hebrew slaves, (d) free all their animals.
4. Because Judah failed to follow through with the pledge, what did God proclaim they were now free in his eyes to do (v. 17)?

1. Repentance means to change both your heart and your mind. What have you repented of recently?
2. Have there been moments when you were tempted to take back your change of heart and mind?
3. Of the behaviors you needed to change when you repented, which one was the most difficult to maintain?

***“Proclaim freedom for the slaves”** (v. 8). Hebrew law required that a Jewish slave be released after working for six years (Ex 21:2-6; Dt 15:12-18), but the Jews had been neglecting this law. The people, whether through genuine religious conviction or a less noble motivation (no longer having to feed slaves) made a solemn covenant with God in the Temple to free them. The slaves were freed, and God sent the Babylonians away to fight the Egyptians. After the Babylonians left, the Jews felt the danger was over and forced their former slaves back into servitude. God condemned this two-faced repentance.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

Keeping a Legacy of Faithfulness

Jeremiah 35

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you ever made a promise to a parent, or to yourself, that you have never broken? What was the promise?

DIGGING
into the Word

- 1.** Who was Jeremiah instructed by God to invite into the Temple (v. 2)?
 - 2.** What was Jeremiah told to offer the family (v. 2)? (a) money, (b) wine, (c) sanctuary, (d) safety.
 - 3.** What was the Recabite family tradition, and who started it (v. 6)?
 - 4.** The Recabites not only promised to avoid wine, but other things as well. What were they (v. 7)?
 - 5.** What was God trying to teach Judah through this family (vs. 12-17)?
-

LIVING
out the Word

- 1.** Do you or your family also have a legacy of faithfulness to God?
 - 2.** Does your family have a special tradition, that goes above and beyond the commands of Scripture? What is it? How did it begin?
 - 3.** Do you feel the need to begin a tradition of abstinence in some area? How might it help you or your family, and how might it glorify the Lord?
-

WINDOW
on the Word

***The Recabites** (v. 2) were a nomadic clan descended from Jonadab, son of Recab. He was known for assisting Jehu in halting Baal worship in Israel (2Ki 10:15-27). Apparently, Jonadab rejected a settled home for a nomadic lifestyle and vowed to abstain from alcohol. He instructed his family to follow his example, and they all remained obedient to his instructions down through the generations. Unlike most of Judah, they had been faithful to their traditions.*

“Then I set bowls full of wine and some cups before the men of the Recabite family and said to them ‘Drink some wine.’ But they replied, ‘We do not drink wine, because our forefather Jonadab son of Recab gave us this command: “Neither you nor your descendants must ever drink wine.”””

Jeremiah 35:5-6

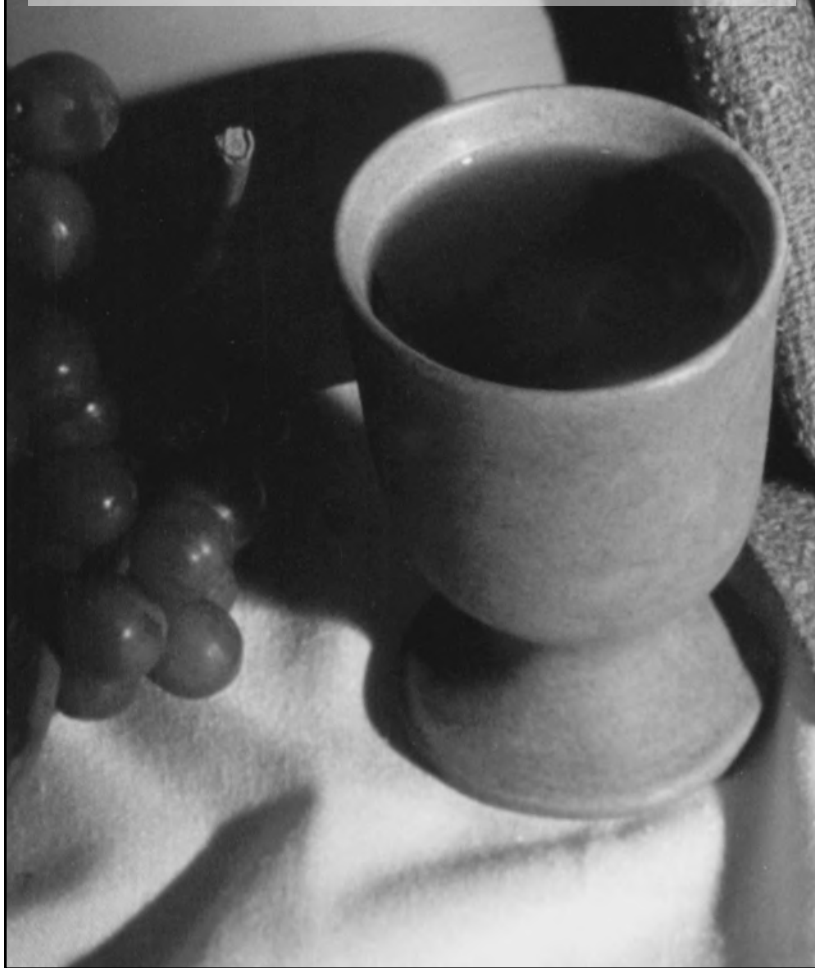
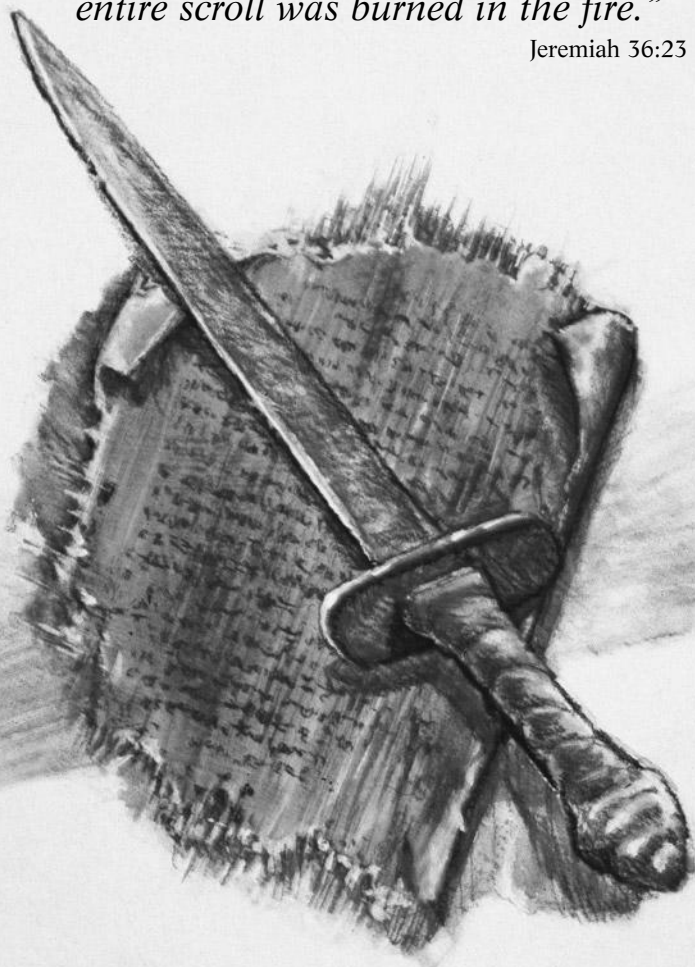


Photo by Barry Stahl—PTM

“Whenever Jehudi had read three or four columns of the scroll, the king cut them off with a scribe’s knife and threw them into the firepot, until the entire scroll was burned in the fire.”

Jeremiah 36:23



Unwelcome News

DAY 3

Jeremiah 36

What is some unwelcome news you have received recently?

1. Why did God want Jeremiah to write down all the words of judgment he had spoken against Judah (v. 3)?
 2. Who was Jeremiah's secretary (v. 4)?
 3. Why couldn't Jeremiah take the scroll and read it in the Temple himself (v. 5)?
 4. After Baruch read the words of the scrolls to the officials, what did they tell him to do (v. 19)?
 5. What was King Jehoiakim's reaction when the scroll was read to him (v. 23)?
-

1. Has anyone ever tried to tell you something about yourself that you found unwelcome?
2. Did you become upset only at the message, or also at the messenger?
3. As you reflect back on that time, do you have any regrets about how you responded?

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

DAY 4

A Prophet's Life

Jeremiah 37

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you ever been misunderstood, when you tried to share God's truth with someone who wasn't receptive to it?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Who made Zedekiah king of Judah (v. 1)? (a) his father, (b) the people, (c) the priests and prophets, (d) Nebuchadnezzar.

2. What request did Zedekiah make of Jeremiah (v. 3)?

3. Though the Babylonians temporarily lifted the siege of Jerusalem, who did Jeremiah say could fulfill God's prophecy and burn the city (vs. 9-10)?

4. What action of Jeremiah (vs. 11-15) was misunderstood and led to his arrest and imprisonment?

5. How did Jeremiah point out the fickle nature of the other prophets to King Zedekiah (v. 19)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. How is your mission as a Christian similar to Jeremiah's mission?

2. In what ways have your motivations been challenged or misunderstood? How did you feel when that happened?

3. How has God encouraged you in the midst of misunderstandings and persecution?

WINDOW
on the Word

***"Zedekiah...was made king of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar"** (v. 1) after pledging his loyalty. Jehoiakim's son Coniah was in line to become king, but reigned only three months and ten days, until Nebuchadnezzar deported him. Zedekiah was the brother of Jehoiakim.*

The Last Kings of Judah

Josiah

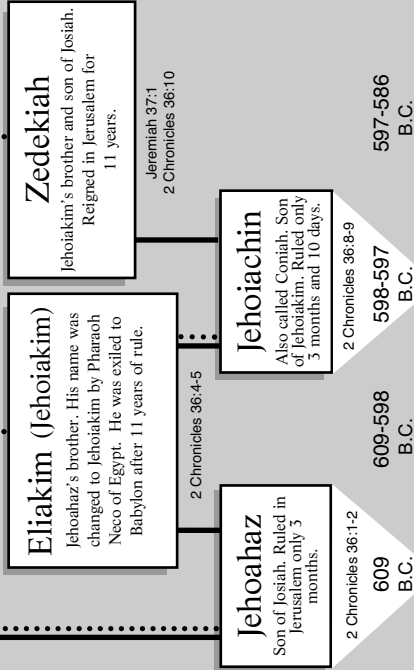
Josiah was 8 years old when he began his reign in Jerusalem. He reigned for 31 years.

2 Chronicles 34:1-2

KEY

— King Sequence
 Hereditary Line

During the reign of these last five kings, God sent prophets to Judah to deliver his message of repentance. It was after Josiah that these kings led God's people far from his commandments and ignored the prophets' warnings of destruction.



605 B.C. 586 B.C.

BABYLONIAN CONQUEST OF JUDAH

Deep Conversations

Jeremiah 38

OPENING
up to the Word

Sometimes people are attracted to Christianity, but are afraid of what others will think. Have you ever had a confidential conversation with someone about the Lord?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What was Jeremiah accused of doing by the officials of the king (v. 4)?
2. Was Jeremiah (v. 6) imprisoned in: (a) the Temple, (b) a cistern, (c) his home, (d) the king's courts?
3. Who was responsible for rescuing Jeremiah and how did he do it (vs. 7-13)?
4. Who was Zedekiah afraid of, and what was he afraid they might do (v. 19)?
5. What was Jeremiah to say when asked what he and the king talked about (vs. 24-26)?

LIVING
out the Word

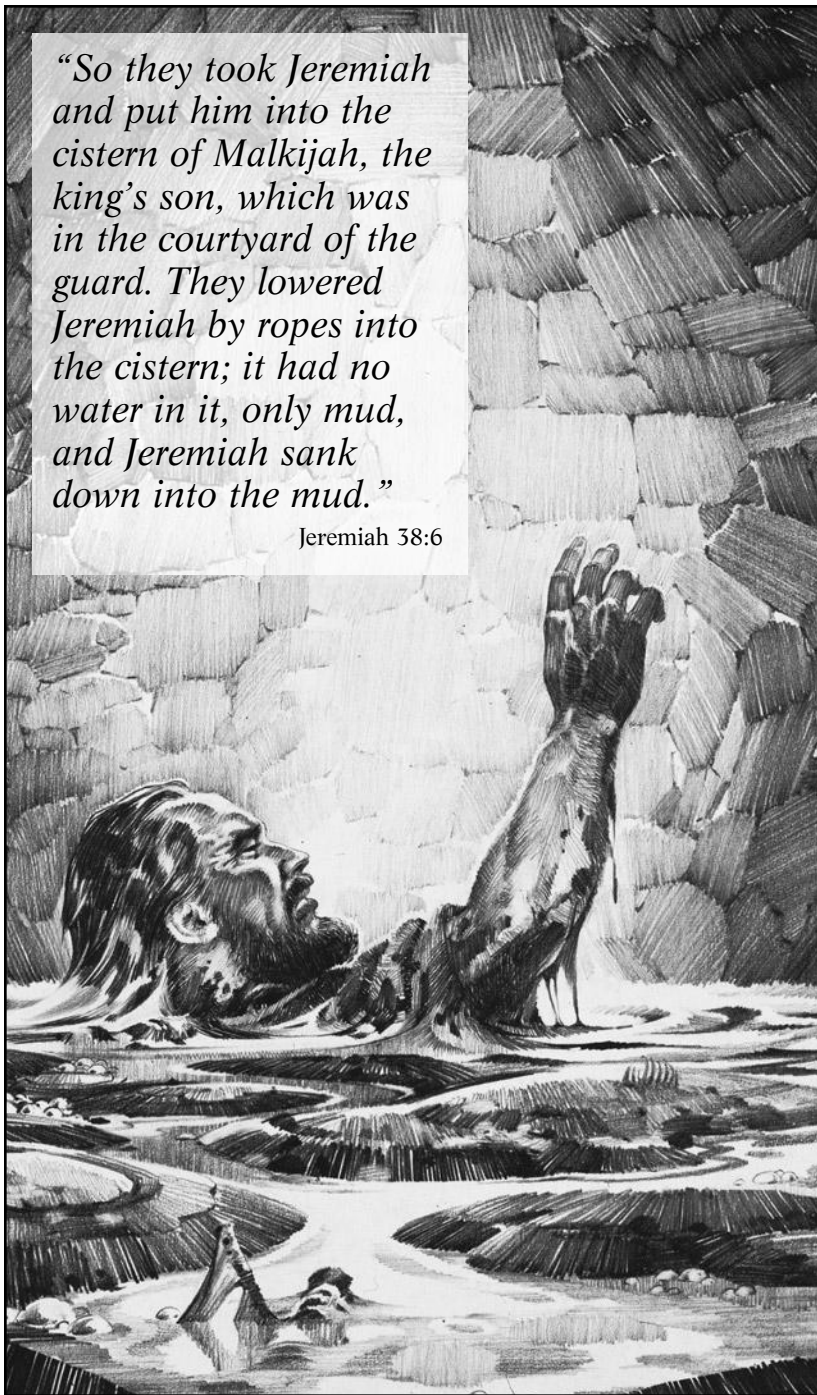
1. Have you ever spoken with someone who seemed to be embarrassed to be asking questions about your faith?
2. Why do you think some people are attracted to Christianity, yet embarrassed by it at the same time?
3. Was there any aspect of Christianity that embarrassed you before you became a Christian? What was it, and why do you think you were so embarrassed?

WINDOW
on the Word

***The Cistern of Malkijah** (v. 6), like other cisterns, was a large pit cut into rock and covered over. It was used to hold rainwater. The cistern Jeremiah was thrown into was empty, and only mud remained in the bottom.*

“So they took Jeremiah and put him into the cistern of Malkijah, the king’s son, which was in the courtyard of the guard. They lowered Jeremiah by ropes into the cistern; it had no water in it, only mud, and Jeremiah sank down into the mud.”

Jeremiah 38:6



Punishment and Protection

Jeremiah 39

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you ever experienced God's protection while others around you were left unprotected?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. In what year of King Zedekiah's reign (v. 2) did Nebuchadnezzar's forces break through Jerusalem's walls?
2. Why did the Babylonian officials take seats in the Middle Gate (v. 3)?
3. How did Nebuchadnezzar punish King Zedekiah (vs. 5-7)?
4. What orders were given by Nebuchadnezzar regarding Jeremiah the prophet (vs. 11-14)?
5. What promise did God give Ebed-Melech, and why (vs. 16-18)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. How has God protected you in the past, physically, mentally or emotionally, and why do you think he did it?
2. Have you ever had to bear the consequences of your sins even though you had repented? Can you discern God's mercy even in the midst of difficult times?

WINDOW
on the Word

The siege of Jerusalem lasted 18-30 months, though most commentators feel the siege was closer to 18 months. "Took seats in the Middle Gate" (v. 3). To be able to do this meant that the Babylonians were effectively in control of the city, since these were places of government. From these historic places of judgment they now ruled.

The Eye of the Storm

DAY 7

Jeremiah 40

Have you ever experienced the calm in the eye of a terrible storm?

1. Why do you think Jeremiah was taken captive, but later freed (v. 1)?
 2. Where did Jeremiah go when he was freed, and with whom did he stay (v. 6)?
 3. Who began to come to Gedaliah to find out what would become of them (vs. 7-8)? (a) the prophets, (b) former army officers, (c) Zedekiah's relatives, (d) the priests.
 4. Where had the Jews who returned to Gedaliah in Mizpah been scattered (v. 11)?
 5. Who was Ishmael, and why would he want to assassinate Gedaliah (v. 14)?
-

1. Have you ever been given preferential treatment because of your faith? What were the circumstances?
 2. Has anyone ever had it in for you—actively seeking to destroy your life, happiness or reputation?
 3. What do you think inspired them to oppose you so vehemently? Was it your faith?
 4. What aspect of our faith do you believe inspires the most opposition in people?
-

***Ishmael** (v. 5) was from the royal line of David and had served as one of Zedekiah's officers.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word