

2 KINGS 11:1–21

2 Kings 8:16–18, 25, 26; 2 Chronicles 22: 10 — 23:21

JOASH SAVED / JEHOIADA, FAITHFUL PRIEST

Story Notes

File no. 82

Athaliah became queen mother in the South. Her parents were King Ahab and Jezebel of the northern tribes but she alone was left of all her royal family. Jehu had killed her son, the king. Here in the South, she sought to grasp a throne for herself and Ahab's family by killing all her remaining sons who could inherit the throne in David's name. That is, she thought she had killed them all.

God had promised to bless the world through David's line. One of her stepdaughters had married the priest Jehoiada, and they rescued one son. God's promise was kept (2 Sam. 7:11; Ps. 89:36) and Solomon's prayer was heard (1 Kings 8:25). The lamp of David was not extinguished (1 Kings 11:36; Ps. 132:17).

When the son was old enough to be presented to the nation, Jehoiada staged a coup de etat. Surprise was gained by off duty soldiers joining those on duty, and coming to the temple unarmed as if to worship, and then being armed from an arsenal within the temple. Joash was crowned and given a copy of the covenant and proclaimed king to the acclaim of the nation. It appears that army commanders and priesthood, together with the people welcomed the restoration of covenant loyalty to Yahweh.

Athaliah and the house of Ahab were finished and Baalism had suffered a crushing blow. Young Joash had been given a crown but also 'the covenant', perhaps a copy of the Ten Commandments. His power was not his own but an expression of God's covenant with and kingship over his people. The covenants which the king and the nation made with God, and which the king made with his people, affirmed this. It would have been good for the young king Joash to have prayed the prayer of Psalm 73 at this time. He needed to live in the covenant grace by which he had been sealed in his kingship.

The well meaning but unwise alliance that Jehoshaphat had made with the North had had a sorry history, but had now been brought to an end.

Baalism was not finished however. It would recur in the reigns of Ahaz (2 Chron. 28:2) and Manasseh (2 Kings 21:3) in the South.

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JONAH 1:1 — 4:11

JONAH THE UNWILLING PROPHET / JONAH PREACHES IN NINEVEH

Story Notes

File no. 83

God was ready to announce his judgement on Nineveh. The evil of this capital city and the Assyrians was generally clear (Nahum 2:11–12; 3:1, 19).

However, the reason God announces or sends a judgment is to warn people so they can repent of their wrongdoing. 'Is a trumpet blown in a city, and the people are not afraid? ... The lion has roared; who will not fear? The Lord GOD has spoken; who can but prophesy?' (Amos 3:6–8). But Jonah was not ready to prophesy and he thought he could distance himself from the presence and mercy of the Lord.

Jonah certainly knew that Israel lived because of God's mercy, grace, steadfast love and faithfulness. He also knew that God would not acquit the guilty, that is, the guilty who refused to be warned (Exod. 34:6–7). As the story proceeds, it appears that what made Jonah fear was not the judgment of God on Nineveh. He wanted that! He feared that God would have mercy on them when they repented (4:2). Why would God send him if it were not so they could turn to him?

The pagan sailors showed more eagerness in placating their idols than Jonah did in declaring the living God. It was they who sought out the person responsible for the disaster and then showed mercy to Jonah as they worked hard to avoid throwing him overboard. But neither Jonah nor they could escape 'the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.' Jonah's small world was crumbling. He had witnessed the response of these sailors to the living God, and the smallness of his own heart. Now he encountered the water and a large fish.

The sailors had encountered Israel's covenant LORD. They pleaded to him for mercy for having to dispense such rough justice, and feared even more, and worshipped, when the storm ended. Their prayer had been heard by Israel's God.

Jonah 2

Jonah was God's servant to Nineveh, but here, he discovered the heart of the God who had called him. The Lord had interrupted his escapist cruise and taken him to death's door. The memory was vivid: the weeds, the waves, and not just of water but of the Lord's disfavour. He had been expelled from God's presence, and never expected to come before God again (at Jerusalem).

Many times, God's servants have felt abandoned by God (e.g. Ps. 42 and 69), sometimes for their sins and often because of oppression. It seems that the truth God wanted them to know or to proclaim, could not be discovered in an arm chair or proclaimed from one either. When Jesus came, he was made to feel the pain of being deserted by God, bearing our sins and sorrows in their fullness (Mark 15:34). The Son of God, who would bring the news of God's mercy to us, had to be rescued from such a fate himself. Jesus said the only sign that would be given to this evil generation would be his being in the depths of the earth, as Jonah had been in the belly of the whale (Matt. 12:39–41).

Psalm 69 is quoted several times in the New Testament. It anticipated the sufferings of Christ (v. 21).

A sign is always an intervention by God and so, most probably, refers to the resurrection. There was a tradition in Israel that the Ninevites had heard of the miraculous deliverance of Jonah making him a sign to them, just as Jesus would later be to Israel.

Jonah's life was ebbing away when he remembered the Lord and not just the Lord, but his mercy. Did he remember the Psalm: 'He restores my soul'? However, from his temple in Jerusalem, the Lord heard Jonah's cry.

JONAH THE UNWILLING PROPHET / JONAH PREACHES IN NINEVEH con't

Jonah now knew the vanity of idols, because the Lord had become his deliverer. Any thing less than the worship of the Lord was vanity for any human being. The Ninevites were idolaters, as were the sailors who had tried to save him, but Jonah had been no better than an idolater himself. Now, he knew first hand that the Lord was the living God. He was full of praise and ready to be about God's purpose, though, as we shall see, not yet fully reformed in heart.

Jonah 3 and 4

There is no other record of a prophet rejecting the Lord's word as Jonah had done, but the word of the Lord came to him a second time. This time, he went. He came to Nineveh and travelled from one side of the city to the other proclaiming God's word. Nineveh had only forty days before being overtaken by God's judgment.

Nineveh's repentance is unexplained. They heard it from one who knew it was impossible to escape from God. They heard it from someone who knew it was possible to cry out to God after being abandoned. Did he convey this to his hearers? Were they already fearful because of some threat? We will never know. But the Ninevites, from commoners to king, humbled themselves without reserve in hope of a reprieve. They were to turn from evil and from violence, the things that Israel found so abhorrent in these Assyrians.

God changed his mind as Jonah had feared, and the prophet prayed to God a second time, not now for mercy for himself, but in resentment and complaint over God's mercy for the Ninevites.

The story now focuses on Jonah and his anger with God. Did he have reason to be angry? God's change of mind was the revelation of his unchanging mercy. Jonah's anger was out of control as it settled into depression and the desire to die. His life had shrivelled to the point where all that mattered was the satisfaction of his anger and he retreated to a safe vantage point, perhaps hoping that God would still show some vengeance. He provided himself with some shade, and God even aided him with a quickly growing vine. But then, a worm destroyed the vine and his anger over this made him ready to die.

Jonah, like Cain, needed to master his sin (Gen. 4:6–7). He could rage over a vine that related to his personal comfort and not care at all for many of God's creatures. His life had become totally self-focused.

God had in mind not only the repentance of the nations, but also the reformation of his servant. Jonah had been taken to his own depths in order for grace to conform him to the image of God.

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AMOS 1:1; 4 — 8; 9:11–14

2 Kings 14:23–27; Hosea 6:4; 14:1–5

ISRAEL WOULD NOT LISTEN

Story Notes

File no. 84a

Power in the North changed to the third generation of the Jehu dynasty, Jeroboam II. His leadership was no more godly than any of his predecessors, but now, God had mercy on his people who had suffered for a long time. Assyria attacked Aram and weakened Israel's Northern enemy; then Assyria herself was preoccupied further North. All this happened according to the word of the Lord by Jonah. Jeroboam was free to strengthen his Northern border and extend it. He gained again what David had won (1 Kings 8:65) and what God had said would be their Northern boundary (Num. 13:21). God, out of his own purpose and mercy, enabled the ungodly Jeroboam to bring relief to his people. However, God also sent Amos to warn Israel against wrongful use of their new prosperity, and their oppression of the poor. He warned that state security was a false trust and that their religion was empty.

See Amos 2:6–8; 5:21–24; 6:1–8; 8:4–6

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AMOS 1:1; Chs 4 — 8; 9:11–14

2 Kings 14:23–27; Hosea 6:4; 14:1–5

ISRAEL WOULD NOT LISTEN

notes for the 5 – 8's group prepared by Helen Farmer

File no. 84b

Teacher: *Introduction*

God cared for His people and He sent prophets to tell them what He was going to do. First of all the Lord came to the prophet and personally spoke to him. Amos was one of those prophets.

Teacher: *Ask the children to open their Bibles to Amos chapter 1.*

Look at the first line in chapter 1.

What kind of work did Amos do?

Answer: *(children)*

He was a shepherd and cared for sheep.

Teacher: *(ask the children)*

In chapter 1:1 of the book of Amos

How did God show Amos what He wanted him to know?

Answer: *(children)*

In a vision.

Teacher:

God told Amos to say that the time had come when He (the Lord) must come against Israel's neighbours for the many crimes of great cruelty they are doing to His people.

They are being cruel and harsh to the people, beating them and selling them into slavery and showing no mercy.

Even hunting them with swords.

e.g. child to read: Amos 1:9

Teacher:

Then God told Amos to say to the Lord's own people in Judah that they have forgotten the Lord who rescued them from slavery in Egypt,

and brought them to this land that He gave them and made them His own precious people. They have gone back to worshipping the false gods of their ancestors and doing wicked things.

Child to read: Amos 2:4

Also to Israel Amos said,

Child to read: Amos 2:6 and Amos 3:1&2

Teacher:

The Lord loves His people and cannot let them continue in their sin (in this way).

Child to read: Amos 3:10–11

Teacher:

The Lord said to them,

'I held back the rain and sent trouble to you, but you still did not come back to me.'

Yet even now the Lord says to them, 'Come to me and live! Don't go to your idols.'

ISRAEL WOULD NOT LISTEN con't

Teacher:

One of the visions God gave to Amos was 'The vision of the plumb-line' (explain what a plumb-line is).

Child to read: Amos 7:7–8

ISRAEL WOULD NOT LISTEN con't

Teacher:

Israel heard what Amos said but in their hearts they did not listen – They said, 'Go home Amos, we don't want to hear you.'

Child to read Amos 7:12–13

Teacher:

Amos kept on speaking for God. He said, 'Come to the Lord and live!'

Child to read Amos 7:14–15

Teacher

Amos said, 'you **must** listen to the Lord's word. But because you will not listen and you refuse His word to you and you have told me not to prophesy, the Lord will allow you to be taken captive and be sent to another country. However, even there, He will still be your God.'

The Lord God also says to you.

Child to read Amos 8:11–12

Teacher:

In days to come the people will wish that there was someone (a prophet) to speak God's word to them — they will be thirsty for His word and want to hear Him.

Then the Lord told Amos to tell His people that one day a king would come who would lead Israel to truly love God.

Then the Lord would bless His people and other nations would also want to worship God.

Child to read Amos 9:11–12

God fulfilled this promise when He sent Jesus to turn us from our sins by bearing the sin of the world on the cross.

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ISAIAH 6:1–13

Isaiah 1:1–23; 2:5–9; 9:6,7

GOD'S MESSENGER, ISAIAH

Story Notes

File no. 85

Christians read the Old Testament knowing the Christ to whom it bears witness. We see more of what it means than the writers themselves. On the other hand, there are many things about a relationship with God which are not clear to us without the truth that was revealed to them.

We read about a people who belonged to God but were unfaithful to him. We who have heard the gospel of Christ will blush with them because our sins are often the same. We will feel the pain of the judgments that disciplined them. But we will also learn to love the promises God made to them and which broke through the hopelessness of their situation to give them forgiveness and hope.

The story when we begin

Isaiah was a poet, a friend of princes, aware of national events and the royal household. He was also aware of the civic and religious life of his people. However his vision of 'the Holy One of Israel' shaped everything he saw. God spoke to him and, by doing so, changed the situation in which the nation found itself.

Prophets, like Isaiah, were those to whom God spoke. They were commanded to tell Israel what they had heard. Their message was usually for Israel but often concerned other nations as well. Priests had been commanded to teach Israel about the Lord and about how they should live as his people, but when this was not done and Israel's situation deteriorated, prophets were sent with a special word.

This word from God did not just remind Israel of what they had forgotten but announced the things God would do to save the nation and take them onto their inheritance. In particular, prophets announced the coming of a Leader and Saviour, a Messiah, who would reveal God's glory to the nations.

When Isaiah began his speaking, Israel had already been fathered by God and shaped for over a millennium by the promises made to Abraham. For about half of this time they had lived as a nation saved by God from slavery in Egypt. Now established in their land for two and a half centuries, they had had the benefit of a kingship established by God so that they would prosper and fulfill God's purpose for them.

But all was not well in the land.

Isaiah tells us (in chapter one) that God spoke to Israel as only a father could speak, a father who was faithful and strong. Israel had turned away from their God. They were like Sodom, or a harlot, and they were sick. God hated their worship and despised their injustice to one another. They were his enemies. However, in attacking them, God would heal them. Their healing would come through righteousness, although he does not yet tell us how this could be. Israel would then blush as they remembered their idolatry. Their present strength would go up in flames.

The Lord called Israel (in chapter two) to walk in his light. God's temple was established at Jerusalem as a sign of God's presence among the nations. Pride stands, as it stood then, as an obstacle to this purpose of God. It was expressed by going to wizards for guidance, relying on wealth, trusting in what their hands had made. God would terrify everyone who was haughty and make them throw away their false trusts and cry out to Him.

Isaiah 6

God purposed that his people would bear fruit, by reflecting the character of God in their community living. In fact, they had been unjust, pleasure hungry, arrogant and blasphemous. They would not display righteousness, but God would, and the proud would be humbled. When

GOD'S MESSENGER, ISAIAH con't

Jesus came, he said that without him we could do nothing, that is, anything that would bear fruit for God. But if we would abide in him we would bear much fruit (John 15:1–6). Christ is the true hope for a people in the earth who love God and their neighbour.

Isaiah's vision happened at the end of the long and prosperous reign of the good King Uzziah. Isaiah may well have been thinking about the future of the nation and its leadership. He saw the holy Lord of Israel and heard angels (seraph, or burning one) worshipping him because the whole earth was full of his glory; not all heaven but the whole earth.

This made Isaiah aware of his and his nation's sinfulness so that he cried out. Nevertheless he could not have anticipated the change that would come to him when he knew that his sin was blotted out. He was equipped now to speak for this holy God, even though the nation remained unresponsive. Love for his Maker and not the expediency that ruled the nation would shape everything he did. The nation would be chopped down like a tree and its remaining stump be burned.

John says that it was the glory of Jesus that Isaiah saw (John 12:40–41). Every revelation of God has had in view the revelation of all his glory in his Son. Still, Israel remained unresponsive, but Jesus said that when he was lifted up he would draw all men to himself (John 12:32). Christ was Israel's remaining stump, and he was killed by God's judgments in our place. In this way, God's revealing himself to be the holy God is not designed to exclude us but to catch us up to himself and make us like himself.

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2 KINGS 18:17 – 19:36

2 Chronicles 32:1–8

A LETTER FOR HEZEKIAH

Story Notes

File no. 86

Hezekiah was an outstanding king. He destroyed the false worship that Israel had fostered and trusted himself and his nation to the Lord. Like Joseph, Samuel and David before him, the Lord was with him and he prospered. But Assyria was now strong and had captured the Northern tribes.

An Assyrian army returned, and its commander taunted Hezekiah with trusting Egypt, or even worse, with trusting in the Lord. He thought that when Hezekiah removed the numerous worship places of false worship around Judah that he was dismantling their religion. He knew they needed Egyptian cavalry to complete their defenses. They could not even find their own horsemen for a battle. Had not the Northern tribes fallen to him? What could Judah's gods do? He claimed that their own God, the LORD, had commanded him to destroy their city and then to take them to his land. If they would give him their allegiance, he would provide for them. He was like Satan who promised Jesus the kingdoms of this world if he would bow down and worship him.

All this became public knowledge and the whole city knew their dilemma. Wisely, Hezekiah had said to his ambassadors that they should give no answer. This was a problem for God.

2 Kings 19

Hezekiah went straight to the temple and humbled himself before God. He also needed the fellowship of the prophet Isaiah in this crisis. The surrounding cities had been defeated. How could Jerusalem stand? Money had not kept Assyria away. The city could not long endure a siege. But Assyria claimed its gods were superior to the Lord on whom Hezekiah had set his trust. Would the Lord let this go unchallenged? Hezekiah thought not and believed Isaiah would think the same.

Without delay, the word of the Lord assured Hezekiah that Assyria would retreat and that their king would be killed in his own land. The Assyrian commander returned to find his king diverted by another war and left behind him a further taunt against God. The Assyrians were too full of their own successes to know the power of the living God. Hezekiah humbled himself again and took the letter to the Lord. What was at issue was the arrogance of those who had reviled the living God, and even more so, the purpose of God to make himself known to all nations. Surely God would deal with this threat for the sake of his own name.

Again, Isaiah sent a message to Hezekiah from the Lord. Concerning Israel he said, 'You are like a virgin daughter confident in the house of her father, tossing her head at danger.' To the King of Assyria he said, 'You think you have done great things, not realising that it was I who gave it to you to do them. I will lead you away like a captive with a hook in your nose.' He also gave Jerusalem an immediate sign of his favour: they would have food for the present, and be able to farm very soon. Then, they would grow strong and spread to re-inhabit the cities that had been destroyed.

All this was said to assure Hezekiah and Jerusalem that they should not fear the enemy at their gate. Jerusalem would remain, for God and for David. In the morning, 185,000 Assyrian soldiers, (or 185 of their commanders), were dead. Without further word, the army left, and their king died as God predicted.

2 KINGS 22:1 – 23:3, 21–23

2 Chronicles 34:1 – 35:19; Deuteronomy 28:1–25

JOSIAH'S GREAT WORK FOR GOD / THE BOOK FOUND IN THE TEMPLE

Story Notes

File no. 87

Josiah was young when crowned and was a contemporary of Jeremiah. His heart was stirred, and, in the height of his reign, he sought to repair the temple damaged by years of abuse and neglect. (The account has similarities to when Joash was stirred to repair the temple at the end of Athaliah's evil reign; see 2 Kings 11:12–15.) This clean up located a copy of Israel's covenant with God (probably *Deuteronomy*) which recounted the duties of Israel's worship and the curses which would come if they were not performed. Josiah was dismayed (tearing of garments was a sign of deep sorrow or remorse). What did all these renovations mean if the Lord was not pleased with the nation. Wrath was already on the land and he sought from a prophetess what he should do.

The sins of our parents are ours as well if we do not flee from them. But what seems to be uppermost in Josiah's mind is not who sinned but that he stood in continuity with all the Lord's people and that God's purpose was being worked out over the generations. All he could do was stand where he stood and do what was true.

He had already done what was proper, that is, he had been penitent and humble, and this is how he would remain. The judgement would still come because of the shame brought on God's name by the sins in the days of his father Manasseh (a culmination of years of apostasy), but this judgement would not arrive in his days.

2 Kings 23

Josiah vowed his own allegiance to the Lord's covenant and secured the compliance of the people. The covenant was read and the Passover celebrated. Then, he set about to purge the land of its evils. False priests were deposed, and in some cases, killed. False objects of worship were put beyond use ever again by burning and grinding, and altars were defiled with the remains of the dead. We are surprised to discover that part of what Josiah cleaned up was what Solomon had installed over 300 years before. Israel's kingdom had been marked by almost continuous idolatry.

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**JEREMIAH 1:1 – 2:7; 12–13, (23, 27) 4:1, (2,) 5–7,14;
25:1–12; 29:1, 3–14; 31:17, 20, 31–34; 39:9–14**

Jeremiah 32:1–44; 2 Chronicles 34:33; 2 Kings 25:1–26

JEREMIAH THE PROPHET

Story Notes

File no. 88a

Jeremiah is called to be a prophet in the middle of King Josiah's 30 year reign, in 627 BC. This great King began to institute religious reforms just prior to Jeremiah's call and his faithfulness to the Lord is second to none (2 Kings 19:25-26). However, the sins of Judah are more deeply engrained than can be removed by outward change.

After Josiah, came Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, both of whom reigned for about a decade, and most of the prophecies given to Jeremiah are identified as being given during these years, (Two other kings only lasted a few months each.)

Jeremiah has the difficult task of speaking to these kings and these people. They think that God will not forsake them because the temple is still among them, but Jeremiah must remind them of the warnings of Deuteronomy that God's curses will fall on the people if they forsake him. Actually, their sin is syncretism, mixing the worship of God with the worship of their idols. They will learn that God is jealous for the love of his people and will not share suitors (Exod. 20:5; Deut. 4:23–24; 6:15).

Jeremiah knows, not only the threats, but also, the promises of God concerning Israel, and his love for them, and God reveals to him that he will make a new covenant with Israel (chapters 30–33). But Jeremiah must deal with the personal cost of being opposed and despised by his king and his people, along with their priests and false prophets. Jeremiah does not find it easy to walk between the faithfulness of God on the one hand and the unfaithfulness of his people on the other.

1:1-19

Jeremiah does not seek or want the office of prophet and protests that he is too young—just a youth. He does not have the wisdom to speak to Judah or to the nations about God. But human wisdom has failed in Judah, and other nations too (8:8-9; 9:12; 49:7; 50:35; 51:57). Only God's wisdom can suffice (9:23; 10:7, 12; 51:15). Jeremiah is known by God, consecrated and appointed for his office, and will be given what to say. Moreover, he will be delivered from those who will oppose him (1:8, 19; 15:20-21), and this may address Jeremiah's real concern for his own safety. He will need to assure others of their safety too (39:17; 42:11) because he will be speaking against idolatry, and idolatry thrives in an atmosphere of fear.

The work Jeremiah must do is more than giving instruction. By his word, meaning God's word given to him, nations will fall, and rise. The prophet, rather than the king, will be the representation of God's reign (cf. Ps. 2:1-6). Like a farmer watching for almond blossoms (as his town of Anathoth), God will watch over his word to make it happen. Like a boiling pot ready to spill its deadly contents over all within its flow, Northern kings will roll southwards and subdue Jerusalem and the surrounding Judah. God's people stand directly exposed to God's wrath. The prophet, on the other hand, must be ready for work, not fearing the word of man, because he is the city that is impregnable, and from him will come disaster for Judah, its leaders and its people. His words will be a fire, devouring them (5:14–15). He needs to know he is an impregnable city because he will be attacked by all and sundry. God will not be with Jerusalem (cf. Ps. 48:1-3) but with Jeremiah.

2:1-13

This first prophecy goes to the heart of the Lord's complaint. The early days of Israel as a nation were, to the Lord, like a honeymoon. She was his bride, and she trusted him. In fact, her trust was patchy, but the Lord looks back at those early days with the eyes of a lover who is now jilted. The Lord, speaking to a young man who has grown up in a priestly home and knows the laws of harvest first-fruits, says Israel was the 'first-fruits' of humanity, devoted to the Lord, so judgement came on any who touched them. This is how the Lord regarded his people in those days.

JEREMIAH THE PROPHET con't

Again, taking the part of a jilted lover, God tells them how he saved them from Egypt; they were redeemed. He brought them to their land; they had an inheritance. But now, they are ungrateful; they give themselves to idols and become like them—worthless. Priests no longer know the Lord or his law and the prophets serve Baal rather than the Lord. They should be appalled, not lulled, appalled that a nation should change its gods, from a saving Lord, to an array of worthless idols.

All that Deuteronomy had anticipated concerning their prosperity, complacency and idolatry had occurred, and all levels of leadership were affected. Amongst all of their sins, the sin of turning from 'the fountain of living waters' was most serious.

25:1-14

After 23 years of prophesying, and four years into the reign of Jehoiakim, the Lord speaks again through Jeremiah. Nebuchadnezzar has come to power in Babylon (605 BC), and he will be the agent of what the Lord plans for his people. Judah is not listening to Jeremiah, any more than to the other prophets before him. The message of the prophets has been consistent: turn from idols to the Lord; don't worship idols or provoke me with your deeds; if you change, I will not harm you. But the response of his people has been, and is now, uniformly rebellious.

Judah, along with surrounding nations, will all fall under the power of Babylon, tragically, and for 70 years. Nebuchadnezzar is even called the Lord's servant. Any thought of an alternative outcome is impossible. After this, God will deal with Babylon.

The old power brokers, Assyria and Egypt, are no longer players on the world stage, though Judah will still foolishly put its trust in running off to Egypt to avoid Babylon.

All of the nations are subject to these judgements; if Jerusalem is not spared, neither will any other city (25:1–38).

29:1-14

King Jeconiah (or Jehoiachin) after only a few months in office, surrenders to the besieging army of Nebuchadnezzar. It is 597 BC. His royal household and counsellors, and many craftsmen are taken also. Among the captives now in Babylon, there appears to be a prophetic movement, perhaps based on some unsettlement in the Babylonian court, claiming that their captivity will be brief.

Jeremiah is given a message for them: they should stay put and settle down. God's prospering them will now depend on being in this foreign land, not back in Jerusalem. Seventy years will pass. Then God will visit them again. They need a new start—a new exodus. The Lord's plans remain the same, to bless them, but he will bring them back truly seeking the Lord. Then he will bless them, gathering them from many nations where they have been scattered.

31:18-34

Jeremiah sees the day when the captives will return, acknowledging their sin, seeking God's restoration. The Lord assures them that he has not forgotten them and they should return and expect his blessing again. The land will be a place of righteousness. If some feel they are suffering for the sins of their parents (cf. Ezek. 18:2, 25), it shall be so no longer. Each can choose for themselves to turn from their sins and walk in the blessing of God.

In fact, God will make a new covenant with this newly redeemed people, a covenant in which his law is written on their hearts. Their earlier adultery with idols instead of with their true Husband will be gone. They will know the Lord through the forgiveness of their sins.

It is this promise of a new covenant that Jesus refers to in establishing the Lord's supper. Captives did return from Babylon in 536 BC, but this was in readiness for *all* that was to come. The change in them would be far more than a change of geography.

JEREMIAH 1:1 – 2:7, 12–13; (23, 27) 4:1, (2,) 5–7,14;

25:1–12; 29:1, 3–14; 31:17, 20, 31–34; 39:9–14

Jeremiah 32:1–44; 2 Chronicles 34:33; 2 Kings 25:1–26; Lamentations 3:21–24

JEREMIAH THE PROPHET

notes for the 5 – 8's group prepared by Helen Farmer

File no. 88b

God sent prophets to His people to tell them what He was going to do.
Jeremiah was one of those prophets.

1:5

God said to Jeremiah,
'Before you were born, I chose you to do a special work,
to be a prophet to people in many countries.'

1:6

Jeremiah said.
'Lord, I can't be a prophet. I don't know how to speak. I am only young.'

Read 1:9

The Lord reached out with his hand and touched my mouth.
He said to me, 'See I am putting my words in your mouth.'

Teacher — (based on 2:2ff) Explains the content of what God said to him,
e.g. 'My people used to love Me, but now have turned away from me.
I looked after them, but now they trust in gods of wood and stone, made with their own hands,
that cannot save them.'

Read 2:11–13

God is the fountain (well) of Living Water they have dug their own wells

Read 4:1, 13–14

Jeremiah warns them that God will allow a strong people from the North to overcome them and
take them away. God will not save them this time.
But the people would not believe Jeremiah. They laughed at him.

Teacher (based on Jer. 25:7, 9–12) So Jeremiah said, 'When the enemy comes, go with them
and you will be safe in Babylon.'

Read 29:10–12 (OR Teacher to summarize see next paragraph)

The Lord says 'Babylon will be powerful for seventy years. After that time I will come to you who
are living in Babylon. I will keep my promise to bring you back to Jerusalem. I have good plans
for you. I don't plan to hurt you. . . you will come to Me and pray to Me. And I will listen to you.'

OR Teacher summarize

The Lord said He will not give them up even though they have turned away from Him. He will
bring them back after seventy years – He is faithful to His promises.

Teacher (based on Jer. 31.17) God will bring them back to Jerusalem. He loves them, they are
His children and they will know again, that He is their God who has never forsaken them. God
also told Jeremiah that He was going to do something **even greater** than this.

Read 31:31-34

He told them of the time that would come when the New Covenant would be . . .
He said that 'in that time they shall all know me, from the least to the greatest.' Declares the
Lord, 'for I will forgive them, and their sin I will remember no more.'

JEREMIAH THE PROPHET con't

Teacher

This was pointing to the time when Jesus would come and His death on the cross would bring into being the New Covenant, in which we now live. We know Him (Jesus). In Him we have a new heart and the forgiveness of all our sin.

The day came when Nebuchadnezzar and his army defeated Jerusalem and broke down the city and took most of the people away to Babylon.

—When Jeremiah was watching God's people going away as prisoners to Babylon, he was sad because they had refused to hear God's word to them.

—God spoke to Jeremiah and said,

Read

Lamentations 3:21–24

3:21 But I have hope when I think of this:

3:22 The Lord's love never ends. His mercies never stop.

3:23 They are new every morning. Lord your faithfulness is great.

3:24 I say to myself, 'The Lord is what I have left. So I have hope.'

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Song:

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases.

His mercies never come to an end.

They are new every morning,

new every morning.

Great is Thy faithfulness, O Lord.

Great is Thy faithfulness.

(Scripture in Song 209/414)