

JEREMIAH - A STUDY GUIDE

THE CENTRAL QUESTION:

What does this book/story say to us about God?

This question may be broken down further as follows:

- a. Why did God do it/allow it?
 - b. Why did He record it for our study?
-

1. Does Jeremiah contribute significantly to our understanding of God? If not to our understanding, how about the understanding of the Universe looking on? In what ways is Jeremiah outstanding, compared to other books we have studied? Are there some things uniquely emphasized in Jeremiah? What were the circumstances under which Jeremiah wrote? What was Jeremiah's work and position in society?
2. When did the children of Israel behave as well as suggested in Jeremiah 2:1-3? (compare 31:18-20; Ezekiel 20:4-26) Or is God just being very generous here? Didn't that whole generation who passed through the wilderness have to die because of their rebellion?
3. Jeremiah spends a great deal of time discussing the worship of different "gods" and how the people had left the true God to go after other "gods." (Jeremiah 2:11; 3:13; 7:16-19) Can you think of any other nation that changed its "gods?" Was Israel irreligious during this period? When He complained that they had changed "gods" were they aware that they had done this? Or was it that in their minds, they had changed their picture of God? Although they paid tithe, worshiped on the Sabbath, and observed all the ceremonial requirements, did they really know God? What could possibly have been so attractive in those heathen religions? Why does God have such a hard time holding His people and getting them to worship Him? Doesn't He have the power? Can you produce what God wants most by power and force? How could God have lost one-third of the angels? (Revelation 12:4)
4. What does it do to your mind to worship a "glued-together god" (1 Samuel 5:1-5), or a "piece-of-firewood god?" (Isaiah 44:9-20; Jeremiah 2:27; 3:9; 10:2-16) What do you think the children of Israel were thinking when they worshiped the Baals and then rushed to the temple? (Jeremiah 7:9-11) Did they think two "gods" were better than one—like having extra "fire" insurance? Did they not recognize the incompatibility of these other religions with their true religion? What difference did they see in their two "gods"? What does it mean to worship a "god"? Can you truly worship two different "gods" at the same time? Do we?
5. Is God angry when we worship other "gods", or do we just lose by becoming like them? (Jeremiah 2:5,19; 7:19; Hosea 9:10; Romans 1:18-31) How many different "gods" were they worshipping? (Jeremiah 2:32,33; **3:9,12,13,23,24**; 10:14; **11:13**; see also Psalms 121)
6. Does God seem less gracious in Jeremiah than in some other books where all is "good news?" (Jeremiah 3:12,13; 15:1-9; 23:1-8) Has God become very severe and harsh?
7. God had appointed Israel to evangelize the world. (Jeremiah 3:17) How hard did He push them to try to get them to do this? What did he have to do to Jonah? Daniel and his friends? Jonah was certainly no "Missionary Volunteer"—under his "duress" did he deliver a good, clear message about God? Most of the Jews apparently knew so little of the truth about God that even if they had been sent to a place to witness they would have done a terrible job. What about us?
8. What do you think of a God who would tell you not even to pray for your friends and family who had been taken off into captivity? (Jeremiah 7:16; 11:14; 1 John 5:16) Does it do any good to pray for someone who is blatantly misbehaving and who has no intention of changing? (Jeremiah 14:19-15:2) Why would God not want to forgive? Will such a thing ever happen again? (See Revelation 22:11)
9. How could God through Jeremiah make a statement like the one found in Jeremiah 7:22-23? How could God even suggest after what we have read in Exodus 20 through Leviticus 27 that He did not give commands to offer burnt offerings and sacrifices? (Notice that the *NIV* and *The Clear Word* change the whole meaning of the verse by adding the word "just"! Compare the reading of *The New Century Version*.)

10. Did the darkened minds of the people really comprehend what Jeremiah was saying to them? (Jeremiah 7:27,28) Did they really understand that they were at the end of their options? (Jeremiah 15:1-9; 23:1-8) Did they, in retrospect understand the reason for their captivity? (see Daniel 9:1-21) When God said that they should acknowledge their “rebellion”, what was He talking about specifically? (Jeremiah 3:13)
11. What were the real messages of Jeremiah? What is God saying about Judah and about Himself in these passages? Jeremiah 3:11-18 (Compare John 13:34,35); 7:23-28; 9:23-26 (Compare Romans 1:16); 31:31-34. Have you ever gloried that you understand and know God? **Is the gospel primarily about “God’s plan to save you and me?” or “The truth about God’s character and His government?”** What divided the Universe in the beginning? Are we surprised to find such insights about God, in the *Old* Testament? What was the actual covenant that God wanted to have with His people? Is God asking for something more than a ceremonial religion? What does it mean to “know the Lord” or to “be His people?” (Jeremiah 31:31-34; 32:38-41) If we really understand what kind of religion God wants, we will realize that the most natural thing of all is to grow up, intellectually and spiritually, and we will begin doing what is right because it is right!
12. Jeremiah talks a lot about “knowing the Lord.” (See Jeremiah 2:8; 5:4,5; 8:7; 9:3,6,24; 16:21; 22:16; 24:7; 31:34) What do you think is implied by this expression? Why do you think the use of reason and careful use of the mind have been made fun of in religious circles down through the years? Who do you suppose would lose if everyone would critically examine the reasons for his faith? It is often suggested that religion is a matter of the heart and not of the mind, but the heart is really only good for pumping blood, so what do we mean by these expressions? In Jeremiah’s day, the heart was thought to be the seat of thinking and reason, and the bowels the seat of the emotions. (Jeremiah 4:19; 31:20, *KJV*)
13. Have we SDA’s come to the place where we are not much use to God any more? Is He ready to give us up forever? (4ST44:1:2) The church has had so much bad PR lately. Will there ever be a time when we could actually say something good, and specific about our God? Could we ever specifically say, “God is not the kind of Person His enemies have made Him out to be! He is not even the kind of God that some of His so-called friends have made Him out to be!?” What was Israel saying to the nations about their God?
14. Now that we have come to where the prophets actually describe God letting His people go off into captivity, how do you think God felt about this? (Jeremiah 8:18-9:1; 14:19-15:2; 23:1-8; 31:20; Hosea 11:7,8)
15. Do you see the picture of God as given by these prophets getting more and more obscure and confused or more and more clear as we approach the end of their time as an independent nation? Doesn’t it seem almost like the darker the background (the general condition of the people), the brighter the picture appears? Jeremiah 9:23,24 suggests that we could even come to the place of boasting about God. What would this mean? Paul knew and understood God very well, and he was proud of this. (Romans 1:16,17) Does our knowledge of God make us feel different—even give us an exhilarating sense of freedom? There is no worse loss of freedom than to feel fear. Does your knowledge of God make you afraid? Are you afraid of what God may do to you in the future?
16. Is it fair for the good to suffer with the bad? Jeremiah suffered, even though he was good and had done his best to warn the people of what would come if they did not repent. How honored was Jeremiah?
17. What did God say would happen to Babylon? What hope did Jeremiah leave for the captives? Jeremiah 25:11-14; 29:10-14; see Daniel 9:1-2; compare Jeremiah 30:3; 31:16,17
18. After having worked with the children of Israel approximately 800 years before the time of Jeremiah (1400-600 B.C.), does God seem to be enjoying a great deal of “success”? What is God trying to work toward? Was the problem that God didn’t have enough power?

© Copyright 2000-2006, Kenneth Hart
info@theox.org