

Study Guide



***ADULT BIBLE STUDY
IN BASIC ENGLISH***

**ISAIAH
AND
JEREMIAH**

Don Sewell and Van Gladen

BAPTISTWAY

Dallas, Texas

ADULT BIBLE STUDY IN BASIC ENGLISH
STUDY GUIDE
Isaiah and Jeremiah

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Isaiah and Jeremiah

In the 8th century B.C., a number of prophets spoke up to warn Israel about the impending destruction if the people would not repent. For about four decades, God used people like Amos, Hosea, Jonah, Micah, Jeremiah, and Isaiah to warn the people. The people were not serious followers of God. The people thought they could cover up their sinful living and injustice by acting as if they really worshiped the living God. They were fooling no one but themselves. They certainly did not impress God with their hollow worship practices.

Both Isaiah and Jeremiah brought messages of doom and gloom to the people. But their messages were not without some small ray of hope. The years ahead would be difficult for the people of God, but they could claim the promise of the coming Servant, the Savior, Who would bring with Him a New Way of Worship.

UNIT 1—ISAIAH: PROCLAIMING GOD’S SALVATION

<u>Lesson 1:</u>	Confessing Our Need for God	Isaiah 64:1-9
<u>Lesson 2:</u>	Receiving Good News from God	Isaiah 40:1-11
<u>Lesson 3:</u>	Enjoying God’s Blessings	Isaiah 61:1-11
<u>Lesson 4:</u>	Celebrating a Baby’s Birth	Isaiah 9:1-7
<u>Lesson 5:</u>	Trusting in God’s Promises	Isaiah 62:1-12

UNIT 2—ISAIAH’ SERVANT SONGS

<u>Lesson 6:</u>	A Light for the Nations	Isaiah 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-11
<u>Lesson 7:</u>	Healed by His Wounds	Isaiah 53:1-12

UNIT 3—JEREMIAH: MESSAGES OF JUDGMENT AND HOPE

<u>Lesson 8:</u>	Called to a Difficult Task	Jeremiah 1:1-19
<u>Lesson 9:</u>	When Trust Is Misplaced	Jeremiah 7:1-15
<u>Lesson 10:</u>	Warning to Unfaithful Leaders	Jeremiah 22:1-5, 13-17; 23:9-18
<u>Lesson 11:</u>	Responding Courageously	Jeremiah 37:1-2, 6-17; 38:14-23

UNIT 4—JEREMIAH: GOD’S MESSAGE OF HOPE

<u>Lesson 12:</u>	When the Worst Is Happening	Jeremiah 32:1-15
<u>Lesson 13:</u>	It’s a New Day	Jeremiah 31:27-34

Isaiah



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ISAIAH:
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**Lesson 1
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Isaiah 64:1-9**

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**UNIT 1
ISAIAH: PROCLAIMING
GOD'S SALVATION**

The writings of Isaiah are a clear example of how the Old Testament ties in so clearly to the New Testament. The words of the book of Isaiah come to life centuries later with the coming of Jesus Christ. God knew well what He was saying over 700 years prior to Jesus' coming.

The book of Isaiah covers a lengthy time of history. The message begins 740 B.C. And it ends sometime after the return of the Southern Kingdom of Judah from exile in Babylon (539 B.C.). The Northern Kingdom of Israel had fallen much earlier in 722 B.C.

Isaiah is arranged in this way. Chapters 1-39 deal with events related to the latter part of the eighth century B.C. Chapters 40-66 focus on events in the sixth century B.C.

Our lessons will study two main themes. First, we will focus on the Isaiah passages that tell of the coming Christ. Second, we will study passages that speak in special ways about Christ.

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Adult Bible Study in
Basic English

Bible Text

Isaiah 64:1-9

Background Text

Isaiah 63:7-64:12

Memory Verse

“But now, O Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay and you are our pot-maker” (Isaiah 64:8a).

Word List

apathetic:

unconcerned, not caring or not interested

knick-knack: a small, ornamental object

Confessing Our Need for God

I remember very well my responsibilities as a child. I had to keep my room clean. I helped Mother with the kitchen chores. I took out the trash. I helped Dad with other work from time to time.

But sometimes I tried to avoid my responsibilities. I failed at my tasks and tried to blame someone or something else. Finally, I had to tell the truth. I was afraid to confess. But I found it to be a freeing experience. Mom and Dad would understand and forgive me when I admitted my fault.

The longer I went without confessing, the worse I felt. The quicker I got things right with Mom and Dad, the faster I could make sense of life.

Confession frees us to become what God intended us to be all along. But confession is difficult. We hesitate to confess our sins. But we gain so much by doing so. God teaches us to confess our faults.

Life hasn't changed too much for centuries. For example, Isaiah led the Jewish people to understand God's ways. He emphasized people's need to come to God for forgiveness. Many of Isaiah's teachings would be repeated when Jesus came to our world. Throughout all time, people have needed to admit their fault, confess their sin, and turn to God for healing and forgiveness.

Calling on God's Power (Isaiah 64:1-3)

We see the personal testimony of Isaiah as he called on God's power in the 64th chapter of Isaiah. His actions are a model for us. Isaiah shows his great desire to see the work of God. He called in faith to humbly request God's power upon the Jewish people. Compare these words from Isaiah to the earlier passage in Judges 5:5. Isaiah and faithful people from his time were

**Things To
Think About**

1. With all that we have, do we really need God?
2. Why does God still want us to confess?
3. Can we trust God to shape us just right?
4. Isaiah displayed a great desire to see the hand of God among the people. Do we really want God to act among us? Do we ask Him to do so?
5. Have you ever confessed something to a loved one? Did you feel better after confessing?
6. Do you see ways that God values us?
7. When God asks us to confess, does that show God's level of appreciation for us?

trusting that God would repeat the miracles from the time of the exodus from Egypt.

Isaiah was showing his faith in the responsiveness of God. An **apathetic** person would not spend time calling on God. A doubting person would not talk to God about His special work in the world. Isaiah approached God with reverence and fear, with faith and gratitude.

Ask yourself why we do not call on God's power more often and more readily. What are the reasons for our lack of prayer? Some people do not have a close relationship with the Heavenly Father. They think prayer is a very uncertain action. Some people do not know how to pray. They do not know how to work through a holy time of talking with the Lord. They simply repeat their problems instead of focusing on the Living Lord Who can solve the problem. What do you do in your prayer time?

Maybe we do not pray often because we are selfish in our prayers. We only pray for our personal needs, rarely including other people's concerns. Do we take time to sit in God's presence and simply listen to Him?

Look for opportunities to pray no matter where you are. Pray while you are commuting in a car or bus to work or school. Call on God while you are cleaning house. Talk to the Lord while you are taking a walk. Seek every chance to talk to the One Who dearly loves you.

God's Singular Power (Isaiah 64:4)

Verse 4 reminds us of God's unique quality possessed by no one else. This verse tells two great truths. First, we hear the prophet saying that God has no equal. Second, we learn that God acts with grace and justice for those who love Him.

Also, we learn from verse 4 that many think of God as a waiting Lord. They see Him as One Who does not move

among His people very often. But verse 4 tells that God does take the first step to work among us. He does His good work among those who wait for Him in faith.

We can look through the Bible and find a “history of waiting.” Think about the history of the Jewish people. They waited for centuries as slaves in Egypt. Finally, God sent Moses to take them to the Promised Land. Also, remember the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. Their patience ran thin, but they still had to wait on God’s timing.

How are we waiting today in America? How are you waiting in your local church and in your life? Are you showing patience and trust in God during the wait?

A Time to Confess (Isaiah 64:5-7)

A country can be absolutely destroyed when the spiritual foundations are damaged. Sometimes the people are unaware of the problems. The Israelites needed Isaiah’s stern reminder to turn back to God in repentance and faith.

It is an important time in life when someone admits to God that they are sinful. The person is changed. His life shows the new work done by God.

When we realize our sin, we confess that we are chained to the problems we created for ourselves. This expression is what the Jewish people had to recognize. They were

not bound to their enemies as much as they were bound to their own sin. This is the kind of slavery Paul discusses in Romans 6:16: “Do you not know that when you give yourself as a servant to be owned by someone, that one becomes your owner? If you give yourself to sin, the end is death. If you give yourself to God, the end is being right with Him.”

Isaiah reminds us of the extreme seriousness of sin. He describes the clearest picture of the impact of sin to be found in the Old Testament. The people basically ask God to rescue them from themselves. Also, Isaiah 64:5-7 echoes other parts of the Bible that instruct us about the power of our sin.

God Molding His People (Isaiah 64:8-9)

These verses register a final plea for God’s help. The passage has inspired more than one great hymn of the faith. The idea of God’s molding us becomes an inviting, pleasant comment. This passage from Isaiah regarding a potter sounds similar to Job 10:9 Jeremiah 18:4-6.

These verses remind us that we are the work of His hands. We are His people. He did not just make us and in turn disregard us. The same God Who made us has a continual concern for us. This personal concern is confirmed since we are His people. We are part of the family He wants to redeem for all

eternity.

We find Isaiah pleading with God to hold back His anger. How often do we plead with God for anything? Many people in America are so comfortable that we do not plead for anything at all, much less for a reduction in God's anger.

In verse 9, God is looking at us. God takes a very good look and thankfully concludes we are worth saving. Then He gives us the dignity of making our own choice to follow Him.

Various personal items in our houses are worth saving. At the same time, other **knick-knacks** just take up space. God says we are worth saving. We are valuable to God. He wants to redeem us and to improve us. He has a plan for our lives that outshines anything we could imagine for ourselves.

Thankfully, God is the most artistic, wise, and loving Potter of all time. We can be glad to be clay in His hands.

Isaiah 64:1-9

1: If only You would tear open the heavens and come down! The mountains would shake before You,

2: as when fire burns the wood and causes the water to boil. Come and make Your name known to those who are against You, that the nations may shake in fear before You!

3: When You did powerful things which we did not expect, You came down, and the mountains shook before You.

4: From long ago no ear has heard and no eye has seen any God besides You, Who works for those who wait for Him.

5: You meet him who finds joy in doing what is right and good, who remembers You in Your ways. See, You were angry because we sinned. We have been sinning for a long time, and will we be saved?

6: All of us have become like one who is unclean. All our right and good works are like dirty pieces of cloth. And all of us dry up like a leaf. Our sins take us away like the wind.

7: There is no one who calls on Your name, who stirs himself up to take hold of You. For You have hidden Your face from us, and have given us over to the power of our sins.

8: But now, O Lord, You are our Father. We are the clay, and You are our pot maker. All of us are the work of Your hand.

9: Do not be so angry, O Lord. Do not remember our sin forever. Look now, all of us are Your people.



Adult Bible Study in
Basic English

Bible Text

Isaiah 40:1-11

Background Text

Isaiah 40:1-11

Memory Verse

“He will feed His flock like a shepherd. He will gather the lambs in His arms and carry them close to His heart. He will be gentle in leading those that are with young.” Isaiah 40:11

Word List

empower: to give authority or power

impoverished: made poor

malice: hatred

wayward: to stray from approved behavior

Receiving Good News from God

Everyone likes a good rest. The book of Isaiah reminds us that we can find complete rest in the arms of God. His goodness has no rival. His love has no boundaries. The 40th chapter of Isaiah is a symbol of God’s special plan of goodness for us.

Chapter 40 is in the heart of the Old Testament. But it hints at the message of the New Testament. Isaiah 40 shows a God Who creates and is sovereign over all. The same Father also is Judge and Redeemer. He comes to us as the great Forgiving God. God is graciously providing forgiveness for sinful people. And the story doesn’t stop here.

God is seen in Isaiah 40 as the One Who educates His people for evangelism. He **empowers** His redeemed people to carry out His work. Isaiah 40 tells of God sending a righteous Servant (Jesus Christ) to suffer. That suffering is designed to bring sinful nations to repentance. This loving God has a plan to win back the hearts of the people of the world.

A Time to Rest in God’s Goodness (Isaiah 40:1-2)

God is active in our 21st century world. This was true in the times of the Old Testament and continues to be true today. God’s advice for us in 40:1 is to be comforted. Many people have gone to such extremes in life that they cannot find any rest from the worries of life. God has a better plan. His comfort heals wounds and restores people to each other. Verse 2 tells of God’s willingness to pardon Jerusalem. The city of Jerusalem has been for centuries a symbol for the whole Jewish nation. God is willing to tenderly forgive His people.

God’s fatherly heart is always ready to forgive. Sometimes He uses discipline to mold people and remind them of the need for repentance. His ultimate goal is for all His people to come to

**Things To
Think About**

1. Think back over your life. Describe a secure, safe place during a rough period of life.
2. What happens to a cut flower after a few days in a vase? How is this a picture of a life without Christ?
3. Why should we not hesitate to shout out the Good News of God's love?
4. Describe how a shepherd caring for a sheep is like God's caring for us.

Him in faith.

Consider God's great love as He dealt with various Bible people. God mercifully broke into the life of one man named Saul of Tarsus. God took this **wayward** man, disciplined him, and poured His forgiveness on him. God took a murderer and made him a man of love.

Getting Ready for the Greatest Show (Isaiah 40:3-5)

In verse 3, we hear a heavenly voice that speaks in a useful way for us all. Forces beyond anyone's control are working together. They are preparing a great route for our God and His guidance. And we are assured that nothing can stop the will of God at this point. He will make this "way" into the dark places of life. Nothing physical will stand in the way of God's progression. Potential obstacles such as valleys and mountains will be leveled. All will become smooth for God's work in the world.

People of Isaiah's day had no clear understanding of the meaning of this fantastic earth-moving process. They trusted by faith that God's plan was righteous and sure. He fulfilled these plans through the coming of Jesus seven centuries later. God didn't give up on His plan. He carried it through. He carries us in His plans, too.

The strong pledge of the Lord comforts us in the 21st century, just as Isaiah and his friends understood it years ago. God is strong and secure. We can compare His strength with the weakness of every human who has ever lived.

Verse 5 talks about a glory of the Lord to be revealed. This glory will be without description. A new mother or father cannot fully describe their experience of holding their baby for the first time. In the same way, we cannot completely describe the goodness of the Lord in His glory.

Admitting Our Weaknesses before God (Isaiah 40:6-8)

Nature has seasons of change. In contrast, God consistently remains the same. All faithful followers of Christ can count on His goodness to be consistent. And we can count on His justice, too.

The Jewish exiles who had been to Babylon were in awe of the splendor of the city. They were impressed with her architecture, commerce, and style of life. At first, they must have questioned whether the **impoverished** Jewish ways could really receive God's blessings. They had literally nothing while Babylonians had all the luxuries one could enjoy.

This is when God spoke to His people. He reminds them that His strength far surpasses the wealth of the Babylonians. Someday their "grass" would dry up. Their Babylonian flowers would fade.

People always make comparisons and have secret fears. We worry about silly things. Yet God wants to share His permanence and strength. Maybe we have money problems, or social or physical problems. God is there to be our strength. Mankind is limited. God is limitless. This is the comfort we find in God.

Being a Witness to God's Greatness (Isaiah 40:9-10)

God gave Israel (and us) a great

responsibility. We are to give others a message of comfort. The message assures people that God is going to act and set things right in the world. Again, Jerusalem represents the Jews as a whole. God is going to give Jerusalem His message of hope. The Jewish people are to become missionaries spreading the news of Jehovah God.

Such a new responsibility is not taken lightly. The children of Israel learned that the special message from God goes beyond Judah and to the very ends of the earth. This new opportunity will change their lives forever.

Our witness to Christ makes us react differently in this day and time. When God tells us to share the good news, we should treat His words as our command. God has the royal right to expect His children to be mouthpieces for His work in this world.

Our ability to share Christ will depend on a number of things. First, we must be committed to the task of serving our Lord. We must be filled with the Spirit. We need to be "prayed up," confessing our sins, and led by Christ to speak to others.

Some people claim they don't need to share their faith verbally. They say they use their actions to influence others for Jesus' sake. Consider that we use our mouths to teach children. We use our mouths to tell people we love them. We share our ideas through words. In the same way, we can use

our words to mention God's goodness to those who don't know Christ. We don't have to be preach in our presentation. We simply speak from the heart.

Securely Placed in His Hands (Isaiah 40:11)

Here we find that the conquering Lord is also characterized in another powerful image. But this image is much gentler than the idea of a warrior. In verse 11, Isaiah notes that the strong-leading God will also act as a Shepherd.

Do you know how much concern a shepherd has for a flock of sheep? This level of attention is certainly what our Lord is trying to convey. The shepherd protects the flock from predators. The shepherd also mends their wounds, leads them to fresh grass and water. In other words, the sheep would be "dead ducks" without the help of the shepherd. Without God's divine protection, we would have no chance in a **malice**-filled world.

Isaiah 40:1-11

1: "Comfort, comfort My people," says your God.

2: "Speak kind words to Jerusalem. Call out to her that her time of war has ended, that her sin has been taken away, and that she has received from the Lord's hand twice as much for all her sins."

3: A voice is calling, "Make the way ready for the Lord in the desert. Make the road in the desert straight for our God.

4: Every valley will be lifted up and every mountain and hill will be brought down. The turns in the road will be made straight and the bad places will be made smooth.

5: Then the shining-greatness of the Lord will be seen. All flesh together will see it, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

6: A voice says, "Cry." And he said, "What should I cry?" All flesh is grass. All its beauty is like the flower of the field.

7: The grass dries up and the flower loses its color when the breath of the Lord blows upon it. For sure the people are grass.

8: The grass dries up. The flower loses its color. But the Word of our God stands forever.

9: O Zion, you who bring good news, go up on the high mountain! Lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, you who bring good news. Lift it up, do not be afraid. Say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!"

10: See, the Lord God will come with power, and His arm will rule for Him. See, He is bringing the pay He will give to everyone for what he has done.

11: He will feed His flock like a shepherd. He will gather the lambs in His arms and carry them close to His heart. He will be gentle in leading those that are with young.



Adult Bible Study in
Basic English

Bible Text

Isaiah 61

Background Text

Isaiah 61

Memory Verse

“I will have much joy in the Lord. My soul will have joy in my God, for He has clothed me with the clothes of His saving power.” Isaiah 61:10a (New Life Version)

Word List

assign: to give someone a job
assignment: a task or job given to someone
confirmation: being sure of truth, affirming something as valid
depiction: description which makes a mental picture
reiterate: to repeat
sovereign: supreme, independent

Enjoying God's Blessings

Think about how you celebrated Christmas last year. Did you enjoy the season with an awareness of the blessings of God? Everyone enjoys the small blessings like wonderful food and lively parties. We enjoy the love of family members and friends on Christmas Day. But all these blessings are not the real power behind the meaning of Christmas. God is the power behind those blessings.

God is the source of the blessings in our everyday lives, too. The book of Isaiah helps us understand that God has a great task for us. His task goes far beyond the self-serving ways in which we usually spend our days. Listen well to God's voice as we plunge into Isaiah 61.

God's Great Task for Isaiah (Isaiah 61:1-3)

We have strong **confirmation** on the value of this part of the Bible. Jesus quoted Isaiah 61:1-2 when He spoke in Luke 4:18-19. These words had special meaning to Christ. He truly came to help the poor and hurting. He came to speak the Good News. He came to heal those with sad hearts. Our world today still needs Jesus' touch. He calls on us to carry forth His task.

This passage from Isaiah 61 is similar to Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12. First, there is an introduction of the Servant. Then a painful mission unfolds. Finally, we see God's blessing through the efforts of the Servant. We also see similar pictures of the Servant in Isaiah 42:1; 48:16; and 50:4. His job is to declare a coming of divine favor and also judgment.

A beautiful part of the Scripture comes into focus when we hear of the Servant's assistance for those who are hurting or in need. The people of Isaiah's time had returned from captivity in Babylon. But they were still in cruel situations. They had poor government, lived in poverty, and had moral lapses. They needed

Things To
Think About

1. Give examples of sad-hearted people in today's world.
2. What can you do to assist those who have sad hearts?
3. Very few things in nature can bother a giant oak tree. What does the idea of "oaks of righteousness" mean to you in today's passage?
4. God says that He loves justice. Do we like justice only when it falls in our favor? How can we become more like God in a love for justice?
5. Isaiah sounds extremely confident in this chapter. He is being used by the Lord to proclaim a special message. What can you do when you feel that you are lacking in personal confidence?

good news and comfort.

Think about the historical meaning of this passage. God blessed His people by rescuing them from exile. He does not just get them out of the "hot seat" by freeing them. He begins to renew fellowship with them.

God's Special Job for Us (Isaiah 61:4-7)

God **assigns** us with a mission. Only He can **assign** the task. And only He can empower us to do it. "We know we are not able in ourselves to do any of this work. God makes us able to do these things" (2 Corinthians 3:5).

God even uses non-believers to accomplish His purposes. Verse 5 says that strangers will take care of the flocks of His people. These strangers were the Gentiles, the non-Jews.

God had a special plan for the Jewish people to carry on the mission of God. The New Testament carries on this theme in 1 Peter 2:5 and 9. The followers of Christ are called a chosen group of people, the King's religious leaders, a holy nation. We are ambassadors to tell the news of God's forgiveness to the world.

God's Special Agreement for Us (Isaiah 61:8-9)

God's blessings are for those who stop sinning and turn to God with their lives. We must **reiterate** God's love for justice and His hate for all that is wrong in the world. God made a promise with His people early in Old Testament history. If they would follow Him, He would bless them.

God developed a special agreement for us. He gives special **assignments** to us. Today's world has special **assignments** for all kinds of people. If you work in the Pentagon, you have certain **assignments** to accomplish. And if you work for your city's maintenance office, you have special **assignments** that no one else will be doing. In God's

work, we have the **assignment** of loving justice. We do not simply think about justice from time to time. We are to pursue it, concentrate on it, and live it out in our daily lives.

God says His followers will be recognized and acknowledged as people who have been blessed. They will be known as people who are honored. Everyone wants to be appreciated and liked by others. We can receive this worthy position when we serve the Master Who made us and redeemed us.

God's relationship with us is forever. He established it and will keep it through eternity.

Delighting in God's Amazing Ways (Isaiah 61:10-11)

Isaiah's words of joy in verses 10-11 describe the goodness of God. He pictures himself as putting on "clothes of His saving power." The clothing symbolizes a right relationship with God.

Also, the **depiction** of the bride and groom tells us about God and His followers. Both are thrilled in the relationship. Both see great promise in the future together.

All of us want to experience a touch from God that shows us His grace and forgiveness. Many of us just don't know exactly what to do in order to gain that

sense of joy. Some people try to impress God with a few actions and hope He will notice them. The truth is that God in His marvelous strength always pays perfect attention to us.

The book of Isaiah reminds us that God is **sovereign**. This term means God is fully and completely in charge. He can do as He wishes. He is truly King in life. Through Him, righteousness and praise spring forth. This means all that is worthy and beautiful in our lives actually comes from His power at work in us. We can find joy in God's amazing ways.

Maybe you can relate to the following situation. Many young people begin to ask God for guidance after they finish school. They need to know where to work and need a sense of approval from God. Everyone would like to follow the will of God, but many are not sure they clearly understand His will. Slowly but surely, the growing Christian begins to see how God is using them in their first job. He or she begins to be more tuned in to the will of God. They eventually sense the amazing work of God in their lives, even though they started off with doubts.

Upon reflection, we all can sing that simple chorus, "God is so good, He's so good to me."

Isaiah 61

1 The Spirit of the Lord God is on me, because the Lord has chosen me to bring good news to poor people. He has sent me to heal those with a sad heart. He has sent me to tell those who are being held and those in prison that they can go free.

2 He has sent me to tell about the year of the Lord's favor, and the day our God will bring punishment. He has sent me to comfort all who are filled with sorrow.

3 To those who have sorrow in Zion I will give them a crown of beauty instead of ashes. I will give them the oil of joy instead of sorrow, and a spirit of praise instead of a spirit of no hope. Then they will be called oaks that are right with God, planted by the Lord, that He may be honored.

4 They will build the cities again that were destroyed long ago. They will raise up what had been torn down, and will build the cities that were destroyed, and have lain waste through the years of many families and their children's children.

5 Strangers will stand and feed your flocks. Men from other lands will be your farmers and care for your vines.

6 But you will be called the religious leaders of the Lord. Men will speak of you as servants of our God. You will eat the riches of the nations, and in their riches you will speak with pride.

7 Instead of your shame you will have a

share that is twice as much. Instead of being without honor, they will sing for joy over all you receive. So they will have twice as much in their land, and joy that lasts forever will be theirs.

8 For I, the Lord, love what is right and fair. I hate stealing and what is wrong. I will be faithful to pay them what they should have. And I will make an agreement with them that will last forever.

9 Their children will be known among the nations. Their children's children will be known among the people. All who see them will know them, because they are the people to whom the Lord has brought honor.

10 I will have much joy in the Lord. My soul will have joy in my God, for He has clothed me with the clothes of His saving power. He has put around me a coat of what is right and good, as a man at his own wedding wears something special on his head, and as a bride makes herself beautiful with stones of great worth.

11 As the earth lets its new plants grow, and as a garden causes the things planted in it to grow, in the same way, the Lord God will cause what is right and good and words of praise to grow up in front of all the nations.



Adult Bible Study in
Basic English

Bible Text

Isaiah 9:1-7

Background Text

Isaiah 8:21—9:27

Memory Verse

“For unto us a Child will be born. To us a Son will be given. And the rule of the nations will be on His shoulders. His name will be called Wonderful, Teacher, Powerful God, Father Who Lives Forever, Prince of Peace.”
Isaiah 9:6 (New Life Version)

Word List

cut corners: to not fulfill a job completely in order to save time and effort

contempt: feeling of scorn or disgust

notion: idea or opinion

peer pressure: urging from friends to conform to ideas shared by the group

Celebrating a Baby's Birth!

Major events affect everyone. For people in New York City, life changed forever on September 11, 2001. After the fall of the Soviet Union, life would never be the same for the Baltic Republics of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Life for a remote village in Brazil will never be the same after electricity comes to their area. The notion of having light during the night has a powerful effect. But the **notion** of a light coming on in our souls can have the greatest impact ever.

Setting the Stage

The sixth chapter of Isaiah helps us understand the entire book of Isaiah. We see the prophet as he experienced the earth-shaking event of being in the presence of the Lord of Hosts. Isaiah described a time after the death of King Uzziah. It was a time when many Jews were sad and discouraged.

Isaiah was in the temple that day. He sensed an amazing presence of the Lord that changed his life forever. He realized the extreme holiness of the situation. Isaiah was at first so humbled that he felt helpless. He didn't know how God would ever consider using him. Eventually, Isaiah realized God could take him, cleanse him, and use him for service. Isaiah would never be the same after this magnificent encounter with God.

This passage relates to the historical context around the period of 734 BC. It was the time of the Syro-Ephraimitic War and the Assyrian invasion. (For more information on this pressing time of life, see 2 Kings 16:5-9 and Isaiah 6:1; 7:1-2; and 8:5.)

God revealed some of His full plan of redemption to Isaiah. In earlier times, God used priests, prophets, and even kings in His plan. Kings Saul, David, and Solomon were part of accomplishing God's work. In this situation He chose to speak through His servant, Isaiah. God continues even now to

Things To Think About

1. God set the stage of world history through the coming of His Son. How do you set the stage with a friend in order to share your faith?
2. What happens when you try to read a book without good lighting? Do you get headaches? Do you just get sleepy or angry? How does light help you?
3. In what way was the government on our Lord's shoulders during His time on earth? Does that differ from today? When the Lord returns again, how will the government be completely on His shoulders?
4. The zeal of the Lord is a powerful and awesome concept. List four things you are completely zealous about doing. List four other things that are interesting but not very compelling in your life. What makes the difference?

encourage and teach people through the wisdom of the Bible. He speaks to us with His still, small voice in ways that confirm biblical truths.

The Show Is About to Begin (Isaiah 9:1-3)

The first verse tells us the times were noted as being rumbling and tough. We note the idea of **contempt** for the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali. These areas had been overrun by Tiglath-pileser in 733-732 BC. They were added to the Assyrian empire. But life was about to change with the beginning of God's handiwork.

God predicted that He would be in the process of changing what men thought could not be altered. In Isaiah 9:2, we read of the symbol of light. Many people had previously walked in darkness. But a better way was coming. We see a similar reference in Jesus' day in Matthew 4:15-16.

We can see how the early Jews became confused about the idea of a coming Messiah. This great truth being fulfilled in a small, innocent baby seemed too impossible. Other important Old Testament passages that speak of the coming Messiah are 2 Samuel 2:4; 2 Kings 11:12; 1 Samuel 24:10; and Psalm 2:2.

Many Old Testament references echo the material found in Isaiah 9. Look up various passages dealing with God's establishment of the throne of justice. These concepts are found in Psalm 2:8-9; 61:6-7; 72:1-8; and 132:11-12.

History Shows the Need for Change (Isaiah 9:4-5)

Verse 4 deals with the concept of "broken as on the day of Midian." This is a reference to the famous day of Gideon's complete victory over the invading Midianites (Judges 6-8). Isaiah 9:4 sends the message that God will securely and completely do the work He sets out to do.

In these verses, we get a picture of God's ability to foil the

enemy and set right the issues of justice. God will not allow a simple group of unfaithful people to roll over His people of faith. He continues to unveil an even clearer picture of His ultimate and final act of salvation for the world.

We can have great confidence in the work of God. He will not lead us into difficulties we cannot handle. A young person may find **peer pressures** to be nearly overwhelming. God can give direction and understanding to withstand the trials.

Another example is how God assists a young adult by empowering them in their job. Many people would pressure the young person to “**cut corners.**” This is not God’s idea of acting ethically. The young worker can rely on the strength of God to do the best job possible. As Christians we are representing God in everything we do.

The Greatest Story Will Be Told (Isaiah 9:6-7)

The Bible tells us that the Coming One will be known by special names. He will be called Wonderful, Teacher, Powerful God, Father Who Lives Forever, and Prince of Peace. These names are not given without great meaning. They symbolize the distinct difference between regular religious leaders and the Son of God Who was both human and divine at the same time. When

Isaiah used these special names, he was stating that Jesus would be victorious and that everlasting peace would come through Him. Also, the names imply that Jesus would bring a peace that knows no boundaries and would continue forever.

Such a prediction was both awe-striking and thrilling to consider. The very fact that God had planned this event for thousands of years (even since time began) is fantastic to the human brain.

We should closely consider the idea of God’s zeal to send His own Son into the broken world. God did not give partial concern to our world. Nor did He send a second-level angel to try to correct wrong ways of men and women. God sent the only potential cure for the big mess made by a sinful world.

The whole Christian movement of the world has been built around the **notion** of a Living God Who cared so much for His world that He sacrificed part of Himself. God’s love extends to each people group of the world. Some estimate there have been over 15,000 languages spoken in the world. God can speak to all of those people in their heart language. He shows His amazing love for them all by giving His only Son. God’s zeal for loving us was that He gave part of Himself.

No greater love can ever be shown than what God expressed for us. We have the

greatest opportunity to share that truth with people we know.

Since God came to us through His Son Jesus, many things have happened. First, we do not have to be miserable. We have hope. Also, we have purpose in life. We enjoy a secure future and are anchored safely while the world is tossed around us. Finally, because Jesus came, we have an answer for the worst events that could ever come to us. No matter the hurt in this world, we know that our Lord will one day bring justice and correct everything. He loves us too much to let any injustice continue indefinitely.

Spend some time brainstorming with other members of your Bible study group. Find some meaningful ways to express the love of God through Christ. At Christmas, we give gifts. But we have God's gift of love to share all year long. Consider surprising someone with a gesture of Christian love and appreciation. Do something for the workers of your city, such as the maintenance people, postal workers, and public works laborers.

Isaiah 9:1-7

1 But there will be no more heavy hearts for those who were suffering. In the past God allowed the lands of Zebulun and Naphtali to be put to shame. In the future He will honor Galilee where those who are not Jews live and where the road to the sea is. It is on

the other side of the Jordan.

2 The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. The light will shine on those living in the land of dark shadows.

3 You will make the nation great. You will give them great joy. They will be glad before You, as with the joy of gathering time, and as men have joy when they divide the riches taken after a battle.

4 For you will break the heavy load from their neck and shoulders. You will break the power of those who made it hard for them, as at the battle of Midian.

5 For every shoe of the soldiers in the battle, and every coat rolled in blood, will be burned in the fire.

6 For to us a Child will be born. To us a Son will be given. And the rule of the nations will be on His shoulders. His name will be called Wonderful, Teacher, Powerful God, Father Who Lives Forever, Prince of Peace.

7 There will be no end to His rule and His peace, upon the throne of David and over his nation. He will build it to last and keep it strong with what is right and fair and good from that time and forever. The work of the Lord of All will do this.



Adult Bible Study in
Basic English

Bible Text

Isaiah 62

Background Text

Isaiah 62

Memory Verse

“Look, the One Who saves you is coming! See, He is bringing with Him the pay He is to give.” Isaiah 62:11 (New Life Version)

Word List

acronym: a word formed by using the first letters of a phrase

bestow: to give

divergent: moving in different directions

emerge: to come forth or appear

grasp: to take or seize firmly; to understand

impact: influence

intervention: coming between two concepts or actions in order to change them

Trusting in God's Promises

Everyone likes a good party. Humans are “party animals.” We celebrate everything from winning a baseball game to the visit of a relative. We use holidays to celebrate friendships and culture. Cinco de Mayo celebrations hold great significance for people of Mexican descent. The Chinese celebrate a new year that does not fall on January 1. Christmas celebrations take on great significance for people who trust Christ as Savior. The Christmas story reminds us of God’s care to intervene in an ugly world. It goes beyond what happened 2,000 years ago. The story will not be fully finished until our Lord comes again. A celebration helps us recognize what has happened and what will happen.

No one knows what the future holds. But Christians can approach the future with a confidence that others do not enjoy. Christians look expectantly into the future because God is there. They may not have job prospects. They may have little money in the bank. But they are children of the One Who answers all the questions the future could ever pose.

Understanding the Background of Isaiah 62

This chapter deals with the same setting found in Isaiah 61. Again, we hear a message of God’s promise to **bestow** blessings on His people whom He **redeemed** from exile. God would develop a special fellowship with the people. The **impact** of the message can even be felt in the New Testament, where we find Isaiah 62:11 quoted in Matthew 21:5.

God promises to care for His people. All His promises had not come to pass. But the prophet continued to pray for their fulfillment in 62:1. The people were called to watch for God’s work like the men who kept guard on the city’s walls (62:6).

The human race has always been the focus of God’s attention. We are held in God’s hands like a king would hold a royal crown. Verse 3 shows the idea that God prizes us greatly. His

mindset: the experiences and prejudices which tend to turn us toward certain positions

redeemed: freed from sin; rescued by paying a price

quizzical: questioning

Things To Think About

1. God set the stage of world history through the coming of His Son. Name some human elements that give people a sense of confidence for the future (such as financial stability). How are these earthly strengths really shaky?

2. What can we do to allow Christ to work in us?

3. Where else in the Bible do we find words that give us hope for the future? Look up John 17 and the last verses of 1 Corinthians 13 to get some hints.

4. Why don't we pray with more consistency and intensity?

love for us is remarkable.

We are called a holy people in verse 12. God is at work in our lives to make us holy. We cannot become holy by our own effort. We must experience the changing, healing work of God. If we tried to become holy on our own power, we would have the success rate of a grasshopper trying to jump all the way to the moon.

Time for a New Name (Isaiah 62:1-2)

A powerful part of the book of Isaiah **emerges** at this point. Isaiah is determined to never rest until God's will is accomplished. His zeal is admirable. We should have the same enthusiasm to see others come to saving faith in Christ.

Verse 2 says we will be called by a new name given by the Lord. It is a mystery just what that new name will be. From the **mindset** of the ancient Middle East, a new name symbolized a new person on the inside. Even today in some countries around the world, believers add a new name when they are baptized.

Time for a New Reputation (Isaiah 62:3-5)

Everyone needs a chance for a fresh start. This includes a "wiping of the slate" regarding our reputation. God says we will be a crown of beauty to Him. We get a further understanding of His love through the idea of name changes. His people were called "Left Alone," and the land called "Forgotten." Isaiah uses the idea of marriage to explain the newly restored relationship between God and His people.

Time to Call on the Lord (Isaiah 62:6-7)

Christians are often encouraged to be "watchmen on the walls." This call is designed to stimulate ongoing prayer on the part of God's people. Some people might wonder if such

constant calling on God to work would bother or annoy God. But God's Word tells us to continually bring our requests to him.

All prayer carries an element of mystery. We will never fully **grasp** all the importance of prayer. But we know that our God urges us to pray and live within His will "until He builds Jerusalem." This phrase means He continually works within the people of faith until He perfects us in the end of time.

We should pray with a kind of direction and attitude that's reflected in the **acronym** of *ACTS*: *A* for adoration, *C* for confession, *T* for thanksgiving, and *S* for supplication. Our first motive in prayer should be focusing on God's greatness, not on our problems, challenges, and worries. Next we move to personal confession. Confession is a natural reaction to our acknowledgement of God's greatness.

This leads us naturally to a spirit of thankfulness. God cleanses us, renews us, empowers us. We overflow with thankfulness. Finally, we are ready for supplication. This word means asking for help, assistance, guidance from God for our needs and the needs of others.

Time to Reflect on God's Provisions (Isaiah 62:8-9)

God makes a promise in verse 8 and seals it by swearing "by His right hand and

by His strong arm." We can count on His limitless power that He will carry out what He says He will do. In verse 9, we can imagine the thankfulness felt by those who are eating the meal they have worked hard to grow, harvest, and prepare. God promises to provide for His faithful followers.

Time for the Earth to Hear the News (Isaiah 62:10-12)

A **quizzical** double command starts this section with the words "Go through, go through." Other verses in Isaiah have a repeated command (40:1; 51:9,17; 52:1; 57:14; 65:1). Think how often you repeat commands in everyday life. To rush a slow-moving child, a mother says, "Hurry, hurry! It's time to go!" God repeats His commands to His people to emphasize importance.

The idea behind verse 10's command gives a call for unity. The local church must be united in one voice to accomplish the work of the Lord (see John 17:21 as another example). If Christians have **divergent** ways in attitude and focus, we have little effectiveness. When we are unified on what's important, we can make a strong difference for the cause of Christ.

One of the most beautiful phrases in the Bible comes at this point. We are told in verse 11 that our salvation is coming. Everyone has known the excitement when family and friends are coming for a

celebration. Now the people of faith can look toward the greatest experience of life. They can find cleansing of the Lord. Through such a holy **intervention** in our lives, we get to be the “holy people” who have been “saved and set free by the Lord” (verse 12). We are **redeemed**. We have great reason to celebrate!

Isaiah 62

1: Because of Zion, I will not keep quiet. Because of Jerusalem I will not rest, until her being right with God shines like a bright light, and her being saved shines like fire.

2: The nations will see that you are right and good. All kings will see your shining-greatness. And you will be called by a new name which the mouth of the Lord will give.

3: You will be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, a king's crown in the hand of your God.

4: You will no longer be called “Left Alone.” Your land will no longer be called “Forgotten.” But you will be called “My joy is in her,” and your land “Married.” For the Lord finds joy in you, and to Him your land will be married.

5: For as a young man marries a young woman who has never had a man, your sons will marry you. And as the man to be married finds joy in his bride, so your God will find joy in you.

6: On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have put men to keep watch. All day and all night they will never be quiet. You who help the Lord remember, do not rest.

7: And give Him no rest until He builds Jerusalem and makes it a praise in the earth.

8: The Lord has sworn by His right hand and by His strong arm, “I will never again give your grain to be food for those who hate you. And strangers will never again drink your new wine that you have worked hard to make.

9: But those who have worked on it will eat it and praise the Lord. And those who gather it will drink it in the open spaces inside My holy house.”

10: Go through, go through the gates. Open the way for the people. Build up, build up the road. Take away the stones, and raise the flag over the people.

11: See, the Lord has made it known to the end of the earth: Say to the people of Zion, “Look, the One Who saves you is coming! See, He is bringing with Him the pay He is to give.”

12: And they will call them “The holy people, the people who have been saved and set free by the Lord.” And you will be called “A city looked for, a city that God has not forgotten.”

Isaiah



Adult Bible Study in Basic English

UNIT 2: ISAIAH' SERVANT SONGS

Lesson 6
A Light for the Nations
Isaiah 42:1-4;
49:1-6; 50:4-11

Lesson 7
Healed by His Wounds
Isaiah 53:1-12

UNIT 2 ISAIAH'S SERVANT SONGS

The book of Isaiah is one of the richest books in the Bible. By the term “rich,” we mean it provides a great amount of material about God’s ultimate plan. Isaiah bridges the Old Testament to the New Testament. This book reveals much about how God will eventually accomplish His complete purpose for people of the earth. He sent a servant, His only Son, to save the world.

This special preview of Christ in the book of Isaiah is a miracle in and of itself. But the greatest miracle was Jesus coming to save us.

God also explains in the book of Isaiah that salvation will be for more than just the Jewish people. God desires to send His light to all people of the world, not to just those on whom He focused in the Old Testament.

Four “Servant Songs” are presented in Isaiah. Lesson 6 covers three of them. Lesson 7 looks at the fourth Servant Song.

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Adult Bible Study in
Basic English

Bible Text

Isaiah 42:1-4;
49:1-6; 50:4-11

Memory Verse

“I will also make You a light to the nations, so that men over all the earth can be saved from the punishment of their sins.” Isaiah 49:6b (New Life Version)

Word List

afterglow: the light lingering after a sunset

challenge: a call to take part in a difficult situation

intimate: very friendly and personal

A Light for the Nations

The idea of service and being a servant gets a bad rap nowadays. Our culture tells us to try to be better and stronger than others. We are not encouraged to try to serve people. Our first thought may be “they ought to be helping themselves.” Jesus Christ came to earth with the opposite attitude and spirit.

Getting a Perspective on the Material

Christ is called the Servant in parts of the book of Isaiah. This book was inspired by God and written by Isaiah over 700 years before Christ came into this world. In Isaiah, God presents His plan that salvation will not be limited to the Jewish people. Non-Jews were called Gentiles. They will have the opportunity for God’s salvation (Isaiah 49:6). Salvation was for all the nations, not just the Hebrew nation.

We find a valuable description of the Servant in Isaiah 41:8-10. This message was meaningful for the oppressed people of Isaiah’s day. But the complete fulfillment of this picture comes only in Jesus Christ. The book of Isaiah gives us a foundation for understanding Christ’s work in the New Testament.

God weaves His message throughout the whole Bible. Many of the concepts in this lesson are repeated in the New Testament. This truth sheds light on the great value the Jewish people placed on the book of Isaiah. For example, Isaiah 42:1-4 is quoted in Matthew 12:18-21. Isaiah 49:6 is echoed in Acts 13:47.

Isaiah clearly points out the importance of working in the service for our Lord. We are called to be instruments of justice and salvation to the lost world. The instructions are outlined beautifully in the Old Testament. But they come to full definition only after we understand and follow Jesus Christ.

**Things To
Think About**

1. Isaiah gives glimpses of the mission of God's coming Servant. What would you say your personal mission is?
2. We all hear of very unjust things that occur in our world. Try to name at least five injustices in your area. What could you try to do in the upcoming year to combat those injustices?
3. Isaiah saw God's hand working in his life. Mention three times when you have seen the hand of God working in your life.
4. God will do what He intends to do. We should make no mistake, He will work His will in spite of Satan's schemes. Name three ways you have seen God's will win in the lives of people around you.
5. How are you going to be part of God's efforts in helping justice reign in your family? in your neighborhood? in your state?

Jesus Acts as the Perfect Servant (Isaiah 42:1-4)

The first verse in this passage reminds us of the moments surrounding Jesus' baptism. As we see the work of God in the lives of the servant and His people, we think about responsibility. When God assigns tasks to us, He also gives the needed wisdom and energy to perform those jobs.

God shows **intimate** appreciation to His servants. He does the choosing. He delights in His followers. We should not take His blessings casually and selfishly. He calls us to be greater than the self-serving people of our day.

In verse 2, we notice the Servant works silently and without demanding attention. This is seen in the images of the sensitivity to the broken branch and the little fire. God's Servant will effectively and patiently serve. We often refer to God speaking to us with His still, small voice. Servants of God accomplish much as calming forces in this noisy world.

In verse 4, we grasp the idea of the untiring work of the Servant. This concept inspires us to endurance while we seek to serve our Lord. By following the attitude of the Servant, we will not be easily discouraged. We guard against discouragement by constantly requesting strength from God. Plus, we draw power and encouragement from other believers as we work as a team to accomplish Kingdom efforts.

God's Plan is Carried Out Perfectly (Isaiah 49:1-3)

In these verses, Servant reflects on His role in God's full plan for eternity. His role will affect all nations. Also, the idea of God's care begins before the Servant is aware, even to the point of beginning prior to birth.

Verse 3 reminds us that our self-sufficient God will choose the people of faith to glorify Himself. He calls us to respond. Then He chooses to use those same people to spread His message to all people of all time.

God's Holy Display (Isaiah 49:4-6)

Serving God comes with a price. Many believers find themselves discouraged due to all kinds of pressures and moments of defeat. This part of Isaiah stresses the potential of such low moments where emotional strength is depleted. Believers may not immediately see the value of their efforts. If so, they will wrongly conclude their efforts were in vain.

But God has an answer for these low moments. In verse 5, we see an astonishing answer for the Servant. God would make the task even greater. The Servant would not only be working the Jewish harvest fields from this point into the future. Amazingly, the Servant would now find the whole world to be the harvest area.

Many times the best medicine to make us forget our troubles is a more challenging assignment. In Isaiah, the Servant is confronted by God's **challenge** to venture far beyond the comfort zones of His Jewish background. The Servant is called on to be a light to the nations of the world.

That same **challenge** and call hits home in our lives today. We are an incredibly blessed people in the 21st century. What are we doing with those blessings? Are we taking God's Light to the world? Certainly God has blessed us in order that we can become blessings to the rest of the world.

God Strengthens/Defends (Isaiah 50:4-9)

Isaiah 50 brings us to the point of remembering that all our strength comes from the living Lord. God provides the energy, the words, and the listening heart. Through His power, we can be victors. In verse 6, we see the strength of the Lord in the worst of situations. Just as Christ stood during His trial and beatings, so we will be able to stand in the strength of our God.

God doesn't just place us in the battle without the support system necessary for victory. He provides the needed resources to cope. With the power of God, the Servant can now stand strong, even to the point of asking, "Who will fight with me?"

His Light Makes All the Difference (Isaiah 50:10-11)

Many places in the Bible remind us of the importance of fearing the Lord. This passage highlights the wrong attitudes of those who fear God but continue to walk in darkness. Our commitment must be whole-hearted. While we hear of God's kindness, we also must heed His warnings of judgment. The closing comments in verse 11 remind us that God is quite serious about the final results for the faithless. His Light truly makes the difference, but true believers must follow His Light. They cannot simply hope to catch a little **afterglow** of the light while continuing to live godless lives.

Isaiah 42:1-4

1 “See! My servant, My chosen one! My much Loved, in Whom My soul is well pleased! I will put My Spirit on Him. He will say to the nations what is right from wrong.

2 He will not cry out or speak with a loud voice. His voice will not be heard in the streets.

3 He will not break a broken branch or put out a little fire. He will be faithful to make everything fair.

4 He will not lose hope or be crushed, until He has made things right on the earth. And the islands will wait with hope in His Law.”

Isaiah 49:1-6

1 Listen to Me, O islands. Listen, you people from far away. The Lord called Me before I was born. From the body of My mother He said My name.

2 He has made My mouth like a sharp sword. He has hidden Me in the shadow of His hand. He has made Me a shining arrow, keeping Me in His secret place.

3 And He said to Me, “You are My Servant Israel, in Whom I will show My shining-greatness.”

4 But I said, “My work has been for nothing. I have spent My strength for nothing. Yet for sure what should come to Me is with the Lord, and My pay is with My God.”

5 And now the Lord speaks, Who made Me before I was born to be His Servant, to bring Jacob back to Him, that Israel might be gathered to Him. For I am honored in the eyes of the Lord, and My God is My strength.

6 He says, “It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the family groups of Jacob, and to bring back those of

Israel I have kept safe. I will also make You a light to the nations, so that men over all the earth can be saved from the punishment of their sins.”

Isaiah 50:4-11

4 The Lord God has given Me the tongue of those who follow Him, that I may know how to give strength when I speak to one who is tired. He wakes Me up morning by morning. He wakes up My ear to listen as a follower.

5 The Lord God has opened My ear, and I obeyed Him. I did not turn back.

6 I gave My back to those who hit Me, and My face to those who pull out the hair on my face. I did not cover My face from shame and spit.

7 For the Lord God helps Me, so I am not put to shame. I have set My face like hard stone, and know that I will not be ashamed.

8 He Who shows I am right is near. Who will fight with Me? Let us stand up to each other. Who has something against Me? Let him come near to Me.

9 See, the Lord God helps Me. Who will say that I am guilty? See, they will all wear out like a piece of clothing. The moth will eat them.

10 Who among you fears the Lord and obeys the voice of His Servant, yet walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord and have faith in his God.

11 See, all you who start a fire and put fire all around you! Walk in the light of your fire and among the pieces of wood you have started to burn. You will receive this from My hand: You will lie down in much suffering.



Lesson
7
Adult Bible Study in
Basic English

Bible Text

Isaiah 53:1-12

Background Text

Isaiah 52:13—53:12

Memory Verse

“All of us like sheep have gone the wrong way. Each of us has turned to his own way. And the Lord has put on Him the sin of us all.” Isaiah 53:6 (New Life Version)

Word List

fathom: to understand thoroughly

horrendous: horrible or frightful

humility: absence of pride or self-assertion

humiliate: to embarrass or put down another person

indignity: not being given the respect one deserves

incredible: difficult to believe

Healed by His Wounds

No story has ever been told like the story of Jesus coming into our world. This **incredible** story includes what the leaders would never predict. The whole idea of a king coming through the poor section of society was unbelievable. Through Isaiah’s writing, God previewed the coming of His Son. Many people still would not grasp the idea. Grace was introduced into a sin-filled world.

Our world has always lived by laws, rules, and punishment. Christ brought understanding and forgiveness.

We can share our new lives with people who live in fear of punishment. We can share a forgiving spirit and show the spirit of Jesus. We can give something to people without their asking for anything. We can act like servants without asking for anything in return. People are attracted to a gospel where they see something special, something they don’t have. Without Christ, people will never know joy and freedom from guilt.

Introducing a Most Memorable Chapter of the Bible

Isaiah 53 carries some of the most beautiful words in the Bible. It also contains the fourth Servant Song. This final song tells that the Servant from God would suffer. His suffering would bring renew the people’s relationship with God. No one in Isaiah’s day could **fathom** these words. They could only **marvel** that God made a unique plan to redeem His people.

This chapter plays an important part in understanding the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. God’s plan to redeem the world meant personal sacrifice—the death of His Son. Jesus became known as the Man of Sorrows.

Our King was a Man of Sorrows (Isaiah 53:1-3)

God’s **incredible** purpose was to take what the world saw as worthless and make it worthy. Isaiah starts with a question of amazement. He then jumps into a description of **humility**. No

marvel: to be filled with amazement or wonder

reprieve: a delay in punishment

tinge: a hint of something, as of color

torturous: causing pain or torment

Things To Think About

1. Christ took responsibility for our sins. Have you ever taken responsibility for another person's actions or faults?

2. Christ was rejected by many people 2,000 years ago. Christians today are sometimes ignored or rejected. Why do we sometimes think that Christians should only have positive blessings and no trials?

3. What does the coming of the Son tell you about the intensity of the Father's love for us?

4. How does the model of Jesus' life help you to see the need for a growing, vibrant faith? What did Jesus do to make sure He was close to the Father?

one would have been immediately impressed with the vision painted by Isaiah. His culture valued physical beauty, just like our culture does. But the Servant looked quite plain. The Servant would not look much like a kingly person.

The Servant was rejected. Think about the loneliness Jesus must have faced as He served the Father. The Bible refers to loneliness and rejection many times (Lamentations 1:1-3; Psalm 22:31; and Jeremiah 49:15). Jesus didn't experience just a **tinge** of pain for us. He was One Who truly knew pain first-hand. He willingly did it for us.

He Took Punishment He Did Not Deserve (Isaiah 53:4-5)

The end of verse 3 speaks of the negative reaction people gave the Servant. In verses 4-5, the story gets more **horrendous**. The Servant willingly accepted the assignment from God to suffer. He is **humiliated** in front of the people He tried to love. But Jesus had a miraculous plan while He was bearing our sorrows. He did something we could not do for ourselves. Our sin was erased because of the suffering of the Servant. The Servant did not deserve any part of the punishment. But He accepted our blame and our failures. He accepted the penalty for what we should pay.

Suffering for the Sheep (Isaiah 53:6)

One of the greatest moments of the Bible comes in Isaiah 53:6. Isaiah writes about the sinfulness of all people by comparing them to wandering sheep. But Isaiah doesn't stop there. The verse continues by showing the Lord's plan of love. The Servant Leader takes responsibility for the sins of all mankind. The Father laid our sins on His Son's shoulders.

He Could Have Walked Away from the Pain (Isa. 53:7-9)

Verses 7-9 remind us that the Suffering Servant did not

open His mouth during the **torturous** experience. This was stated not once, but twice in verse 7. This repetition stresses how absolute God's love was for us. Jesus did not complain or cry out in pain. He did not ask for a **reprieve** or a pardon. Great self-control is required to be silent during unfair treatment. The Suffering Servant endured all that pain for our sakes.

He was given a "grave with the sinful." This grouped the Lord with the lowest rank of humanity. He did not even have His own grave. A rich man gave a grave site so that Jesus' body could be placed somewhere. In the ancient Middle East, this was a horrible **indignity**. They would go to great lengths to have a burial that showed respect for the dead. Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus' burial. Our own Lord's body was placed in a borrowed tomb.

Jesus Accepted and Followed God's Will (Isaiah 53:10-12)

These verses interpret the Lord's purpose as Christ bore our sins on His shoulders. God planned the whole scene, including the death, burial, and resurrection of the Suffering Servant. Christ's silence and patience during His trial were expressions of His dependence on God's power to endure the pain.

Jesus was offering Himself as the guilt offering. Old Testament passages which

refer to such an offering can be found in the following verses: Leviticus 5:1-19; 7:1-38; 14:1-57; and 1 Samuel 6:3.

Christ's suffering for our sins brought about a great sense of **humility**. He was treated like a common sinner. He carried the reputation of being a "loser." Many would choose not to follow this One Who displayed such supposed "weakness." His suffering for our sins was not understood by many of His day. Even today the concept of the Suffering Servant does not make sense to many people.

The final concept in verse 12 reveals that the Suffering Servant prayed for sinners. Jesus had enough love to continue to love them even after suffering punishment for them.

When struggles come our way, we can remember what James wrote in the New Testament. "My Christian brothers, be happy when you have all kinds of tests. You know these prove your faith. It helps you not to give up" (James 1:2-3). Suffering can lead us to glorify our risen Savior.

Isaiah 53:1-12

1 Who has believed what we told them?
And to whom has the arm of the Lord been shown?

2 He grew up before Him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground. He has no beautiful body and when we see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him.

3 He was hated and men would have nothing to do with Him, a man of sorrows and suffering, knowing sadness well. We hid, as it were, our face from Him. He was hated, and we did not think well of Him.

4 For sure He took on Himself our troubles and carried our sorrows. Yet we thought of Him as being punished and hurt by God, and made to suffer.

5 But He was hurt for our wrong-doing. He was crushed for our sins. He was punished so we would have peace. He was beaten so we would be healed.

6 All of us like sheep have gone the wrong way. Each of us has turned to his own way. And the Lord has put on Him the sin of us all.

7 Men made it very hard for Him and caused Him to suffer, yet He did not open His mouth. He was taken like a lamb to be put to death. A sheep does not make a sound while its wool is cut and He did not open His mouth.

8 He was taken away as a prisoner and then judged. Who among the people of that day cared that His life was taken away from the earth? He was hurt because of the sin of the people who should have been punished.

9 They gave Him a grave with the sinful, but with the rich at His death, for He had done no wrong, and there was nothing false in His mouth.

10 But it was the will of the Lord to crush Him, causing Him to suffer. Because He gives His life as a gift on the altar for sin, He will see His children. Days will be added to His life, and the will of the Lord will do well in His hand.

11 He will see what the suffering of His soul brings, and will be pleased. By what He knows, the One Who is right and good, My Servant, will carry the punishment of many and He will carry their sins.

12 So I will give Him a share among the great. He will divide the riches with the strong, because He gave up His life. They thought of Him as One Who broke the Law. Yet He Himself carried the sin of many, and prayed for the sinners.

Jeremiah



Adult Bible Study in Basic English

**UNIT 3:
JEREMIAH:
MESSAGES
OF JUDGMENT
AND HOPE**

**Lesson 8
Called to a
Difficult Task
Jeremiah 1:1-19**

**Lesson 9
When Trust
Is Misplaced
Jeremiah 7:1-15**

**Lesson 10
Warning to Unfaithful
Leaders
Jeremiah 22:1-5, 13-17;
23:9-18**

**Lesson 11
Responding
Courageously
Jeremiah 37:1-2, 6-17;
38:14-23**

**UNIT 3
JEREMIAH: MESSAGES OF JUDGMENT
AND HOPE**

These four lessons help us pay attention to God's message of judgment on the people of Judah because of their unfaithfulness to the Lord God.

The first lesson deals with Jeremiah's call. Jeremiah had to deliver doom and gloom to the people. But he also spoke God's word of future hope.

The second lesson considers one of the most famous passages in the book of Jeremiah. It is often referred to as Jeremiah's temple sermon. Jeremiah "pulled no punches" in this sermon.

The third lesson focuses on Jeremiah delivering God's message of warning to the nation's governmental and religious leaders.

The fourth lesson is set in the time when the nation was only months from being conquered. It contrasts the courageous faithfulness of Jeremiah with the weakness of King Zedekiah.

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Adult Bible Study in
Basic English

Bible Text

Jeremiah 1:1-19

Memory Verse

“You must go everywhere I send you. And you must say whatever I tell you.” Jeremiah 1:7b (New Life Version)

Word List

anguish: extreme pain or distress of mind

blunt: plain spoken; abrupt

Called to a Difficult Task

Did your parents, teacher, or boss ever tell you to do something that seemed too hard? That is when you must decide if you will try to do it. God may ask us to do something very hard. Our lesson shows what Jeremiah did when God asked Him.

Jeremiah’s Book and His Life (verses 1-3)

The title of this book is a simple phrase: “The words of Jeremiah” (verse 1). Words can also mean sayings or speeches. Jeremiah’s book is mainly a group of sermons that he preached.

He told briefly about his father, Hilkiah, and his hometown, Anathoth, which was near Jerusalem. Jeremiah was a prophet while Josiah was king of Judah. He kept preaching until the people of Jerusalem went into exile (verse 3).

How God Called Jeremiah (verses 4-9)

Jeremiah simply said, “The Word of the Lord came to me” (verse 4). He did not explain *how* he knew that God was speaking to him. He just *knew*. Do you know when God is speaking to you? Do you call Him your Sovereign Lord?

God told Jeremiah about a three-fold decision. God had made that decision long before (verse 5). God called Jeremiah for his special work long before Jeremiah was born. “I knew you” meant God had plans for him. “I set you apart” meant God prepared Jeremiah for his work. God wanted Jeremiah as a prophet to the nations. Jeremiah was a Jew. He preached mainly to the Jews. But he also had to give God’s message to other nations.

Next, God told Jeremiah not to make excuses. Jeremiah felt that he was not a good speaker. He felt too young for the job. But God told him not to talk that way. God would tell him what to say. Jeremiah did not need more age or experience. He was to go where God sent him and say what God told him. God promised to

**Things To
Think About**

1. How can people know that God is calling them to do something?
2. When is a person too young to be a speaker for God?
3. How can you tell the difference between a vision from God and your own imagination?
4. Can you preach the good news of forgiveness without preaching against sin?
5. What is God's interest in the Arab-Israeli conflict now going on?

go with Jeremiah and to rescue him.

Then God did two things to make Jeremiah sure of his call. First, God reached out His hand and touched Jeremiah's mouth. Any touch from God's hand is a big help. How has God touched you? Since Jeremiah thought he was a poor speaker, God touched his mouth. Compare this with Isaiah's call from God (Isaiah 6:5-7). The second thing God did was to put His words in Jeremiah's mouth. Now Jeremiah was ready to be a prophet. A great truth jumps out here. When God calls us to do a job, He prepares us to do it!

How God Showed Jeremiah His Job (verses 10-16)

In verse 10, God described the prophet's work. Verses 11-16 describe two visions that pictured how God and Jeremiah would work together. God gave Jeremiah six tasks as he preached to the nations. Four were negative: To uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow. Two were positive: To build and to plant. The tools for doing this work were the words that God had put in Jeremiah's mouth. First, he had to preach God's truth of judgment against the wicked nations—to tear down and destroy them. Only then could he preach God's truth of love and mercy—to plant hope and to build a new kingdom.

Then God showed Jeremiah a tree limb that was a hint about God's power. Jeremiah saw the branch of an almond tree. God explained that strange vision by saying He was watching to see that His Word was completed. In English, we do not see a clear connection between the almond branch and God's watchfulness. But in the Hebrew language, the words for *almond tree* and *watching* are similar. With this vision, God was saying to Jeremiah, "You preach what I tell you and I will make My words that you say come true."

The second vision was a picture of the negative message

that Jeremiah would have to preach. This time he saw a boiling pot, tilting away from the north (verse 13). The north was a region filled with several pagan nations. The boiling pot leaned toward the south, toward Judah and Jerusalem. God quickly explained what that boiling pot meant: Disaster from the north will be poured out on all who live in the land of Judah (verse 14). From that picture of the pot, God told Jeremiah how He would call those wicked pagans from the north to come and rule over Judah. They would attack Jerusalem and other towns. That would be God's judgment upon His own people because of their sins. He gave three examples of their wickedness. They left God out of their lives. They made offerings to other gods, probably the idols of other nations. They worshiped idols that they had made.

Jeremiah now could see that he had a hard job to do. He had to tell his own people that they were wrong. He had to tell them that God would judge and punish them. Even worse, he had to tell them that God would bring **anguish** on His people by sending foreigners from the north.

This reminds us that God Himself has a hard job as He deals with a world full of evil people. When He calls someone like Jeremiah to serve Him, that person can expect to face some hard times.

How God Warned and Encouraged Jeremiah (verses 17-19)

The time had come for Jeremiah to get busy. So in verse 17, God told him to get ready, get up and start talking.

Then God gave him two warnings. He told Jeremiah not to be afraid of the people. The people would not like the message. Jeremiah might fear what they would do.

God knew Jeremiah needed much encouragement at this point. He chose to encourage the prophet by reminding him of Who prepared Jeremiah for the job. God was more **blunt** in verse 19. Jeremiah could expect a fight from the people. But God promised they would not have power over Jeremiah. The prophet would win.

God compared Jeremiah to three very strong things: A strong city, a pillar of iron, and a wall of brass. God gave Jeremiah all the strength he needed to be a good prophet. That strength would defend him against all the citizens of Judah who would fight against Jeremiah—the kings, officials, priests, and the people.

In verse 19 God promised that He would be personally present with Jeremiah. He would take him out of danger. Has God ever rescued you out of a bad situation? Did your trouble come because you were serving God? When you are doing what God wants you to do, remember Whose strength you can call on.

Jeremiah 1:1-19

1 These are the words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah, one of the religious leaders at Anathoth in the land of Benjamin.

2 The Word of the Lord came to Jeremiah in the days of Josiah, the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his rule.

3 It came also in the days of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the fifth month of the eleventh year of Zedekiah, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, when the people of Jerusalem were taken away.

4 Now the Word of the Lord came to me saying,

5 “Before I started to put you together in your mother, I knew you. Before you were born, I set you apart as holy. I chose you to speak to the nations for Me.”

6 Then I said, “O, Lord God! I do not know how to speak. I am only a boy.”

7 But the Lord said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am only a boy.’ You must go everywhere I send you. And you must say whatever I tell you.

8 Do not be afraid of them. For I am with you to take you out of trouble,” says the Lord.

9 Then the Lord put out His hand and touched my mouth, and said to me, “See I have put My words in your mouth.

10 I have chosen you this day to be over the nations and the kings, to dig up and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant.”

11 And the Word of the Lord came to me saying, “What do you see, Jeremiah?” I said,

“I see a branch of an almond tree.”

12 Then the Lord said to me, “You have seen well, for I am watching to see that My Word is completed.”

13 The Word of the Lord came to me a second time saying, “What do you see?” And I said, “I see a boiling pot, with its face turned away from the north.”

14 Then the Lord said to me, “Out of the north trouble will come upon all the people of the land.

15 For, see, I am calling all the families of the nations of the north,” says the Lord. “And they will come. Then every one will set up his throne at the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls around it, and against all the cities of Judah.

16 And I will tell how they are to be punished for all their sin. For they have turned away from Me and have given gifts to other gods, and worshiped the works of their own hands.

17 Now get ready. Stand up and tell them everything that I tell you. Do not be afraid of them, or I will make trouble for you in front of them.

18 Today I have made you as a strong city ready for war, as a pillar of iron and as walls of brass against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, the rulers, its religious leaders, and the people of the land.

19 And they will fight against you. But they will not have power over you, for I am with you to take you out of trouble,” says the Lord.



Adult Bible Study in
Basic English

Bible Text

Jeremiah 7:1-15

Background Text

Jeremiah 7:1-15;
26:1-24

Memory Verse

“The Lord of All, the God of Israel, says, ‘Change your ways and your works for the better, and I will let you live in this place.’ ” Jeremiah 7:3 (New Life Version)

Word List

Ark of the Covenant:

a box of acacia wood trimmed with gold. (The Ark of the Covenant is called the Box of the Agreement or the “special box of God” in the New Life Version of the Bible.)

cistern: an underground water storage tank

deceptive: to speak falsely

When Trust Is Misplaced

Many Baptist people trusted the Baptist Foundation of Arizona. They deposited their savings there for years. In 1999, that foundation went bankrupt. Thousands of people lost millions of dollars. Have you ever trusted a person or a business or an idea that let you down? Have you believed something that was false because you did not want to see the truth?

This lesson shows how Jeremiah tried to keep the Jews from putting their trust in the wrong place.

Jeremiah’s Famous Temple Sermon (Jeremiah 7:1-2)

Many years ago, R.G. Lee was a well-known Baptist preacher. He was pastor of a big church, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, and a very good speaker. He became famous for a sermon named “Payday Someday.” He preached this sermon in many churches.

Jeremiah became famous around 609 B.C. as the “weeping prophet.” His jail was a muddy **cistern**. He smashed a clay pot as the climax in a sermon on how God would smash Judah. He preached this great sermon *at* the Lord’s house, *about* the Lord’s house, and *against* the Lord’s house.

This word from the Lord told Jeremiah to stand in the gate of the Lord’s house. That word told him how to get the people’s attention. He had to “make this word known.” That meant he should speak with a loud voice or cry out to call the people. He had to command them to listen. It was most likely at one of the big meetings that Jews had several times each year.

Just as R.G. Lee preached “Payday Someday” many times, Jeremiah also preached this “House of the Lord” sermon more than once. Another version of it is in Jeremiah 26. If a sermon truly makes known the word of the Lord, should the preacher preach it again or only one time?

Things To**Think About**

1. Why do people “fall in love” with the buildings where they worship God?
2. Why do people think they can live bad lives and still have “good worship”?
3. How do you react when a sermon tells you what you do not want to hear?
4. When God tells you to change your ways and your actions, which sins does He put on your list?
5. How can we recognize “lying words” before they lead us into danger?
6. What moral lessons have you learned from the bad things that have happened to other people?

Why Blind Faith Is No Good (Jeremiah 7:3-7)

The Jews to whom Jeremiah preached had great faith in the place where they worshiped. They would repeat over and over, “This is the house of the Lord” (verse 4). Repetition of a phrase made it more important. The Jews thought this way: “This place is the Lord’s house. It is sacred and holy because He lives here. He will not allow our enemies to ruin it. As long as we have this house, we will be safe.”

But God told Jeremiah to tell the people that those were **deceptive** words. They must not trust the lies. The people were trusting in that house as if it were a magic charm that would protect them. They were blind and deaf to the truth that Jeremiah tried to tell them.

But why would people prefer lies rather than truth? Because they did not want to change their evil ways. In verses 5-6, God pointed out some wrong things they had been doing. They had been unfair to one another. They had cheated and been unkind to weak people who could not defend themselves—foreigners, orphans and widows. They had dishonest courts that killed people who were not guilty. They worshiped idols. Some even sacrificed their children to false gods (see Jeremiah 19:5). God said that all those sins brought harm and danger that would destroy them.

The Lord offered a surprising promise to those wicked people: I will let you live in this place (verse 7). But He would keep that promise only if they would change their ways (verses 3,5). They not only had to stop doing the bad things. They had to start doing good things. The Jews put their trust in a building, the house of the Lord. They should have put more trust in their Lord.

How People Fool Themselves (Jeremiah 7:8-11)

People act like fools when they ignore God and His

commands to do good (see Psalm 53:1-3). In Jeremiah 7:4, God warned, “Do not trust the lies.” In verse 8, He said, “You are trusting in lies which cannot help you.” Some fools pay no attention to God. Other fools may listen but not do what He says.

In verses 9-10, God talked about the sins of the people. Each of the sins listed was disobedience to one of the Ten Commandments. These laws were not new. They had been known and honored for centuries among the Jews. But disobedience had become a way of life. They would commit these sins, then go to the Lord’s house to feel “safe and free.”

In verse 11, God asked them if His house seemed like a place where robbers could feel at home. The people hoped they could come to the house of the Lord and have God’s approval without changing their ways. They may have fooled themselves but they were not fooling God.

Trust What History Teaches You (Jeremiah 7:12-15)

God gave those foolish Jews a history lesson. He talked about Shiloh. This was the place where Joshua set up the Tent of Meeting (or Tabernacle) after winning battles in Canaan (see Joshua 18:1). That is why God called it the place “where I first made a place for My name” (verse 12). The priests led worship there for a long time. In

those years the Jews often fought the Philistines. The Jews thought the **Ark of the Covenant** would protect them in war and help them to win. But God let them lose both the battle and the box (1 Samuel 4:1-10). After that the Jews moved the Tent of Meeting to Nob and later to Gibeon. Apparently something terrible happened to Shiloh. In verse 12 God told those people who trusted in the house of the Lord to go to Shiloh. There they would see what God did to it because of the people’s sins. The Jews got a preview or forecast of what would happen to Jerusalem.

God gave a clear reason for destroying Shiloh—the people’s sins. God was going to destroy Jerusalem for the same reason. He had tried to change them: “I spoke to you again and again . . . I called you” (verse 13). But those stubborn sinners would neither hear nor answer. God would now destroy His house because they trusted in it, rather than in Him (verse 14).

In verse 15, God had another history lesson about the children of Ephraim. That was a name for the northern kingdom of Israel. God allowed Assyria to conquer and destroy that kingdom in 722 B.C. Now God would allow the same thing to happen to the people listening to Jeremiah. “I will send you away from My eyes, as I have sent away all your brothers” (verse 15).

How did the Jews of Jeremiah’s time

misplace their trust? By trusting in a thing, a building, rather than in the living God. By thinking they could “play at religion.” By thinking they could cover up their wrong way of living. By refusing to listen to God’s warnings and His calls to change their ways. By failing to heed the lessons of God’s judgment in the past. What about you? In what or in whom have you placed your trust?

Jeremiah 7:1-15

1 This word came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying,

2 ”Stand in the gate of the Lord’s house and make this word known: ‘Hear the Word of the Lord, all you men of Judah who go through these gates to worship the Lord!’ ”

3 The Lord of All, the God of Israel, says, “Change your ways and your works for the better, and I will let you live in this place.

4 Do not trust the lies that say, ‘This is the house of the Lord, the house of the Lord, the house of the Lord.’

5 For if you for sure change your ways and what you do for the better, if you are fair as you judge between a man and his neighbour,

6 if you do not make it hard for the stranger from another land, or the child whose parents have died, or the woman whose husband has died, and do not kill those who are guilty in this place, and stop going after

other gods, for that will destroy you,
7 then I will let you live in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever.

8 See, you are trusting in lies which cannot help you.

9 Will you steal, kill, do sex sins, make false promises, give gifts to the false god Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known,

10 and then come and stand before Me in this house which is called by My name, and say, ‘We are safe and free!’ and still do all these hated sins?

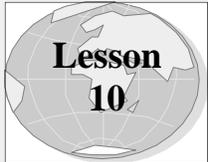
11 Has this house which is called by My name become a place of robbers in your eyes? See, I Myself have seen it,” says the Lord.

12 “But go now to the place in Shiloh where I first made a place for My name. And see what I did to it because of the sin of My people Israel.

13 Now you have done all these things,” says the Lord. “I spoke to you again and again, but you did not hear. I called you but you did not answer.

14 So as I did to Shiloh, I will do to the house that is called by My name and in which you trust, and to the place that I gave you and your fathers.

15 I will send you away from My eyes, as I have sent away all your brothers, all the children of Ephraim.



Adult Bible Study in
Basic English

Bible Text

Jeremiah 22:1-5,
13-17; 23:9-18

Background Text

Jeremiah 22:1-23:40

Memory Verse

“The Lord says, ‘Do what is right and fair and good.’ ” Jeremiah 22:3 (New Life Version)

Word List

Baal: the main idol of the Canaanite people. Baal worship included sex sins, child sacrifice, and drunkenness.

extravagant: fancy and costly

prophet: “one who speaks for another.” Jewish prophets spoke for God, telling the people of future events, correcting or encouraging them.

Sodom/Gomorrah:

Two evil cities in the days of Abraham.

Warning to Unfaithful Leaders

We have lots of kinds of leaders. They govern us in politics. They teach us in school. They hire us and boss us. They guide us in religion. Some leaders are good and help us. Some leaders are bad and do wrong. They need help, to get straight and do right. But who dares to warn them and tell them they are wrong? That is just what Jeremiah had to do for the bad leaders in his time.

How a King Should Rule (Jeremiah 22:1-5)

Jeremiah the **prophet** was probably in the house of the Lord when God told him to go and talk to the king. Jeremiah was to speak God’s Word to everyone at the king’s house. The Lord’s order to all was, “Do what is right and fair and good” (verse 3). How would they know what was right and fair and good? The Lord gave some examples of what He meant. They should help someone who had been robbed. They should help the people who had a hard time, like strangers or those whose parents or husbands had died. They should help people who were not guilty, instead of letting them be killed for what they did not do.

If the king and the people obeyed God’s word, they would have a good country. The kings, one after another, would keep ruling the country. But what if everyone would not obey this word? Then the Lord made a “promise by Myself” (verse 5). That meant the promise, which was really a threat, would surely come true. It was a sad promise: This house will be destroyed. “This house” meant the king’s palace and those who lived there.

Obeying God’s Word would keep the king on the throne and his house open for business. Not obeying God’s Word would ruin everything: king, throne, house, family, and all.

Why King Jehoiakim Was Wrong (Jeremiah 22:13-17)

Jeremiah spoke to or about several bad leaders of Judah.

Things To Think About

1. How can a religious leader change what a ruler does?
2. Why do people in power want so much “stuff”?
3. Who should tell rich people to stop doing what is wrong?
4. How have the sins of some religious leaders affected your life?
5. How can preachers keep from getting into so much trouble, especially over money and sex?
6. Should preachers who sin suffer more or less than other sinners?
7. Which seems more important to you, getting more riches or doing what is right and fair and good?

Jehoiakim was a son of former King Josiah. Jehoiakim became king about 609 B.C. The king of Egypt won a war against Judah. He made Jehoiakim king of Judah. These things happened in the years from 609 to 597 B.C.

Jehoiakim was a bad leader because of greed. He always wanted more things for himself. Even in his building projects, he was mean and cruel. He was building his house by wrong-doing. The king was not right and fair and good. King Jehoiakim dreamed big, selfish dreams and made big, fancy plans (verse 14). He planned an **extravagant** house for himself with many rooms, windows, and cedar trim.

Verse 15 reminds us of Jesus’ words: “A man’s life is not made up of things, even if he has many riches” (Luke 12:15). God asked Jehoiakim if he thought that having a big, fine palace was what made him a king. Josiah, the father of Jehoiakim, had been different. He had a happy life because he did what was right and fair and good. That was why he could eat, drink, and enjoy life while “all went well with him.”

Then God explained what it means to know Him (verse 15-16). To know God is a practical matter of doing what He says about how we should treat people, especially those who are poor and those in need.

The way God described Jehoiakim makes it clear that he did not know the Lord. He was greedy, always planning only what he could get by wrong-doing. That wrong-doing included killing those who were not guilty.

How the Religious Leaders Messed Up (Jer. 23:9-18)

Jeremiah called the religious leaders “the men who speak for God.” Their actions made Jeremiah feel sick (verse 9). What upset him so much was not just their bad lives. He staggered (walked “like a drunk man”) when he learned what the Lord would do to the leaders who offended Him.

Too many people were not faithful. The land was full of bad people doing bad things. When people do wrong, even the land suffers. When Adam did not obey God, the ground was cursed because of his sin (Genesis 3:17). The fields of the desert dried up because of the people's sins.

In verse 11, the Lord talks about the sins of two groups of men. "The men of God" were preachers who sometimes claimed to have a message from God. The "religious leaders" had steady jobs in in the house of the Lord. They led worship services. They put gifts on the altar from the people. But that did not keep them from doing wrong. God said, "I have found their sin even in My house."

God promised to bring much trouble upon them in the year of their punishment. He did not say when that year would be. He did say that they would have to go away into the darkness and fall down in it. That was part of how God would punish them. And that was why He warned them that their way would be a danger to them. The way they were going would lead to a fall in the darkness. What kind of darkness? Maybe the same kind that Jesus talked about when He said, "Throw the bad servant out into the darkness" (Matthew 25:30).

God then compared the religious leaders of Samaria and Jerusalem. Samaria was

north of Judah. Their leaders were bad, too. Instead of leading the people to the true God, they led the people to sin. Those leaders seemed to think that one religion was about as good as another. They spoke for the false god Baal. But here the true God said that anyone who speaks for false gods is leading people into sin.

Then God said that He looked among the religious leaders of Jerusalem and saw a very sinful thing. He meant not just one thing, but all the bad things that they were doing—sex sins, lies, helping others to sin. The people of Jerusalem and the religious leaders had become so bad, that to God, they looked like the evil cities of **Sodom** and **Gomorrah** (Genesis 19:24-25).

The religious leaders were setting a bad example of how to live. Their example did not make the people feel the need to turn from their sin. God would punish them with bitter food and water with poison.

Verse 16 says those lying preachers were filling the people with empty hopes. Their words did not come from the mouth of the Lord but from their own thoughts. They thought someone could live a sinful life "in the strong-will of his own heart" and not have any trouble. Their preaching showed they had not listened to the Lord or His Word. People who listen to the Lord can truly say, "The Lord has said." How much do you listen to the Lord?

Jeremiah 22:1-5, 13-17

1 The Lord says, “Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak this word there.

2 Say, ‘Hear the Word of the Lord, O king of Judah, who sits on David’s throne, you and your servants and your people who come through these gates.

3 The Lord says, “Do what is right and fair and good, and take the one who has been robbed away from the power of the one who has made it hard for him. Do not hurt or do wrong to the stranger, the one whose parents have died, or the woman whose husband has died. And do not kill those who are not guilty in this place.

4 For if you will obey this word, then kings will come through the gates of this house and sit on the throne of David. They will be in war-wagons and on horses, together with their servants and their people.

5 But if you will not obey these words, I promise by Myself,” says the Lord, “that this house will be destroyed.” ’ ’

Jeremiah 22:13-17

13 “It is bad for him who builds his house by wrong-doing, and his upper rooms by not being fair, who has his neighbor serve him for nothing and does not pay him,

14 who says, ‘I will build myself a big house with large upper rooms. I will cut out its windows, cover it with cedar and color it bright red.’

15 Do you become a king by trying to build better houses of cedar? Did not your father eat and drink? He did what was right and fair and good, so all went well with him.

16 He spoke strong words in the cause of the poor and those in need, and so all went well. Is not that what it means to know Me?” says the Lord.

17 “But your eyes and heart are set only on what you can get by wrong-doing, and on killing those who are not guilty, and on making it hard for people and on hurting others.”

Jeremiah 23:9-18

9 As for the men who speak for God, my heart is broken within me. All my bones shake. I

have become like a drunk man, like a man who has had too much wine, because of the Lord and because of His holy words.

10 For the land is full of people who are not faithful. Because of the bad things that have come upon it, the land is filled with sorrow, and the fields of the desert have dried up. Their way is sinful, and they use their power in a wrong way.

11 “For both the men of God and the religious leaders are sinful. I have found their sin even in My house,” says the Lord.

12 “So their way will be a danger to them. They will be driven away into the darkness and fall down in it. For I will bring much trouble upon them in the year of their punishment,” says the Lord.

13 “In Samaria I have seen a very bad thing among the men of Samaria who tell what is going to happen in the future. They speak for the false god Baal, and have led My people into sin.

14 In Jerusalem I have seen a very sinful thing among the men of Jerusalem who tell what is going to happen in the future. They do sex sins and tell lies, and give help to those who do sinful things, so that no one turns from his sin. All of them have become like Sodom to Me. The people of Jerusalem have become like Gomorrah.”

15 So the Lord of All says about the men who tell what is going to happen in the future, “See, I will make them eat bitter food and drink water with poison. For from these men of Jerusalem sin has gone out into all the land.”

16 The Lord of All says, “Do not listen to the words of those who are telling you what will happen in the future. They are filling you with empty hopes. They tell of dreams from their own thoughts, not from the mouth of the Lord.

17 They keep saying to those who hate Me, ‘The Lord has said, “You will have peace.” ’ To every one who walks in the strong-will of his own heart, they say, ‘Trouble will not come to you.’

18 But who among them has listened to the Lord, that he should see and hear His Word? Who has given thought to His Word and listened?”



*Adult Bible Study in
Basic English*

Bible Text

Jeremiah 37:1-2,6-17;
38:14-23

Background Text

Jeremiah 37:1—39:10

Memory Verse

“Obey the Lord by doing what I tell you. Then it will go well with you and you will live.” Jeremiah 38:20 (New Life Version)

Word List

courage/courageous:
to act bravely

mock: to tease or
make fun of someone

traitor: a person who
changes his mind and
joins the enemy

Responding Courageously

Years ago, the mayor of Torreón, Mexico, refused to let a group of Baptist young people have a meeting in a city park. Later, he allowed a group of Catholics to block traffic while they marched down several streets. I wrote to the mayor and strongly objected to his unfair treatment. He called me to his office and reminded me that I was a foreigner who did not know their culture. I was afraid of what he might do, but I insisted that he should treat all groups fairly. Finally, he agreed to sponsor a concert in a public park by our seminary choir. Later, the city asked the choir to sing in several places. They even closed a downtown street for a public concert.

Jeremiah had a lot more to be afraid of than I did. Even so, he was very brave in saying what God wanted him to say.

A Message From God (Jeremiah 37:1-2,6-10)

About 597 B.C., King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon captured Jerusalem. He took King Coniah and many leaders away to Babylon. He carried away all the riches of the Lord’s house and the king’s house. He took 10,000 prisoners (2 Kings 24:13-14). He made Zedekiah the king. But his kingdom was not worth much. He had to pay taxes to Babylon. He and his people needed all the help they could get. The Lord tried to speak to them through Jeremiah, the prophet of God. But they would not listen to what the Lord said.

Once again the Word of the Lord came to Jeremiah. And once again it was a message of defeat and destruction for Judah.

The army of Babylon had been around Jerusalem. The army of Pharaoh moved out of Egypt toward Judah. The army of Babylon left. King Zedekiah and his officers thought that Judah would soon be free. But God told them that both armies would move back to where they had been. Then the Babylonians would

Things To**Think About**

1. Why would one nation like Judah make deals with another nation like Egypt?
2. Who really decides what a nation does—the main ruler or other leaders or the people?
3. To what extent was Jeremiah a **traitor**, by urging his country to surrender to Babylon?
4. How long should a good preacher try to help a bad leader?
5. Why do women and children suffer so much from what bad men have done?
6. Which is worse, a leader who is too brave or one who is not brave at all?
7. Which do you fear more—someone hurting your body or someone **mocking** you?

burn down the city. The coming defeat was so sure that even the injured Babylonian soldiers would be able to burn the city. God made it clear that even if Zedekiah could win the battle, the people of Jerusalem and Judah would still lose.

It took **courage** for Jeremiah to tell King Zedekiah this sad, dark truth. But would the king bravely deal with it?

How the Prophet Went to Prison (Jeremiah 37:11-17)

After the Babylonian army left Jerusalem the first time, the people could go from the city to do business. Jeremiah left Jerusalem to go to his land in the region of Benjamin. But he did not get far. The guard on duty at the gate grabbed him. He accused him of being a **traitor**, of going over to the Babylonians. Jeremiah said it was not true. But the guard brought him to the leaders. These men already were angry with Jeremiah. They beat him and put him in prison. They had made the house of Jonathan the writer into a prison.

King Zedekiah was not brave enough to stop them from putting Jeremiah in prison. But he did take Jeremiah out of prison to talk with him secretly. He asked Jeremiah for “any word from the Lord.” Zedekiah got the same message: You will be given over to the king of Babylon.

A Weak King Warned Again (Jeremiah 38:14-23)

Jeremiah spoke for God again. First, God told the king how he and his people could stay alive. He would have to surrender to the Babylonian captains. But Zedekiah was afraid of what would happen to him if he surrendered. God then told him what would happen if he did not surrender.

God told the king that three things would happen: (1) God would give Jerusalem to the enemies; (2) They would burn down the city; (3) The king and his family would be captured.

The king had a strange excuse for not wanting to surrender. He did not show fear of what the Babylonians

might do to him. Instead, he was afraid of the Jews who had joined the Babylonians. He was afraid they might **mock** him. But Jeremiah said this would not happen—if the king obeyed God and surrendered.

Next, Jeremiah told Zedekiah the bad things that would happen if he did not surrender. First, the Babylonian captains would get all the women left in the king's house. Those women may have been his harem, his "extra" women. Or they may have been the widows or ex-wives of former kings. They were not Zedekiah's regular wives, who would be taken later.

These women would do the very thing that the king feared—they would poke fun at his weaknesses. "Down into the mud" was a word-picture of trying to cross a swamp. That is when anyone needs the help of a friend. But Zedekiah's trusted friends would leave him stuck in the mud. Did you ever trust a friend who got you into trouble but did not help you get out? The Lord is our trusted friend Who can and will help us when our feet have gone down into the mud, just as He helped Jeremiah (see Jeremiah 38:6-13).

Jeremiah predicted that all the king's wives and sons would be handed over to the Babylonians. Even the king would not be able to escape. Sure enough, what happened later was just what Jeremiah had said. You can read the rest of the story in

Jeremiah 39:1-10.

Our lesson ends sadly: "This city will be burned with fire" (verse 23). Zedekiah's fear and pride were the reasons the city was burned. And the Babylonians did burn down Jerusalem (Jeremiah 39:8). God had given him a way out, but he ignored God's instructions. Zedekiah was a king who did not respond **courageously** to the problems of his time. But Jeremiah was **courageous** as he told God's message again and again. When God asks us to respond to His Word, we can remember the sad end of Zedekiah. And we can choose **courage**, like Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 37:1-2

1 Zedekiah the son of Josiah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had made king in the land of Judah, ruled in place of Coniah the son of Jehoiakim.

2 But he and his servants and the people of the land would not listen to what the Lord said through Jeremiah the man of God.

Jeremiah 37:6-17

6 Then the Word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the man of God, saying,

7 "This is what the Lord God of Israel says: 'Tell the king of Judah, who sent you to ask Me what will happen, "See, Pharaoh's army which has come to help you is going to return to its own land of Egypt.

8 Then the Babylonians will return and fight against this city. They will take it and burn it with fire:"

9 The Lord says, 'Do not fool yourselves, saying, "For sure the Babylonians will go away from us." For they will not go.

10 Even if you had won the battle against the

whole Babylonian army fighting with you, and only men who were hurt were left in their tents, they would rise up and burn this city with fire.’ ”

11 Now the Babylonian army had left Jerusalem because of Pharaoh’s army.

12 And so Jeremiah left Jerusalem to go to the land of Benjamin to take his land there among the people.

13 While he was at the Gate of Benjamin, a soldier was there watching. His name was Irijah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah. He took hold of Jeremiah the man of God, saying, “You are going over to the Babylonians!”

14 But Jeremiah said, “It is a lie! I am not going over to the Babylonians.” But Irijah would not listen to him. He took hold of Jeremiah and brought him to the leaders.

15 The leaders were angry with Jeremiah and beat him. They put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the writer, which they had made into a prison.

16 After Jeremiah had been in an underground prison many days,

17 King Zedekiah sent for him and had him brought to his house. The king asked him in secret, “Is there any word from the Lord?”

And Jeremiah said, “There is!” Then he said, “You will be given over to the king of Babylon!”

Jeremiah 38:14-23

14 King Zedekiah sent for Jeremiah the man of God and had him brought to him at the third door of the house of the Lord. And the king said to him, “I am going to ask you something. Do not hide anything from me.”

15 Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, “If I tell you, will you not kill me? Even if I speak wise

words to you, you will not listen to me.”

16 But King Zedekiah promised Jeremiah in secret, “As the Lord lives, Who gave us life, for sure I will not kill you or give you over to these men who want to kill you.

17 Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, “This is what the Lord God of All, the God of Israel, says: ‘If you will go out to the captains of the king of Babylon, then you will live. This city will not be burned with fire, and you and those of your house will live.

18 But if you will not go out to the captains of the king of Babylon, then this city will be given to the Babylonians. They will burn it with fire, and you will not get away from them.’ ”

19 King Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, “I am afraid of the Jews who have gone over to the Babylonians. I am afraid I will be given over to them, and that they will make it hard for me.”

20 But Jeremiah said, “They will not give you to them. Obey the Lord by doing what I tell you. Then it will go well with you and you will live.

21 But if you will not go out, this is the word which the Lord has shown me:

22 ‘All of the women left in the house of the king of Judah are going to be brought out to the captains of the king of Babylon. And these women will say, “Your trusted friends have lied to you and have become stronger than you. Now when your feet have gone down into the mud, they turn away from you.”’

23 All your wives and your sons will be led out to the Babylonians. And you yourself will not get away from them. The king of Babylon will take hold of you, and this city will be burned with fire.’ ”

Jeremiah



Adult Bible Study in Basic English

**UNIT 4:
JEREMIAH:
GOD'S MESSAGE
OF HOPE**

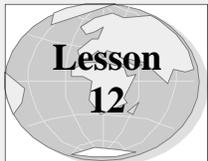
**Lesson 12
When the Worst
Is Happening
Jeremiah 32:1-15**

**Lesson 13
It's a New Day
Jeremiah 31:27-34**

**UNIT 4
JEREMIAH: GOD'S MESSAGE OF HOPE**

At last we come to the good news in the book of Jeremiah. In the very darkest days of the nation of Judah, Jeremiah began to deliver God's message of hope. Both of these lessons remind us that God provides help and hope just when it seems neither is available and only darkness lies ahead.

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Adult Bible Study in
Basic English

When the Worst Is Happening

According to an old saying, “the night is darkest just before the dawn.” Jeremiah had to preach a lot during the dark night of Judah’s fall. He had to tell the dark side of God’s truth. We studied this in the past four lessons. In this lesson, the Babylonians were about to break down and destroy Jerusalem. Things were bad and would get worse. But Jeremiah pointed toward a better time ahead.

Bible Text

Jeremiah 32:1-15

Background Text

Jeremiah 32

Memory Verse

“Then I knew that this was the Word of the Lord.” Jeremiah 32:8 (New Life Version)

Word List

dungeon: a room or rooms underground where prisoners are kept. Usually dark and dirty.

A Prophet in Prison and a King with No Hope (Jeremiah 32:1-5)

Jeremiah started to tell about the word he got from the Lord. God wanted Jeremiah to buy a field. This happened in the tenth year of Zedekiah’s rule in Judah.

If Nebuchadnezzar made Zedekiah the king about 597 B.C. (2 Kings 24:17), then this event took place about 587 B.C., not long before the fall of Jerusalem.

Jeremiah had already been in prison in the **dungeon** at Jonathan’s house (Jeremiah 37:15-16) and then in the muddy well (Jeremiah 38:6). Now he was a prisoner in the open space of the prison, in the house of the king. Apparently the king wanted to keep him near. In verses 3-5, the king gave a list of reasons why he kept him as a prisoner. Zedekiah did not like the messages that Jeremiah delivered in the Lord’s name. The king did not like what the Lord said. Then the king repeated the bad news about the fall of Jerusalem, his own capture, and how the king of Babylon would take Zedekiah to Babylon. He did not want to see the king of Babylon face to face and eye to eye. He did not like the threat that his armies had no chance of victory against the Babylonians.

But the Lord was clear. Zedekiah would stay in Babylon until the Lord visited him. In this sentence, “visit” could mean to inspect, to guide, to take care of, or to punish. The Lord’s visit to

**Things To
Think About**

1. Why did the Word of the Lord come to the king only through Jeremiah?
2. What if God had not told Jeremiah about the field? Would he have bought it anyway?
3. How does the Word of the Lord help us through the bad times?
4. When should we start to think more about our future in heaven than about our future here on earth?
5. How can God tell people today how to do their business deals?
6. What benefits did the people get from watching Jeremiah buy the field?

Zedekiah would be to punish him. When the Lord visits you, which of these things does He do in your life?

God Says and Does (Jeremiah 32:6-8)

Jeremiah then told what he learned when the Word of the Lord came to him. God said that Jeremiah's cousin would come and offer to sell a field in Anathoth to Jeremiah. The Jews had a strange law about selling land (Leviticus 25:23-25). If someone became poor and had to sell his land, then one of his relatives should buy it. That is why the cousin offered the field to Jeremiah. But why would Jeremiah want it? It was several miles away. The army of Babylon had already come through there and would soon burn Jerusalem. Jeremiah knew that he would never get to use that field.

The cousin named Hanamel did come to Jeremiah. And he said just what God had told Jeremiah to expect. That was when Jeremiah knew that this was the Word of the Lord.

Have you ever seen an event happen just as God said it would?

A Public Deal to Buy a Field (Jeremiah 32:9-14)

In these verses, Jeremiah gave the details of how he bought the field at Anathoth from Hanamel. First, he weighed out the money. The price was 17 pieces of silver. Some people think that was a small price for a field. But that strange law of the Jews said, "The land will not be sold to be kept forever" (Leviticus 25:23). The buyer could not keep it more than 50 years. If he bought it near the end of a 50-year period, the law said, "Make the price less if there are few years" (Leviticus 25:16). Maybe that was why the price was so small. Even so, Jeremiah did not say how much the silver weighed or how much the land was really worth.

Then they made the deed to the land. The deed was the

agreement which showed that Jeremiah had bought the field. They made two copies of the agreement. One copy was not to be opened. The other was open for all to see. They may have written each one on a piece of dried sheepskin and rolled it up and tied it with a string.

Jeremiah said, "I wrote my name and put my mark on the agreement" (verse 10). "Put my mark" means that he sealed up the copy that was not to be opened. He could have done that by smearing a layer of wet clay over the string around the roll. His "mark" may have been a symbol or his initials scratched into the clay before it dried.

He "called in people to watch" so that they could witness the deal. Those witnesses and several others saw him give the deed to Baruch. Then they heard him tell Baruch what to do: "Take these agreements, both the closed and open one, and put them in a clay jar so they may last a long time."

All these actions took place in the open space of the prison. Jeremiah wanted all the Jews who were sitting there to see and to hear the whole business deal.

Why They Made the Deal (Jeremiah 32:15)

Why would Jeremiah make such a big show of buying a field that he would never

use? What he did was much more than just a business deal. He was acting out a picture-story that showed how God would give the Jews a better future. Most of the time, Jeremiah preached about how God was going to punish the Jews because of their sins. From the beginning, his job was "to dig up and to pull down, to destroy and to thrown down" (Jeremiah 1:10). But in this situation, he was also to build and to plant (Jeremiah 1:10).

Sometimes God gave Jeremiah a message of hope. Jeremiah preached that the people would return from being slaves in a foreign land (Jeremiah 30:3,10-11,18). One time God even said, "Again you will plant grapefields on the hills of Samaria" (Jeremiah 31:5).

When Jeremiah bought the field, the future looked very dark. The army of Babylon was about to pull down and to destroy everything that the people had. The king's palace and the people's houses would be burned. The walls of the city would be broken down (Jeremiah 39:8). Only the land would remain. Even so, the God of Israel promised that houses and fields and grapefields would again be bought by the Jews. By buying the field and saving the deed, Jeremiah showed that the people could believe God's promise about their future.

Jeremiah 32:1-15

1 This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar.

2 At that time the army of the king of Babylon was around Jerusalem. And Jeremiah the man of God was shut up in the open space of the prison, in the house of the king of Judah.

3 For King Zedekiah of Judah had shut him up, saying, "Why do you speak these things in the Lord's name? You have said, 'This is what the Lord says: "I am giving this city to the king of Babylon, and he will take it."

4 King Zedekiah of Judah will not get away from the Babylonians. For sure he will be given into the hand of the king of Babylon. He will speak with him face to face and see him eye to eye.

5 He will take Zedekiah to Babylon, and he will be there until I visit him," says the Lord. "If you fight against the Babylonians, you will not win." ' "

6 Jeremiah said, "The Word of the Lord came to me, saying,

7 'Hanamel, the son of your father's brother Shallum, will come to you and say, "Buy my field at Anathoth. For because of your place in the family you have the right to buy it." ' "

8 Then Hanamel, the son of my father's brother, came to me in the open space of the

prison, as the Word of the Lord had said. And he said to me, 'Buy my field at Anathoth in the land of Benjamin. For you have the right to own it. Because of your place in the family you have the right, so buy it for yourself.' Then I knew that this was the Word of the Lord.

9 So I bought the field at Anathoth from Hanamel, the son of my father's brother. And I weighed out seventeen pieces of silver for him.

10 I wrote my name and put my mark on the agreement, and called in people to watch. And I weighed the silver.

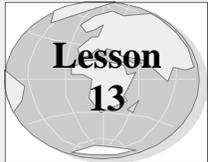
11 Then I took the agreement which showed that I had bought the field, both the agreement which was not to be opened, and the open one.

12 And I gave the written agreement to Baruch the son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah. This was seen by Hanamel, the son of my father's brother, and by those who watched me write my name on the agreement, and by all the Jews who were sitting in the open space of the prison.

13 I said to Baruch in front of them,

14 'This is what the Lord of All, the God of Israel, says: "Take these agreements, both the closed and open one, and put them in a clay jar so they may last a long time."

15 For the Lord of All, the God of Israel, says, "Houses and fields and grape-fields will again be bought in this land." ' "



Adult Bible Study in
Basic English

Bible Text

Jeremiah 31:27-34

Background Text

Jeremiah 31:27-34

Memory Verse

“All of them will already know Me from the least to the greatest, says the Lord. I will forgive their sins. I will remember their sins no more.” Jeremiah 31:34 (New Life Version)

Word List

external: outside of

internal: inside of

supervise: to watch or guide someone

It's a New Day

Some people call Jeremiah 30-33 the Book of Comfort. Here Jeremiah told how God would restore His people after He had punished them. He punished them to correct them. Jeremiah preached that truth again and again. God said it very clearly in Jeremiah 46:28: “I will punish you so you will go the right way.”

In this lesson Jeremiah gave his best message of hope. He saw the great need of the people. How could they keep in touch with God after the house of the Lord was burned down? And he saw deep into the heart of God Who loved His people but hated their sins. How could a holy God stay in touch with sinful people? The answer was a New Way of Worship.

Planting Time for God (Jeremiah 31:27-28)

God sometimes reminded Jeremiah that he should build and plant as well as tear down and destroy. In the last lesson about buying the field, we saw how Jeremiah started to do that. Now in this lesson, God's message of hope becomes even more positive. After all the gloom and doom that Jeremiah had preached, God told him something better to say.

Yes, it was Jeremiah's job to build and to plant (Jeremiah 1:10). But God said that He Himself would do it also. Maybe not right away, but the days were coming. And He would restore both groups of the Jews: the people of Israel and the people of Judah. Why did He talk about “the seed of man and the seed of animal”? Because in order to grow a new nation, God would need humans. They would need cattle, sheep, goats, cows, donkeys, and so on.

God **supervised** the destroying of the old nation when He “watched over them.” He promised to **supervise** the building and planting of the new nation. God can make again what He made before, even if He has to plant new seed and start over.

**Things To
Think About**

1. Why did God tell Jeremiah to build and to plant and then say that He was going to do it Himself?
2. Has God ever asked you to do something that only God would be able to do?
3. Who are the ones who still complain about how God deals with sin?
4. Do God's promises usually come true all at once or over a period of time?
5. Why was the Old Way of Worship too hard for the people to follow?
6. Why is the New Way of Worship better than the Old Way?

Every Tub Sits on its Own Bottom (Jeremiah 31:29-30)

This heading is an old saying. People would say it to mean that each person had to do his own job and then answer for what he had done. The Jews of Jeremiah's time had this saying, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children got the sour taste." Ezekiel talked about the same saying (Ezekiel 18:1-20). The people were grumbling about how God punished sin. They thought He was unfair. They thought He punished people who had not done wrong, instead of the ones who had done wrong. In the past, God said He would punish the children, even the great-grandchildren, for the sins of their fathers who hated Him (Exodus 20:5). But He did not say that those children were free of guilt. The people of Jeremiah's time thought that they did not deserve to be punished. They thought that God was hard on them because of what the fathers had done.

Here, in verse 29, God said, In those days they will no longer say that proverb about the sour taste. In the better time ahead, they will know that the one who eats the sour grapes gets the sour taste. They will be able to see that everyone will die for his own sin. Then that other saying will make no sense. People will stop using it.

The main point here seems to be that sin is a terrible thing and has long-lasting effects. Only God can really deal with it. And people should not criticize God for how He deals with it.

A New Way to Know God (Jeremiah 31:31-34)

These four verses tell us a very deep truth. Of all that God said in the Old Testament, this truth stands among the best.

The Lord again spoke of the future: "The days are coming." He promised that He would make a New Way of Worship. It would be for the Jews who lived in the northern kingdom. And it would be for the family group of Judah in the south.

The northern Jews had already disappeared. The Babylonians were soon going to capture and carry away most of the ones in Judah. And they would destroy the house of the Lord. They would keep the things made of precious metals, like gold and silver. They would tear down or burn everything else. The religious leaders would be gone, with no one to lead worship or to teach the law of God. That was why God needed to make for them a New Way of Worship.

In verse 32 God talked about the Old Way of Worship. That was what He gave to their early fathers. He treated them the way a husband treats his wife whom he loves a lot. Even so, they did not follow the Old Way of Worship.

God gave that Old Way during the time that He led them out of Egypt. Mainly, the Old Way meant that they should obey God's Ten Great Laws and worship around the Meeting Tent and the Altar for Burnt Gifts. You can read all about that in the Book of Exodus.

God said that the New Way of Worship will not be like the Old Way. Then in verse 33, He told how He would give to the Jews the New Way: "I will put My Law into their minds. And I will write it on their hearts." The Old Way was something **external**. The New Way would be **internal**. God's laws would be inside each

person who followed Him—in their minds and hearts. In each case God gave His Law. In the Old Way, God wrote His Law on stone tablets. He put His Law before the people, told them to receive it into their hearts and to obey it. God demanded that obedience from the people as a group, but they were not able to do what God asked.

In the New Way God would write His Law in the people's minds and hearts so that they would want to follow it. And they would be able to do that, because God would give something new to each person. That new thing would be a changed life so that each could do what God was asking.

That was very different from the Old Way of Worship. Under that system, the people tried to obey the Law so that they could become God's people. Then the Lord would be their God. But now God turned that around: "I will be their God, and they will be my people" (verse 33). When God writes His Law in our hearts, that already makes us His people. Then, we can obey His Law, not in order to become His people, but because we *are* His people!

Another difference is how people get to know God. Under the Old Way, the people had to keep the Law in order to be better people so that they could know God. But now He said, "All of them will already know Me from the least to the greatest" (verse 34). That personal knowledge of God

would come. But it would not be by keeping the Law or from teaching each other about God. It would be because God had written His Law in a person's heart.

At the end of verse 34, God told what would make the New Way of Worship work: "I will forgive their sins. I will remember their sins no more." God's forgiving love in people's hearts is a power that helps people to obey the Ten Great Laws and to do whatever God wants. Forgiveness makes people thankful. Then they want to obey because they love the One Who forgave them, not because they fear that He will punish them.

God made the Old Way of Worship right at the time that He spoke of it. But He promised the New Way of Worship for some time in the future. Jesus Christ finally fulfilled what God promised and what Jeremiah predicted: A New Way of Worship. When Jesus gave the Lord's Supper, it happened like this: "In the same way, after they had finished the bread, He took the cup. He said, 'This cup is My blood of the New Way of Worship which is given for you' " (Luke 22:20).

Jeremiah 31:27-34

27 "See, the days are coming," says the Lord, "when I will plant the people of Israel and the people of Judah with the seed of man and the seed of animal.

28 And as I have watched over them to pull up, to break down, to take power away, to destroy, and to bring trouble, so I will watch over them to build and to plant," says the Lord.

29 "In those days they will no longer say, 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children got the sour taste.'

30 But every one will die for his own sin. Each man who eats the sour grapes will get the sour taste.

31 The days are coming," says the Lord, "when I will make a New Way of Worship for the Jews and those of the family group of Judah.

32 The New Way of Worship will not be like the Old Way of Worship I gave to their early fathers. That was when I took them by the hand and led them out of Egypt. But they did not follow the Old Way of Worship, even when I was a husband to them," says the Lord.

33 "This is the New Way of Worship that I will give to the Jews. When that day comes," says the Lord, "I will put My Law into their minds. And I will write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be My people.

34 No one will need to teach his neighbor or his brother to know the Lord. All of them will already know Me from the least to the greatest," says the Lord. "I will forgive their sins. I will remember their sins no more."