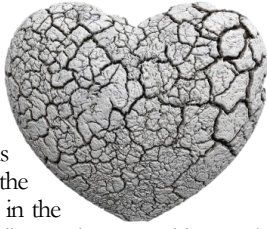


Heart Problems

The Jewish nation of Jeremiah's day certainly had problems. They were idolatrous, immoral, and evil in many ways. These were all symptoms of a larger, central issue—their hearts were hard. Some people feel that “heart-felt religion” is only something found in the New Testament, but that clearly isn't the case. Even in the Old Testament, God wanted His people to have hearts devoted to and shaped by Him. Depending on the version you use, the word “heart” shows up between 50 and 70 times in the book of Jeremiah! (i.e. 67 times in NKJV; 55 times in ESV). In our reading section this week (Jer. 1-12), the word heart is used 26 times alone (NKJV). Here are some of the “heart lessons” found in this section of Jeremiah:



- When repentance isn't whole-hearted, it is merely pretense (Jer. 3:10; 12:11)
- Our hearts must be washed of wickedness (Jer. 4:14)
- Defiance and rebellion starts in the heart (Jer. 4:18; 5:23)
- Fear of the Lord must be something that begins in our heart (Jer. 5:23)
- Our hearts must be shaped by God's will, or else they are unreliable (Jer. 3:15; 7:24, 31; 11:8)
- We cannot fool God by mere action—He tests our hearts (11:20; 12:3)

Christians today should take these heart lessons—to heart! The Israelites often failed because their hearts were set on worldly things and influenced by worldly neighbors. When we see the anger of God that was aroused by their hard hearts, we should seek diligently to mold our hearts after God's will. We will never become the Christians we can and ought to be until we do as Jesus commands, and love the Lord our God with ALL our heart, mind, soul, and strength.

“That You May Grow Thereby...”

A weekly Bible reading plan



Jeremiah 1-12

The Broken Hearted Prophet of a Hard Hearted People

Overview

Serving the Lord is a wonderful blessing, but that doesn't mean it's easy. In fact, God's servants often face difficulty and hardship. Sometimes, the harder one works for the Lord, the more difficulties he faces. This was certainly true of the prophet Jeremiah. While many of the prophets suffered persecution and preached to deaf ears, it seems few if any faced struggles like Jeremiah. Jeremiah labored during the last 40 years before Judah's defeat and captivity by the Babylonians. The nation enjoyed a brief spiritual revival during the days of king Josiah, but soon afterwards spiritual decay took over. Jeremiah, often called “the weeping prophet” plead with his brethren to listen to God, but he was frequently met with disdain and even violence. Throughout his life he was beaten, publicly humiliated, imprisoned, scorned by kings, and ignored by the vast majority of people he was trying to help. At times Jeremiah felt like giving up, but he never did. While Jeremiah's message is a hard one, the prophet himself is a wonderful example of leadership and love.

Suggested Reading Schedule

Monday: Jeremiah 1-2
Tuesday: Jeremiah 3-5
Wednesday: Jeremiah 6-7
Thursday: Jeremiah 8-9
Friday: Jeremiah 10-12

Questions:

1. What was the first vision Jeremiah saw? _____
2. What two rivers are mentioned in Jeremiah 2? _____
3. What does God compare Judah to in Jeremiah 3? _____
4. God promises to give the people shepherds after His own _____ who will feed them with _____ and _____.
5. From what direction did God promise to bring destruction (ch. 5)? _____
6. What did the people need to do to for God to allow them to dwell in their place (7:1-7)? _____

7. What evil took place in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom? _____

8. Had God warned the nation's fathers of the consequences of disobedience (ch. 11)? _____

Outline

- I. **The Call of Jeremiah (1:1-19)**
- II. **Prophecies to Judah (2-45)**
 - A. Condemnation of Judah (2-25)
 - B. Jeremiah's Conflicts (26-29)
 - C. Future Restoration (30-33)
 - D. Present Fall of Jerusalem (34-45)
- III. **Prophecies to Gentile Nations (46-51)**
 - A. Egypt (46)
 - B. Philistia (47)
 - C. Moab (48)
 - D. Ammon, Edom, Damascus, Arabia & Elam (49)
 - E. Babylon (50-51)
- IV. **The Fall of Jerusalem (52)**

Only a Youth

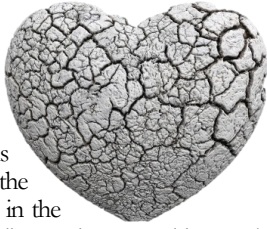
The book of Jeremiah begins by telling how Jeremiah was called by God to be a prophet. He was apparently a very young man when called—some commentators even think he may have been a teenager! Whatever his age, Jeremiah himself thought he was too young for such an important task. He responded to God's initial call by saying, “*Ab, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth.*” Jeremiah may have thought he was too young, but God didn't. God said to Jeremiah:

- Go where I send you
- Speak what I command you
- Do not be afraid of men
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If Jeremiah would follow God's instructions, he could be a useful and powerful servant of God. Today, God can still use young men and women if they will remember to follow the Lord like Jeremiah did!

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