**Old Testament Survey**

**Jeremiah 37 Jeremiah’s message to Zedekiah**

1. The events in this section focus on Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, who was placed on the throne as king by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24:15–17). In these dark days Judah needed a strong and godly leader. Unfortunately, Zedekiah possessed neither quality. From the king to the common people, no one paid any attention to Jeremiah’s words of warning until it was too late.
2. Jeremiah 37:9–10 (NLT): 9 “This is what the Lord says: Do not fool yourselves into thinking that the Babylonians are gone for good. They aren’t! 10 Even if you were to destroy the entire Babylonian army, leaving only a handful of wounded survivors, they would still stagger from their tents and burn this city to the ground!”
3. The withdrawal of the Babylonian army to fight the Egyptians produced a period of calm in Judah. Jeremiah used this time to leave the city for a short journey into the territory of Benjamin. The purpose of his trip was to get his share of some property belonging to his family.
4. Just as Jeremiah started to leave, the captain of the guard seized him. He arrested Jeremiah and charged him with deserting to the enemy. Jeremiah denied the charge, but the captain would not listen. Instead, Jeremiah was taken to the officials who ordered him beaten and imprisoned. The prison was located in the house of Jonathan the secretary and was a vaulted cell in a dungeon. Jeremiah remained there a long time.
5. Babylon returned to Jerusalem and renewed her siege of the city. Zedekiah secretly sent for Jeremiah and brought him to the palace. Zedekiah met with him privately to ask if he had any word from the Lord.
6. Jeremiah asked Zedekiah not to send him back to the prison where he had been confined. As a man who was probably in his 60s, if he were taken back to that hole he might die there. Granting Jeremiah’s request, Zedekiah had him transferred to the courtyard of the guard in the royal palace.

**Jeremiah 38 Jeremiah’s confinement in a cistern (38:1–6).**

1. By being confined to the courtyard of the guard (37:21) Jeremiah had some freedom to meet with people. He used this time as an opportunity to deliver God’s message to any who would listen. His message was overheard by four high-ranking officials. The message was the same one that Jeremiah gave before (21:3–10). Those who remained in Jerusalem would die. Jerusalem’s only hope was to surrender.
2. The officials went to Zedekiah and demanded that Jeremiah be put to death for his words. His remarks were discouraging both the soldiers and all the people. Zedekiah now handed him over to those who sought his life. The officials took Jeremiah and put him into a cistern in the courtyard of the guard. This cistern was so deep that they had to lower Jeremiah into it by ropes.
3. The only official who cared enough to intercede on his behalf was Ebed-Melech who was a Cushite from the area of upper Egypt. His urgent message to the king was that the other officials had acted wickedly by throwing Jeremiah into a cistern where he would starve to death.
4. Zedekiah ordered Ebed-Melech to take 30 men and lift Jeremiah from the cistern before he died. Jeremiah was then pulled up with the ropes and freed from the cistern. He was again put in the courtyard of the guard.
5. Zedekiah sent for Jeremiah again and met him in secret at the third entrance to the temple. Jeremiah’s message remained the same as before.

**Jeremiah 39 Jerusalem’s destruction**

1. Jeremiah’s preaching of doom was ignored by the people of Jerusalem. God brought to pass Jerusalem’s destruction just as he had predicted it. The final conflict began in the 9th year of Zedekiah’s reign in the 10th month. This event was so traumatic that it was recorded three other times in the Old Testament, even noting the day of the month (2 Kings 25:1; Jer. 52:4; Ezek. 24:1–2).
2. After the 30-month siege, the Babylonians broke through the city wall.  God cared for His prophet.
3. Zedekiah and his soldiers saw that the city had fallen. In a desperate bid to escape they fled from the city at night. Pursuing Zedekiah and his soldiers, the Babylonians overtook them on the plains of Jericho just before the Jordan River. Nebuchadnezzar pronounced sentence on Zedekiah for rebelling against Babylon. Zedekiah was forced to watch as the Babylonians slaughtered his sons. To seal this sight of horror in Zedekiah’s mind forever, Nebuchadnezzar then put out Zedekiah’s eyes. Finally he bound Zedekiah with bronze shackles to drag him in humiliation to Babylon. Zedekiah suffered the shame that he feared because he had ignored the warnings of the Lord.

**Jeremiah 40–45 After the fall.**

1. One would think that the fall of Jerusalem would have taught Judah a lesson she would never forget. However, by recording the events that happened after the fall of the city, Jeremiah demonstrated that the basic character of the people who remained in the land was unchanged. They still refused to trust in God or to submit to Babylon (Ezek. 33:23–29).
2. The last years of Jeremiah’s life were spent in mourning for a people who refused to heed his message. Choosing to remain with the remnant of Judah after the fall of Jerusalem, rather than go to Babylon, he was then forced to go with that remnant to Egypt where he died.

**Jeremiah 46–51 Prophecies concerning the Nations**

Jeremiah had been commissioned as a prophet to the nations (1:5; 46:1). He grouped his prophecies concerning the nation of Judah first (chaps. 2–45) because Judah was God’s covenant nation and because she had consumed the largest amount of Jeremiah’s prophetic activity. Yet other nations did not escape his prophetic eye. If God would judge His own covenant people for their sin, how could the heathen nations around Judah hope to escape when their sin was even more pronounced?

1. Jeremiah 46 The first nation to be selected for judgment was Egypt. She had encouraged Judah’s revolt against Babylon; but when it came time for Egypt to protect her partner in rebellion, she proved incapable of meeting her commitments (37:4–10; Ezek. 29:6–7). Jeremiah’s message was directed against the army of Pharaoh. This king of Egypt killed King Josiah of Judah in 609 b.c. (2 Kings 23:29).  Though Egypt had a mighty army, the day of battle belonged to the Lord. God would bring vengeance on Egypt until she was destroyed. Only then would His sword of judgment be satisfied.
2. Jeremiah 47 Prophecy against the Philistines. Jeremiah’s second prophetic judgement was against the Philistines. They occupied the coastal plain of Judah and had been a thorn in Israel’s side. David was finally able to subdue the Philistines (2 Sam. 8:1), and they remained under Israel through the reign of Solomon. During the time of the divided monarchy the balance of power shifted back and forth. God revealed that the Philistines would be caught in the middle of the struggle between Babylon and Egypt and would be destroyed.
3. Jeremiah 48 Prophecy against Moab. The country of Moab was east of the Dead Sea. Jeremiah listed many of the Moabite cities that God would destroy. Much of the imagery used by Jeremiah was borrowed from Isaiah 16:6–12.  Nebo, mentioned here by Jeremiah, was not the mountain of the same name on which Moses viewed the Promised Land and died (Deut. 32:48–50). It was a city inhabited by the tribe of Reuben (Num. 32:37–38) that was later captured by Moab.  The people of Moab would flee and run for their lives to escape the coming judgment. God would put an end to idolatrous practices at Moab’s many high places where offerings were being made to their gods.  Jeremiah ended his section on Moab by freely quoting an old song from Heshbon (Num. 21:27–29). The fugitives who had escaped the destruction stood by helpless because God’s fire of judgment had gone out into all Moab to burn those who had been boasters. Now the nation was destroyed, with her sons and daughters in captivity.
4. Jeremiah 49:1-6 Prophecy against Ammon. The Ammonites were located east of the Jordan River and north of Moab. The Northern Kingdom of Israel had been taken captive in 722 b.c.; and Ammon, assuming Israel had no sons or heirs who would return to the land, seized it for herself. Molech (which could be translated “their king”) was the national god of Ammon that had found its way into Judah (32:35).  Ammon’s problem was pride (48:29).  She trusted in her riches and felt secure enough to question who would have the courage to attack her (Ezek. 21:18–23). But God’s judgment would shatter Ammon’s complacency and pride when He brought His terror on her. Those who had been boasting of their security would be driven away, and no leader would be found to gather the fugitives to return and repossess their land. Yet in His grace God vowed that afterward He would restore the fortunes of the Ammonites (Jer. 48:47; 49:39).
5. Jeremiah 49:7-22 Prophecy against Edom. The country of Edom was located south of Moab and east of the Dead Sea. It had a history of conflict with Judah and came to symbolize all the heathen nations that sought Judah’s harm (Ezek. 34; 36:5; Obad. 15–16). Much of the imagery Jeremiah used to describe Edom was seemingly borrowed from Obadiah. Edom’s pride in her strong natural defenses made her feel secure, but God would bring her down (Obad. 4) from her lofty perch and people would be horrified at her condition. Edom would be destroyed as were Sodom and Gomorrah (50:40) so that no one would dwell there.  Unlike Egypt, Moab, and Ammon (46:26; 48:47; 49:6), Edom was given no promise of future restoration.
6. Jeremiah 49:23–27 Prophecy against Damascus. Damascus’ pain was like that of a woman in labor. In Nebuchadnezzar’s attack on Damascus the soldiers of Damascus were silenced (killed). God vowed to consume the fortresses of Ben-Hadad.
7. Jeremiah 49:28–33 Prophecy against Kedar and Hazor. Kedar was the tribe of Ishmaelites (Gen 25:13) they were known for her skills in archery (Isa. 21:16–17), her flocks of sheep (Isa. 60:7; Jer. 49:28–29), her extensive trade (Ezek. 27:21), and her warlike nature (Ps. 120:5–6). God summoned Nebuchadnezzar to attack Kedar, destroying them and seizing their flocks along with all their goods and camels. The people of Hazor were urged to flee and hide in deep caves because Nebuchadnezzar had plotted to go against them in battle. The inhabitants would be scattered to the winds and the city itself would become destroyed.
8. Jeremiah 49:34–39 Prophecy against Elam. Elam was east of Babylon in what is today the country of Iran. This prophecy was given early in the reign of Zedekiah, about 597 b.c. God promised to break the bow of Elam. This is significant because the Elamites were known for their archery skills (Isa. 22:6). Her invaders would come from all directions (the four winds and the four quarters of the heavens) and would scatter Elam’s exiles throughout the earth.