A) INTRODUCTION:

a) God’s Faithfulness in pursuing His all too often faithless people is an inescapable fact even for the casual reader of the prophets. Yet God’s faithfulness to His people through the millennia is equally inescapable. God gave His people prophets to encourage their faithfulness. The role of the prophet was to confirm the monarchy before God and the nation, and to realign the spiritual life of the nation’s leadership and the people toward God. Through the prophets, God repeatedly warned of impending judgment and doom the nation faced if they failed to turn back to God… remaining in their wicked and deceitful ways. Unfortunately, most of the leadership and most of the people were not responsive to God’s message through His prophets. As a result, reading the prophets also provides a clear reminder of the danger we take on when we ignore God’s calling to His people of a “vital counter-cultural and living relationship” with God, and what inevitably happens when we reduce God’s message to a “social-cultural institutional formula.” God repeatedly used His prophets to shine a spiritual spotlight into the dark landscape of dead moralism and institutionalized religion, which the people too often accepted as normative worship. God held the people’s incorrect actions against them as sin in the Old Testament times, ultimately bringing judgment against them. In New Testament times, Jesus and the apostles continued to criticize the failed spiritual leadership of the institutionalized leadership who were more concerned with the status quo of the Jewish traditions and resisted the personal spiritual transformation God desires. The church in our modern times would do well to remember the unacceptable nature of institutionalized religious behavior and press instead for more for authentic spiritual growth.

b) The prophet’s character typically exhibited a marked contrast with regard to the people to whom they ministered. The prophet Jonah being an exception as he was more in line with the cultural thinking of his day. Jonah couldn’t understand God’s reason for wanting to save the Assyrians who Jonah wanted destroyed. So, when God told him to go east to Nineveh the Assyrian capital, he instead went west to the sea. There are some important characteristics of prophetic ministry:

i) First, the prophets had an elevated appreciation and expectation of God. Their God was not relegated to some comfortable box: He was Wild, Sovereign, and Free to act in the affairs of the world. Even when the prophet questioned what God was doing such as Jonah who ran from God’s purpose, and Habakkuk who questioned and wrestled with God in prayer, the final message delivered by the prophet demonstrated God’s sovereignty. The God of the prophets was a GREAT GOD who could not be reduced to some marginalized position with whom someone could become comfortable and treat lightly. When seen in visions, God was not just wondrous, He was overwhelming. Isaiah in a vision found himself in God’s Heavenly Temple where he observed the Lord and his throne room. There he cried, “Woe to me… I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty” (Isaiah 6). Jeremiah heard God as a youth who told him, “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, before you were born, I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to
“Ah Sovereign Lord, I do not know how to speak; I am only a child.” God responded, “Do not say, ‘I am only a child.’ You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,” declares the LORD. Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, “Now, I have put my words in your mouth. See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant” (Jeremiah 1). Ezekiel witnessed Heaven – seeing the Seraphim, God’s throne and God above His throne, “This is the appearance of the likeness of the Glory of the Lord. When I saw it, I fell facedown...” (Ezekiel 1). Daniel’s vision of a Man dressed in linen, “I, Daniel, was the only one who saw the vision; the men with me did not see it, but such terror overwhelmed them that they fled and hid themselves. So, I was left alone, gazing at this great vision; I had no strength left, my face turned deathly pale and I was helpless. Then I heard him speaking, and as I listened to him, I fell into a deep sleep, my face to the ground. A hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees” (Dan 10). In Revelation the Apostle John wrote, “When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last’ (Rev 1). One can reasonably presume that once these men had these experiences, they were never the same. The same was certainly true of Moses; and also of Peter, James and John at the Transfiguration of Jesus when they saw Him in His Glory (Matt 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35). One can hardly read these stories without praying for a greater appreciation of God’s Glory and Greatness.

ii) Second, the prophets felt a great burden for and identity with the people of God. They were men of prayer and action. It is compelling to me that a small group of prophetic lay-leaders and priestly officials who out of an overarching imperative born out of their love for God and their love for God’s people, put their lives on the line to preach God’s message, usually to their detriment. Jeremiah complained of his sufferings (Jeremiah 36-38) and then wrote five chapters of Lamentations where he literally pours his broken heart out to God. Daniel prayed powerfully for his people as well (Dan 9:4-19). Three times God had to admonish Jeremiah not to pray for his people (Jeremiah 7:16,11:14, 14:11). Micah lamented, “Because of this I will weep and wail; I will go about barefoot and naked. I will howl like a jackal and moan like an owl. For her [Israel’s] wound is incurable; it has [now] come to Judah. It has reached the very gate of my people, even to Jerusalem itself” (Micah 1:8-9). In reading these stories it is hard not to be convicted that intercessory prayer has not been a more important component in my own spiritual life. Although I pray often, it is mostly conversational and relational between God and me and rarely the desperate and labored intercessions observed in the prophets.

iii) Third, the prophets continually challenged God’s people to: 1) have a more vibrant and living relationship with God, 2) to correct their imperfect thinking and 3) to renounce their sin and change their ways. Micah’s tirade in chapter six culminates with his most direct criticism, “With
what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God!” (Micah 6:6-8). The offerings Micah suggests are a literary example of hyperbole intended to shame the reader into a Godlier lifestyle. Like worship in the times of the prophets and the times of Jesus, the modern church has become as much an instrument of institutionalized religiosity as it is an instrument of God’s Grace. The prophets and Jesus knew it would be so – the prophets looked for a faithful remnant that would survive and be restored, and Jesus warned that there would be sheep and goats as well as wheat and tares in the church. What we generally fail to see often enough in the modern church is a concerted effort by church leadership to make their flock uncomfortable with their status quo – to challenge them to seriously reflect upon where they are with God and identifying the reality of what God expects from His children… where we are praying that God will open our heart and mind to see God’s bigger picture and higher calling. We need to understand that a personal relationship with Jesus, entails selective service for the King. c) Fourth – As it pertains to the church today, there are obvious parallels with the writings of the prophets that are timeless reminders: 1) Do we respond to the Spirit of God, or to the spirit of the world [antichrist]. 2) Are we being God’s counter-culture or being like the surrounding societies [nations]. 3) Are we being drawn to true discipleship and Spiritual formation, or to *Vox Populi* - a Latin phrase meaning “the opinion of the majority of the people”. 4) Do we have a Kingdom of God mindset, or a self-centered mindset. 5) Are we living as a holistic unity of the faithful… trusting and submitting to the Holy Spirit; or are we a fractured collection of individuals securing our individual and collective benefit through our own efforts and *realpolitik* [self-serving socio-political pragmatism] instead of moral-ethical standards determined by God. Noted theologian Van Gemeren lists three threats to the Gospel of Christ: “1) De-eschatologization – or Christianity without a living hope, with an emphasis on the here and now rather than the inheritance to come. 2) De-mythologization – or Christianity without a living faith, with an emphasis on rationalism and denial of spiritual reality. Finally of 3) Secularization – or Christianity without a Kingdom vision, with an emphasis on human institutions rather than the Kingdom of God.”¹ All of these remain serious issues that church leadership needs to focus upon. It is apparent in reading scripture that mankind has not changed appreciably through the years. We remain fearful, self-centered, greedy, prideful, etc., etc. As we read Scripture, we should see ourselves in these writings and be convicted that apart from God’s work of grace in our mind and heart that we are lost. The prophets as well as the New Testament writers remind us that we have a higher calling and a choice to make of how we live our

¹ Van Gemeren, *Interpreting the Prophetic Word*, (Zondervan, 1990), pg 380
lives before our God and King. As singer-songwriter-theologian Bob Dylan points out that “we got to serve somebody... it may be the devil or it may be the Lord, but you have to serve somebody.”

B) AUTHOR AND BACKGROUND:

a) The 1st verse introduces this book as “The Words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiah” the priest. The years of Jeremiah’s ministry would have been from around 626 BC to around 580 BC.

i) Jewish tradition held that Jeremiah dictated these words which he “Heard” from God (1:4) to his aide Baruch. It was common for an aide [AKA a secretary or scribe] to write down the words spoken by an important individual. A prominent New Testament example of this is the Apostle Paul who employed an aid to write down his words and then wrote a greeting in “my own hand” usually at the end of his epistles (1 Corinthians 16:1; Galatians 6:11; Colossians 4:18; 2 Timothy 3:17; Philemon 1:19).

ii) Much is known about the history of Jeremiah, who wrote largely in the context of the “Pre-Exilic prophetic era” before the destruction of Jerusalem and the resultant exile. Jeremiah’s home town was a small village just a few miles north of Jerusalem, so he had both knowledge and proximity to the great city and its Temple. Jeremiah’s father Hilkiah was from the priestly line of Abiathar (1 Kings 2:26) who was a priest during the days of Solomon. His priestly roots include Aaron, Eli and the original sanctuary at Shiloh (2:1-3; 7:12-14; 15:1). Because he supported Josiah’s reforms in destroying neighborhood shrines outside Jerusalem, Jeremiah was attacked by his own family and friends (11:17-23; 12:6).

iii) Jeremiah was called directly by God as a prophet from an early age, tradition holds that he was a teenager… possibly 17 years old. Because of the pending desolation that was coming, God instructed Jeremiah not to marry (16:1-4): God delivered His messages through Jeremiah over a period of 40 years spanning the rule of five kings.

iv) Jeremiah’s calling is similar to those of Moses (Ex 3:1-12b), Isaiah (6:1-7a), and Ezekiel (1:1-3:11); placing Jeremiah in the company of some of the greatest historical figures in Judaism. God calls Jeremiah directly (1:4) and identifies Jeremiah as someone He has known since before his birth (1:5a) for whom God has prepared for a special purpose (1:5b).

v) Jeremiah is reluctant to accept God’s calling (1:6)... like Moses, the main reason is revealed as his own self-doubt and feelings of inadequacy... Moses didn’t speak well, while Jeremiah thought he was too young. God’s more forceful response is not merely a rebuke but is a statement of God’s confidence reassuring the young man that He will be with Jeremiah (1:7-8), followed by a sign to reassure Jeremiah (1:9-10).

vi) God says Jeremiah’s mission is 1) to uproot and tear down – a negative role, 2) to destroy and overthrow – a subversive role, and finally 3) to build and to plant – a regenerative role (1:10). Thus, Jeremiah’s prophecy of doom will be balanced by consolation and reconstruction.

vii) Jeremiah’s oracles place on display not only God’s awesome power, but the prophet’s own inner turmoil – sometimes with God Himself and at other times with God’s people.
b) The importance of the office of Prophet in Judaism – God had decreed that His people would be served by three permanent leadership offices following in the tradition of Samuel:
   i) The Priest – was the mediator of the Mosaic covenant both in terms of the sacrificial system and interpreting the Law. The priesthood was hereditary of the tribe of Levi [hence they were Levites] and of the Aaronic order. Preceding Moses was a more ancient order of the priesthood identified with Melchizedek who served “God Most High.” The author of the New Testament Book of Hebrews identified Jesus’s as being a high priest of the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:1, 10, 11, 15, 17).
   ii) The King – was a vassal regent or steward under the authority of the Great King YAWEH. It was the king’s job to protect the nation from outside influences and invaders, and the king also saw to the continuance of the provisions necessary for the ongoing worship at the Temple in Jerusalem.
   iii) The Prophet – was called by God to serve as God’s mouthpiece. The prophet was responsible to identify and anoint God’s choice of king, and then he kept the king and priest properly aligned with God’s will with his decrees and announcements. The prophet heard God’s Words, and relayed God’s message to the king and priests… often making the prophet unpopular when the message was unfavorable or dire.

C) PROPHETIC BACKGROUND of THE TEXT:
   a) The United Kingdom of Israel is represented in the writings of 1 & 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles… and dated between 1,000 BC and 930 BC.
   b) The divided Kingdom of Samaria [northern kingdom] and Judah [southern kingdom] resulted after the death of Solomon and is represented in the writings of 1 & 2 Kings, and 2 Chronicles.
      i) 2 Kings 8:16-17:41 chronicle aspects of the history of Israel and Judah from Joram/Jehoram to Israel’s fall to the Assyrian’s.
      ii) 2 Kings chapters 18-25 chronicle aspects of Judah from Hezekiah to Judah’s fall to the Babylonians.
   c) Jonah, Amos, Isaiah, Hosea, and Micah prophesied from 791 to 698 BC.
   d) The Exile of Judah is dated from 587 BC to 538 BC.
   e) Nahum, Jeremiah, Zephaniah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Habakkuk, Obadiah, Zechariah, and Haggai prophesied from 658 to 520 BC.
   f) Esther, Ezra and Nehemiah are represented in writings dated from 478 to 430 BC.
   g) Malachi and Joel prophesied from 465 to 450 BC.
   h) The following diagram shows the relative dates of the kings and the prophet’s writings associated with each kings’ rule.
      i) Note that Isaiah’s contemporary prophets include Amos, Micah, and Hosea.
      ii) Note that Jewish prophecy in the following diagram is split between the Northern kingdom of
i) Jeremiah’s Oracles and his Laments provide a stunning display of the inner turmoil of a person called by God to deliver a message he struggles with because it doesn’t mesh with his understanding of God’s overarching purpose being played out within redemptive history which he is caught up in.

i) It is important to understand that God’s messengers were not given insight as to why God was doing what He was doing. The role of the messenger was and is to deliver God’s message as they have heard it from God. Messengers deliver the message in obedience, not by compulsion… with an incomplete understanding of what God was asking them to do… obviously a wondrous yet also a potentially scary proposition.

ii) I believe that God’s Grace is put on display because His judgement against His people though just and deserving, was restrained as it plays out over several generations. There is ample opportunity for God’s people to repent and submit to God, but their persistent refusal is their ultimate undoing.

iii) Even though justified, God and His messengers reflect the pain and turmoil they both feel which is recorded in these writings; with the assurance that there is yet Hope... and with the ultimate hope of Messiah and the New Covenant which will redeem all of God’s faithful people.
throughout the ages.

iv) Jeremiah also had his struggles against the false prophet Hananiah who contradicted Jeremiah’s message. The by-play between the young but righteous Jeremiah and the self-seeking Hananiah eager to placate Jewish leaders and the public is compelling. Where Jeremiah’s message sought a response of submission and obedience from God’s people, Hananiah’s message encouraged rebellion and obstinacy.

D) LITERARY DEVICES: The following insights are presented and explored by Lasor, Hubbard and Bush in their excellent book Old Testament Survey:

a) Poetry and Prose – are intertwined in a way strikingly different from other prophetic writings. This interplay is revealing of the duplicity of the leadership.

i) Judgment as an admonition:
   Beware your neighbors,
   And put no trust in your kin;
   For all your kin are supplanters,
   And every neighbor goes around like a slanderer. 9:4

ii) Judgment as an indictment:
   Has Israel no sons,
   Has he no heir?
   Why then has Milicom disposed Gad,
   And his people settled in its towns? 49:1

iii) Judgment as consequence:
   Therefore the time is surely coming, says the Lord,
   When I will sound the battle alarm against Rabbah of the Ammonites;
   It shall become a desolate mound. 49:2

iv) Judgement as prelude for hope:
   But afterward
   I will restore the fortunes of the Ammonites
   Says the Lord. 49:6

v) Judgment as the necessary path to salvation – there are “salvation speeches” that promise hope and deliverance for Judah [the remnant] on the back side of their travail.

(1) This purging should be seen in light of the purging the unrighteous who followed Moses into the desert out of Egypt. As it took 40 years and one generation supplanted by another to purify Israel for the Promised Land, the wickedness of the people was incurable, but health would be found by a new generation:
   For thus says the Lord:
   Your hurt is incurable,
Your wound is grievous.
There is no one to uphold your cause,
No medicine for your wound,
No healing for you….
For I will restore health to you,
And your wounds I will heal, says the Lord…. 30:12f, 17

(2) Hymns are often included for the joyous result for the coming healing:
For thus says the Lord:
Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob,
And raise shouts for the chief of the nations;
Proclaim, give praise, and say
“Save O Lord, Your people,
And the remnant of Israel.” 31:7

b) Literary Techniques:
   i) Compelling figures of speech (5:8; 5:26) – Including irony, hyperbole, simile, etc.:
      (1) For sexual corruption:
         They were well fed lusty stallions,
         Each neighing for his neighbor’s wife. 5:8
      (2) For selfish greed:
         For scoundrels are found among my people;
         They take over the goods of others.
         Like fowlers they set a trap;
         They catch human beings.
         Like a cage full of birds,
         Their houses are full of treachery…. 5:26f
   ii) Rhetorical questions (2:32; 3:1; 18:14; 49:1) – posed where the answer is obvious, but only a scoundrel would fail to come to the proper conclusion. The questions employ a method of literary entrapment, they essentially cause the hearer to condemn themselves. By giving the obvious answer of appropriate conduct to the question, it is equally obvious that the people have done the same inappropriate things.
      (1) An example from common custom:
         Can a girl forget her ornaments,
         Or a bride her attire?
         Yet my people have forgotten Me,
         Days without number…. 2:32
      (2) An example from the Law:
If a man divorces his wife
   And she goes from him,
And becomes another man’s wife,
   Will he return to her?
Would not such a land [that tolerates this] be greatly polluted?
   You have played the whore with many lovers;
And would you [now] return to me? Says the Lord.... 3:1

(3) An example from nature:
   Does the snow of Lebanon leave the crags of Sirion?
      Do the mountain waters run dry, the cold flowing streams?
   But my people have forgotten Me,
      They burn offerings to a delusion [idols of false gods].... 18:14ff

(4) An example from history:
   Has Israel no sons?
      Why then has Milcom disposed Gad.... 49:1

iii) Proverbs (8:7)
iv) “Blessings” and “Cursing” sequences – (17:5-8)
vi) Illustrations – (6:1; 46:3)

c) Stylized Oracles – these and the Structures below demonstrate how intricate and beautifully written the Book of Jeremiah is.
i) Judgment Oracles – begin with an accusation, introduced by “therefore” and sometimes includes a promise of restoration introduced by “afterward.”

ii) Restoration [Deliverance] Oracles – have four different approaches:
   (1) An Assurance of Salvation – begins with consolation followed by the reasons for the consolation.
   (2) An Announcement of Salvation – begins with a lament followed by God’s view of the matter and resulting consequences.
   (3) A Pronouncement of Salvation – begins with a difficult position but then transitions to what God will do to correct the situation.
   (4) A Portrayal of Salvation – begins immediately with a statement of salvation or restoration with no preamble.

E) OUTLINE AND LITERARY STRUCTURE:
a) Thematic Development (David Dorsey):
   i) Oracles against Judah – 1:1-12:17
   ii) Judah’s exile and suffering – 13:1-20:18
iii) Judgment – 21:1-29:32  
iv) Future hope – 30:1-33:26  
v) Judgment – 34:1-35:19  
vii) Oracles against the nations – 46:1-51:64  
viii) Fall of Jerusalem – 52:1-34  

b) Chiastic Structure (David Dorsey)  
   a. Oracles against Judah – invasion from the North – 1:1-12:17  
         • Jeremiah’s complaint of his persecution  
         • Jeremiah beaten and imprisoned  
         • Jeremiah’s complaint of his persecution  
         • Jeremiah’s prayer for vindication  
         • Themes – sword, famine, plague,  
   c. Judgment of kings and groups  
      X – Center of the Book – Messages of Future Hope – 30:1-33:26  
      c’ Judgment of kings and groups – 34:1-35:19  
      b’ Judah’s fall and exile – 36:1-45:5  
      a’ Oracles against the nations – 46:1-51:64  
      Historical appendix – Fall of Jerusalem – 52:1-34  

b) Chiastic Structure of Jeremiah’s Call and condemnation (David Dorsey) – Chapters 1-12  
   Introduction – Jeremiah’s Call – 1:1-19  
   c. Disaster from the North – 4:3-6:30  
      X Center – Temple message... a call to repentance – 7:1-8:3  
   c’ Disaster from the North – 8:4-9:25  
   b’ Condemnation of Israel [Idolatry] – 10:1-25  
   a’ Condemnation of Judah [Covenant desecrated] – 11:1-17  
   Conclusion – Jeremiah’s complaint – 11:18-12:17  

d) Chiastic Structure of God’s purge of Judah/Jeremiah’s complaint (David Dorsey) – Chapters 13-20  
   b. Message occasioned by drought, God won’t relent, so pray for the guilty – 14:1-15:21  
   c. Don’t marry or go into house of mourning or feasting – 16:1-17:4  
      X Center – message of individualized judgment – 17:5-18
c’ Sabbath message – don’t bring loads out of houses on Sabbath – 17:19-27
b’ Message occasioned by potter’s house, God will relent if Judah repents – 18:1-23
a’ Symbolic action, breaking purchased clay jar – 19:1-15
Conclusion – Jeremiah’s persecution and final complaint – 20:1-18
e) Chiastic Structure of Jeremiah’s message collection (David Dorsey) – Chapters 21-29
   b. Two baskets of figs, promise to bring exiles home – 24:1-10
   c. Cup message, seventy years under Babylonian rule – 25:1-38
      X Center – Leaders spurn Jeremiah’s message and seek to kill him – 26:1-34
   c’ Yoke message – three generations of Babylonian rule – 27:1-22
   b’ Hananiah’s prediction that God will bring exiles home in two years – 28:1-17
   a’ Symbolic action, breaking the purchased clay jar – 29:1-32

F) THEOLOGICAL THEMES AND DEVELOPMENT:
   a) God’s Covenant:
      i) Zondervan’s New International Encyclopedia of Bible Words says this about the word translated as Covenant – The concept of covenant (berit) is not found exclusively in the Bible. Other cultures in early biblical times used the covenant concept as a basis for a wide range of interpersonal, business and social relationships.
         (1) Between one nation and another, a covenant was understood as a treaty (Genesis 14:13; 31:44-55). It was common when a nation was conquered by another that they entered into a covenant treaty that stipulated annual tribute the loser paid the victor. Two nations may also covenant together for mutual defense or trade. 2 Samuel 10:19 speaks of such a peace covenant treaty.
         (2) Among individuals, a covenant was expressed as a pledge of friendship such as David and Jonathan (1 Samuel 18:3; 20:8; 23:18), or it served as a business contract.
         (3) When a ruler and his subjects were the parties to a covenant, such a covenant served as a national constitution and spelled out the responsibilities of the ruler and the ruled (cf. 2 Samuel 3:21; 5:3; 1 Chronicles 11:3).
         (4) It should not be surprising that in a world in which covenant was such a pervasive and fundamental idea, that God would select this concept of covenant to clarify the relationship that He sought to establish with His people.
      ii) God’s Covenant with Abraham was personal and relational with a specific person and a promise for his lineage. It was a covenant of Blessing... of an old man with no offspring who God promised would become a great nation and a blessing to all of humanity. It was conditioned by Abraham who by faith followed God.
      iii) God’s Covenant with Moses was on behalf of a specific nation, namely Judah/Israel and the giving of the Law and the promise of the Land where the nation would thrive. It was conditioned
by obedience, worship, dependence and a fierce loyalty to God alone.

iv) In Jeremiah, God’s Covenant expands further and takes on a sense that the whole of Creation is God’s, and Judah’s Covenant keeping takes place in a wider arena. Thus, there is a connection of Genesis 1 and Jeremiah 4:23-28.

v) The New Covenant – Jeremiah sees a greater work of Grace beyond the exile... where the Law is written upon the hearts of the faithful. This Covenant is not mere duty or obligation but looks to a transformed nature with individuals desiring to know and please God. It is the Davidic Covenant empowered by the Spirit (Isaiah 30:1; 42:1; 59:21; Ezekiel 39:29; Joel 2:21. This New Covenant is noteworthy because it has permanence (2 Samuel 7:13; Jeremiah 33:14-26).

b) Role of the Prophet:

i) Zondervan’s New International Encyclopedia of Bible Words says – The basic word for "prophet" in the Old Testament is nabi’, which means "spokesman" or "speaker." Essentially a prophet is a person authorized to speak for another, such as Moses (Exodus 7:1-2; Numbers 12:1-8). Thus, the Old Testament prophets were authorized to speak for God. Two other words used to designate Old Testament prophets are hozeh and ro‘eh (both meaning "seer"). In fact, Gad is called both nabi’ and hozeh (2 Samuel 24:15). At times, prophets are called messengers (mal’ak), and depending on context this term could mean either "angel" or “men of God.” In either case, they are delivering God’s message under His authority, and are not to be taken lightly. The message of the prophet may be called a prophecy (nebu‘ah), but it may also be called a vision, oracle, burden, or simply "the word of the LORD."

Each of these Old Testament terms invites us to look at an important aspect of Old Testament faith and life and the unique gift of the prophetic office that God gave to His people.

ii) During the Monarchy, the leadership of the people under God’s authority were carried out by the Prophet, Priest and King – see “The importance of the Prophet in Judaism” at the middle of page five of this article.

iii) Hosea showed that the life and experience of the prophetic ministry are closely bound to their message. This notion reached its climax in Jeremiah where the explorations of his inner-life have a significant function in his proclamation. Thus, the involvement of the prophet with his message is viewed as an imitation of God’s own involvement in the history of the world he has made.

iv) The theology of “Prophetic Ministry” is profoundly Spiritual and Spirit driven, to keep the leadership of God’s people properly aligned with God’s will and purpose by speaking God’s Words into the life of the leaders and by extension to the people. Then as now, leaders don’t always want to hear the truth, they often go astray and prefer prophetic validation for their own agendas. This is true historically and in modern governments and, unfortunately, also in the church. Prophetic ministry is a gift from God, but it is also a burden for the prophet who must deliver often difficult guidance to those who would prefer to hear something else. John the Baptist was the last Old Testament prophet (Luke 3:1-9; John 1:22-28) who introduced Messiah
Jesus (John 1:29-34) as the King of heaven and earth. John’s message calling the people into repentance paved the way for Jesus’ ministry (John 3:29-36), but his rebuke of king Herod got him thrown into prison and resulted in his death (Luke 3:18-20).

c) The Messiah and the New Covenant – the Theology of Sin, Atonement, and Grace:

i) Professor Brian Morgan observes that, “The prophet Jeremiah’s own life offers one line into Messianic Theology, and his book makes a contribution to the Old Testament’s Messianic Theology in its reflection on David also.” The pre-exilic prophets in their consistent uncompromising criticism of the historical monarchy [post David & Solomon) shows beyond all doubt that there is no hope of salvation in a political restoration (Jeremiah 22:30). It is interesting that Jeremiah returns to the language and imagery of the Davidic Kingship in order to express hope for the future (Jeremiah 23:5-6; 30:9; 33:15-22). However, the Messianic Hope expressed in Jeremiah is not for contemporary politics, but the future New Covenant ushered in by the Davidic successor [Messiah Jesus].


iii) The New Testament theology completes the view of Messiah’s redemptive ministry in the triumphant Atonement through Christ’s Blood with the Passover, Cross and Resurrection.

d) Sin:

i) Sin provides a barrier that separates God and humanity. It is not that God can’t handle our sinfulness, but rather sinful humanity cannot handle God’s Purity and Perfection. Jesus repeatedly told people their sins were forgiven (Matthew 9:2; Mark 2:5, 9; Luke 5:20, 7:47-48). Jesus teachings and His Atonement on the Cross demonstrated God’s love for sinful humanity. Jesus’ Resurrection and Ascension validated His gift of Grace for all time. Zondervan's New International Encyclopedia of Bible Words explains:

(1) The Old Testament’s principle word for sin is hata’, which means "to miss" the mark (cf. Judges 20:16; Proverbs 19:2). In the Old Testament, this word group, which is used some 580 times, typically speaks of missing the standard that God has set for all of humanity. While in much of the Old Testament, "sin" involves a failure to obey the Mosaic Law, we see the concept of sin used prior to the giving of the law. Genesis 13:13 identifies the men of Sodom as great sinners. Joseph was repelled when his master’s wife tried to seduce him; he refused to "sin against God" (Genesis 39:9). Reuben resisted when his brothers wanted "to sin against the boy," that is, to kill the young Joseph (Genesis 42:22). In each of these cases there is what may be called a sin against nature. That is, God has expressed his character and standards in the design of human nature, so that certain actions are perceived as violations of right-living-standards, even though
no law has been given (Romans 2:14-15).

(2) Thus, the structure of human nature and the revelation of divine expectations both provide valid standards for humanity. Violation of these standards, by falling short of performing what is expected by God, is sin. There are many other Old Testament words in the vocabulary of sin. All of them imply the existence of an evident universal divine standard. Most portray human actions in some relationship to that standard. As hata' indicates missing the mark, pesa' ("rebellion," "transgression") indicates a revolt against the standard, and `awon ("iniquity," "guilt") is a deviation from or a twisting of the standard.

(3) In Scripture, the language of sin is also the language of redemption. An example of this is the word hatta't. This word means both "sin" and "sin offering." It speaks of both the fact of human failure and the wonderful reality of Divine forgiveness provided by God through the sin offering that removes guilt. God confronts us in Scripture, calling us to acknowledge our sin. But God also comforts us in Scripture, promising restoration and reassuring us of his love.

Jeremiah listed several reasons why God’s people failed:

(4) They did not think – 4:22... “My people are fools; they do not know me. They are senseless children; they have no understanding. They are skilled in doing evil; they know not how to do good.”

(5) They do not listen – 6:10... “To whom can I speak and give warning? Who will listen to me? Their ears are closed so they cannot hear. The Word of the Lord is offensive to them; they find no pleasure in it.”

(6) They are infatuated with false gods [prostituting themselves to idols] – 2:25... “Any males that pursue her need not tire themselves; at mating time they will find her. [Do they not] run until their feet are bare and their throat is dry.... you said, ‘It’s no use, I love foreign gods and must go after them.’

(7) They are evil – 6:7... As a well pours out its water, so she pours out her wickedness. Violence and destruction resound in her; her sickness and wounds are ever before me.”

(8) Judgment – much of the book of Jeremiah is concerned with God’s Judgment. The Lord has accused the people and judged them for their sin. They have consistently refused to repent and turn away from their evil ways. Worship of God has degenerated into a religion of self-worship. The faith being practiced at this time is to serve humanity, and not to honor God. Judgment is thus:

i) A moral necessity – 5:9... “Should I not punish them for this? Should I not avenge myself on such a nation as this?”

ii) A logical necessity – 2:17... “Have you not brought this on yourselves by forsaking the Lord your God when He led you on the Way?”

iii) A focused and constrained deterrent – 10:24... “Correct me, Lord, but only with justice and not your righteous anger, lest you reduce me to nothing.”

iv) A Biblical Perspective of “Justice” and its necessary outcome “Judgment” – Zondervan’s New
International Encyclopedia of Bible Words explains:

(1) In our culture, "just" and "justice" are often used as political code words. To some, justice means that there should be harsh punishment for criminals. For others, justice refers to a social issue and the desire of ridding the "system" of various inequities. But in all of the talk about justice, we must be careful to read and interpret the Bible so that it speaks with its own meanings. It is all too easy to let contemporary issues so color our notion of what justice is that we fail to develop a Biblical perspective.

In the Biblical perspective, justice derives from God who has communicated to human beings His standards of behavior. Within the context of His covenant relationship with Israel, God shared His norms for a people who would live in intimate relationship with Him. A nation and a person that was identified with the Lord must do justice and live in accordance with the divine standards of what is loving and right according to God's revelation. Old Testament Law, which expresses these standards, is understood as an expression of God's own character as well as His explanation of how His Old Testament people were to live a life of love. Justice in the Old Testament is both a personal and a societal issue. The Law not only shows individuals how to act toward each other, but also lays the foundation for a moral and ethical society. Thus, the Old Testament Law contains developed legal justice and social justice mechanisms.

The New Testament says less about society. This is in part because the Church, unlike Israel, is not a nation. It is also in part because in the New Testament the emphasis shifts from just behavior (behavior in conformity to a standard or norm) to individual righteousness. The New Testament emphasis on righteousness focuses attention on the character, meaning the inner person, from which behavior springs. And God shows us that His solution to injustice is not to be found in life regulated by law; but rather, it is found through God's action in Christ to change [transform] human character.

(2) The Old Testament presents God as Governor of Creation when it speaks of Him as the Judge. In the Old Testament, all the functions of rule--the executive and legislative as well as the judicial--are summed up in judgment. The Old Testament Law sketches a society directly governed by God. But Israel's unwillingness to respond to the Lord first led to the introduction of human governors ("judges") and later to the monarchy. The judges and the kings were viewed as ruling Israel for God, and they were to be subject to the Lord and to His Word. The New Testament maintains the perspective of the Old Testament. God is indeed the ruler of all. And He is the ultimate judicial officer. But when the word "judge" is used in the New Testament, its meaning is shaped more by the meanings found in Greek culture than those found in the Old Testament. New Testament uses of "judge" emphasize the judicial functions of God rather than His overall rule. Thus, it is often a legal or quasi-legal term. But it is also an ordinary word having to do with Godly evaluation: all persons are called on to make choices based on nonjudicial judgments. The New Testament helps us make distinctions about judging that have an
important impact on our interpersonal relationships. God has established human government and assigned it judicial functions relating to criminal acts in society (Romans 13). But God has not given believers any right, apart from Scripture, to examine or condemn other persons. No one but God is competent to measure an individual’s motives or to establish eternal convictions for others. Jesus is Lord, and, as God, he is able to discern rightly. Thus, we are freed from the responsibility of judging others in these areas. We can instead relate to them in love, with acceptance, and freely extend forgiveness. We are not burdened with the responsibility of punishing others or of forcing them to conform to our notions of what God desires. God will judge—at the appointed time (1 Corinthians 4:5).

(3) Yet there are certain practices that God has already spoken about, that He has already judged and made His judgement known in Scripture. It is our responsibility on moral and ethical issues to take our stand with the Lord. Thus, when one who claims to be a believer habitually practices sin, the believing community is justified to expel that person. In church discipline, the church judges, not the person per se but the actions of that person. When the actions are those that God has identified as sin, then the church must act in obedience and expel the unrepentant person. Every Christian has a need for wisdom to make judgments about how to live from day to day. How wonderful to know that God through His Word has already equipped us to judge. By judging only those things that God calls on us to judge (actions/behavior), and by refusing to be trapped into judging others [unilaterally on their character that we may not fully understand], we will be enabled to live productive and peaceful lives.

(4) A good picture of this is “loving familial reproof” where children [especially minors] are guided by their parents... raised up into how to properly act, think, and behave. There are consequences for rebellious behavior and malicious intent, and these should be dealt with.

(5) This is different from the judicial acts of the government, who God has appointed to legislate and enforce laws of the land in a fair and equitable manner.

f) Atonement – is the Biblical provision to mediate peace with God. Zondervan’s New International Encyclopedia of Bible Words explains:

How can a sinful human being approach God? How do we deal with the sins and the failures that alienate us from Him? God's solution to this basic problem is pictured in the atoning sacrifices of the Old Testament. All those sacrifices picture what became a reality in the death of Jesus on Calvary. In the Old Testament, atonement was made to purify objects ritually and set them aside for God's service (e.g., the tabernacle altar [Exodus 29:36-37]). Atonement was also associated with ordaining persons for God's service (e.g., the priests [Exodus 29:35-36]). But the primary connection of atonement was with sin, guilt, and forgiveness. The images in the Old Testament worship system, then, are quite plain. As soon as God introduced law (Exodus 19-24), the reality of sin as law-breaking was established. Persons who broke the law became guilty before God (Romans 7:7-13). It thus became necessary for God to deal with guilt, for implicit in the Old

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Testament notion of sin is not only guilt as personal responsibility for one's actions, but also the conviction that God must logically act to punish sin. Leviticus 17:11 teaches that the death of a sacrificial animal was required for atonement. The Israelites were told not to eat blood, "for," God told them, "the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life."

g) Grace — is the mercy and favor of God extended to the benefit of the penitent faithful. Thus, Sin is the problem, Atonement is the antidote, and Grace is the application of the antidote. Scripture teaches that all humanity has fallen under the curse of sin, where Atonement is the remedy it is appropriated and applied by faith through the Grace afforded by God (Romans 3:23-26).

Zondervan’s New International Encyclopedia of Bible Words explains:

i) The word "grace" seldom appears in the English Old Testament versions. As with a number of theological developments, there is a transition toward but no full parallel to this New Testament concept in the Old Testament. The closest parallel seems to be drawn by the Hebrew hanan, "to be gracious," "to be merciful" (hen meaning "grace," or "favor"). The verb portrays the compassionate response of one who is able to help another person in need. In human society it is often used in statements concerning helping the poor and disenfranchised who cannot help themselves. The Book of Psalms best illustrates the theological use of this Hebrew term. Psalm 51:1 expresses David's appeal to God for forgiveness: "Have mercy on me [hanan], O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions." This appeal is uttered out of a sense of helplessness. It turns away from oneself and looks to God as a loving and compassionate person. God's own nature is the basis on which help is expected. As David says, "Turn to me and have mercy [hanan] on me, as you always do to those who love your name" (Psalm 119:132). Our desperate need for God leads us to turn to Him, but it is His love itself that moves Him to respond to us.

ii) In the Greek language, "grace" is charis. It means a gracious favor or benefit bestowed, and at the same time it means the gratitude appropriate to the grace received. The verb charizomai means "to show kindness or favor." The concept came to include both the gracious action and agreeable human qualities. In the New Testament, Paul fastens on this word and develops it as a technical theological term. It is clear that Jesus' teachings provide a solid basis for Paul's affirmation of the grace of God. Jesus shows that God stoops to help the undeserving and pardons the helpless sinner (e.g., Matthew 11:28-12:13; 18:21-34; 20:1-16; Luke 7:36-50; 15).

iii) By Jesus' time, Old Testament faith had been seriously distorted by centuries of misinterpretation. The religious Jew relied on his physical descent from Abraham and on his knowledge of the law. Relationship with God was considered an issue of ritual piety and obedience to the letter of the law. Under this religious system, the religious man had a claim on God, established by membership in the covenant community and based on his [the person's] own merits. The sense of helplessness that moved the psalmist to call out to God, pleading only that the Lord show mercy and stoop to
meet his needs, was replaced in the religious life of the Pharisees by a smug sense of self-righteousness. The apostle Paul was thoroughly trained in this way of thinking and in Rabbinical theological interpretation. But he was dramatically converted to Christ on the Damascus road and was driven to reexamine the beliefs of his lifetime. His perspective on a person's relationship with God was transformed, and as Paul was committed to missionary work, he was driven to the word "grace" for a way to express the vital difference between human attempts to win God's favor and the way in which personal relationship with God is actually established and developed. Paul's letters to Romans and Ephesians most clearly show the dramatic perspective that grace provides on God's past and present actions. Let us look at some of the teachings of these books, referring also to Paul's epistle to the Galatians. In Romans 3, Paul quotes the Old Testament to show that all people are sinners. Law offered no way of salvation, for law stands as humanity's silent accuser, making us conscious of our sin (3:19-20). So, in Jesus, God acted to reveal a righteousness that has no relationship to the law. This is a righteousness that comes from God and through faith in Jesus is given to all who believe (3:21-22). Because all have sinned, only God's spontaneous and decisive act in Christ—an act of grace—could win our redemption (3:23-26).

iv) The affirmations grace makes about God and human beings stand in bold contrast to the normal human approach to relationship with the Lord. Grace holds that human beings are helpless, so locked in sin that their state can only be represented as death. Grace declares that God is merciful and loving and that he is able to act to meet our deepest need. Grace teaches that God has acted in Jesus to bring us forgiveness and new life through his atoning sacrifice on Calvary.

h) Grace is provided by Christ and received by faith. The process through which forgiveness works through an individual includes a cycle of Conviction, Remorse, Repentance, Restoration, Reconciliation – for a thorough explanation of the theology of these terms, please refer to the AD article on Forgiveness... link below:


G) TOPICAL SUMMARY OF JEREMIAH – Notice the approximate historical timeline:

a) Introduction – Jeremiah called 627 BC:
   i) 1:1-3 – Third Person introduces Jeremiah
   ii) 1:4-5 – God chooses [elects] Jeremiah
   iii) 1:6 – Jeremiah’s protest
   iv) 1:7-10 – God’s insistence and promise of support
   v) 1:11-12 – Vision of an almond tree
   vi) 1:13-16 – Vision of a boiling pot
   vii) 1:17-20 – God commissions and encourages Jeremiah

b) Early messages to Josiah – 627-621 BC
i) 2:1-3:5 – Oracle concerning the unfaithfulness of Israel.
   God laments over His beautiful bride, Israel. God is the faithful husband, Israel is the
   unfaithful bride. Two sins mark Israel – they have forsaken God and found other gods
   to worship. Israel is seen as a prostitute, abasing herself to whoever will promise her
   security [Egypt and Assyria] that will never be delivered. Punishment brings no
   change of heart. This oracle though concerning Israel, is addressed to Judah.

ii) 3:6-10 – God speaks about Israel and Judah as unfaithful sisters.
    Israel is known to be corrupt, but Judah is even worse. Judah has observed all that
    happened to Israel but didn’t take it to heart. Judah relies on the Temple to protect
    her.

iii) 3:11-4:2 – Oracle of hope to the exiles in Assyria.
    One of the few oracles to the Israelites scattered in the north. Even now, if they
    would return to God and declare faithfulness to Him, He will restore them along with
    Judah in Jerusalem. True shepherds lead with knowledge and understanding. When
    this happens, all nations will come to Jerusalem to honor God, and Israel and Judah
    will be reunited.

iv) 4:3-9 – Oracle of judgment on the men of Judah in Jerusalem.
    They have hardened their hearts against God. They need to circumcise their hearts
    [spiritual nature, innerman], not merely their flesh. If they do, God’s anger will relent.

v) 4:10 – Jeremiah questions God.
    Jeremiah wonders why the Temple prophets are able to deceive the people using
    God’s name.

vi) 4:11-6:30 – Oracles against the people and Jerusalem.
    A long oracle and vision of destruction is foretold that is coming from a distant land.
    There is still hope if the people turn from their evil ways. The coming destruction is
    punishment for their evil conduct and wicked actions. Jeremiah is in anguish over the
    sights and sounds of the battle that is destroying the people. All the land has been
    ruined, creation mourns the havoc on it. God says that if one righteous people can be
    found in Jerusalem He will relent… echoing the judgement against Sodom and
    Gomorrah. But none can be found, and they foolishly cling to the conviction that God
    won’t destroy His Temple. God provides hope in a remnant that will survive.

c) Temple Sermons – during Jehoiakim’s reign – 608-605 BC
   i) 7:1-8:3 – Sermon against the Temple [cross reference chapter 26 for reaction to sermon].
      Jeremiah is told to stand in the Temple Gate and tell them that the Temple will be
      destroyed just as the Tabernacle at Shiloh had been destroyed and the Ark of the
      Covenant captured by the Philistines. The Israelites didn’t believe that would happen
      to them, and since they we’re saved Jerusalem won’t be either. They viewed the Ark
as a sort of magical talisman, and that it would protect the people and their city. The false prophets repeated this. The priest even allowed idols to be installed in the Temple. Jeremiah tells them that this is a false hope. The only way to protect themselves is to return to God and obey His commands. Jesus quotes Jeremiah 7:11 when He clears the Temple.

ii) 8:4-9:26 – Oracle against Judah

Jeremiah continues in telling the people the Words of the Lord that punishment and destruction are immanent, because the nation has forsaken God’s Law. Compare Jeremiah to Micah below:

**Jeremiah 9:23-24**

This is what the LORD says:

“Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom
or the strong man boast of his strength
or the rich man boast of his riches,
but let him who boasts boast about this:
that he understands and knows me,
that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness,
justice and righteousness on earth,
for in these I delight,” declares the LORD.

**Micah 6:8**

He has told you, O man, what is good;
And what does the LORD require of you
But to do justice, to love kindness,
And to walk humbly with your God.

iii) 10:1-18 – Poem against idols.

Jeremiah quotes God’s complaint against useless idols, and his complaint against His people who prostrate before them. Only YAHWEH is God; idols are useless. The people are about to be exiled [hurled out] from the Land for their persistent failure to love and follow God.

iv) 10:19-22 – Jeremiah’s lament.

Jeremiah laments his and his peoples’ sad state, there is nothing left now but to endure it.


Jeremiah acknowledges the Sovereignty of God over his life, and before the people he prays God will correct them in justice and not anger so they will not be completely destroyed. He also prays for the destruction of the nations God is using to impart judgement on the people.

d) Failure to abide by God’s covenant results in Exile – Josiah 621 BC – Jehoiachin 597 BC
i) 11:1-17 – Oracle of judgment for breaking the Covenant.
    The Lord reminds Jeremiah of the Sinai Covenant (Exodus 19-24), and of the resultant punishment they would endure if they broke it. Jeremiah agrees with God’s judgment. Jeremiah is told to remind all Judah that because they have broken the Covenant, they are now cursed, disaster will come upon them and God will not intervene. Most surprisingly, God tells Jeremiah don’t even pray for them.

ii) 11:18-20 – Plot against Jeremiah is revealed by God.
    God tells Jeremiah that men from his home town of Anathoth have conspired against him. Jeremiah prays that God would avenge him.

iii) Oracle against those out to kill Jeremiah.
    God proclaims those that sought his life will die. Not even a remnant of the families of those who plotted will survive. Those not involved are safe.

iv) 12:1-4 – Jeremiah’s complaint.
    The complaint is an old one: the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer. Jeremiah asks why? Even Creation itself is suffering from they’re wickedness, and they think God doesn’t see them.

v) 12:5-6 – God’s answer.
    Is not comforting... if you think it’s bad now, it will get even worse. Even his own family will turn against him. God follows with an oracle of judgment against Judah and the wicked.

vi) 12:7-17 – Oracle of judgment and hope.
    God still loves Judah... she will be given over to her enemies, but they will be uprooted from their lands as well. Even then, God will have compassion and will bring them back to their own lands where they will thrive if they truly worship God.

    The linen belt is symbolic of Israel and Jeremiah ruins it by hiding it in dirt and rocks. When he goes back for it, it’s useless. This represents how God will ruin Judah because of her intense national pride and deficient faith.

viii) 13:12-27 – Metaphor of judgment and oracle of captivity.
    Wineskins and drunkenness are used to demonstrate how God will judge the people. Wineskins hold the means of drunkenness, a reference meaning parents hold the means of their children’s sin because they haven’t bothered to teach them. God affirms that no mercy, pity or compassion will be shown to the desperately wicked. When the people complain why is God doing this, the answer is because of their great, unrepentant, and ongoing sin.

e) Messages of drought – 15-15

i) 14:1-10 – Jeremiah describes in poetic detail a terrible drought throughout the land.
Rain is viewed as a gift from God... the message here is that God is withholding His gifts and blessing. Droughts destroy everything... plants and animals alike. Jeremiah asks why God doesn’t come to help and questions His power to do so.

ii) 14:11-12 – Oracle of rejection.

God is not moved by Jeremiah’s accusation, and He tells Jeremiah not to pray for Judah because He’s not moved by them. There are a number of places in Scripture where God’s representative prays, and God hears and responds.

In the case of Abraham, in Genesis 18:20ff Abraham pleads for mercy for Sodom and Gomorrah, and God allowed Lot to be rescued.

In the case of Moses who prayed, and God relented – Exodus 32:12.

In the case of Hezekiah God relented – Isaiah 38:5... but Hezekiah saw much loss and pain by remaining alive; but it well may have been a kindness if he had passed on.

Generally, prayer moves the penitent into the heart of God, where they see things from God’s perspective and come to trust and even understand His ways. Jeremiah is too closely aligned with the people; God’s harsh words help align Jeremiah with God’s perspective.

In response to Jeremiah’s supplications... it is revealed that Israel and Judah are too far gone, the majority will perish but a faithful remnant will be preserved.

iii) 14:13 – Jeremiah complains about the false prophets.

The false prophets are comforting the people telling them what they wanted to hear rather than what they need to know to prepare themselves. The drought will produce a horrible famine, and the people will be attacked and destroyed. Jeremiah stands alone with the reality of a very difficult time ahead.

iv) 14:14-18 – God confirms that He has not revealed anything to these false prophets.

They are deluded and will die along with the people by famine and the sword. Though deserving, God is distressed at the coming calamity.

v) 14:19-22 – Jeremiah prays for the people.

His prayer acknowledges that peace and healing can only come from God, but the people need to confess their sin and wickedness and seek God.

vi) 15:1-9 – God’s response to Jeremiah.

No pity will be shown to unrepentant Israel, they will die by sword and starvation... and the survivors will go into captivity.

vii) 15:10 – Jeremiah laments his birth.

Jeremiah’s prophecy will only result in suffering for him, and he wishes he hadn’t been born.

viii) 15:11 – God consoles Jeremiah.
God will deliver and bless Jeremiah.

ix) 15:12-14 – God’s message to the people.
   The people’s wealth will be forfeit and they will become slaves.

x) 15:15-18 – Jeremiah pleads for his safety.
   God’s words are a joy and delight to Jeremiah even though he has suffered which seems to endure. He worries that God will fail him.

xi) 15:19-21 – God responds to Jeremiah’s complaint.
   God is not pleased with Jeremiah’s doubts and commands his repentance.

f) Messages of disaster and hope – 16-17

i) 16:1-17:6 – Day of Disaster.
   God precedes His message to Jeremiah with an unusual stern warning – 1) do not marry or have children... a counter-cultural decision that would not endear Jeremiah to the population; 2) do not mourn for the death of others... because God has withdrawn His blessing and pity, and His love.

ii) 17:7-17:18 – Poem of Hope.
   Because he knows God can yet heal and save, Jeremiah encourages people to trust God because God will yet reward His faithful followers.

iii) 17:19-27 – Sermon of Keeping the Sabbath.
   An oracle from God on keeping the Sabbath with a dire warning of destructive fire consuming Jerusalem.

g) Messages in the Potter’s Workshop – 18-20

i) 18:1-12 – God the Potter is Sovereign.
   Just as a potter has a right to build up or destroy a pot, so God may build up or destroy a nation if they don’t turn out properly. Message – don’t rely on your heritage, instead do what is right.

ii) 18:13-17 – Day of their Disaster.
   The rhetorical question – has anyone ever heard of a nation that rejects their own God? The result – the nation will see only God’s back and not His face.

iii) 18:18 – The people reject Jeremiah.
   Jeremiah’s message is what God has revealed but not what the people want to hear. They prefer the message of their own priests and prophets.

iv) 18:19-23 – Jeremiah rejects the people.
   Jeremiah is furious with the people and demands God’s retribution.

   In front of the elders, Jeremiah stands his ground and breaks a jar symbolic of the God’s coming destruction of Judah and Jerusalem. Things are beyond repair.

vi) 20:1-6 – Jeremiah confronts the False Priest.
Pashhur the Priest is outraged at what Jeremiah is telling the leaders and people about him and has him locked in stocks for a day at the Temple. After release Jeremiah curses Pashhur with exile and death.

vii) 20:7-10 – Jeremiah confronts God.
Driven with frustration, Jeremiah confronts God and complains of his being ridiculed.

viii) 20:11-18 – Jeremiah’s spontaneous praise.
Following his outburst, Jeremiah praises God who rescues him and will vindicate him. While Jeremiah knows God rescues the needy and downtrodden, he none-the-less rues the day he was born.

h) Oracles Denouncing Kings-Priests-Prophets – 21-23
i) 21:1-14 – Oracle against Zedikiah (587 BC)
Facing an attack from Nebuchadnezzar, Zedikiah believes that only Jeremiah can give him guidance. Jeremiah informs him that there is no escape from the sword-famine-plague that is coming, and that the Lord intends to do Jerusalem and Judah harm. Only those who will surrender and submit to the Babylonians will survive [they are the remnant of the nation].

ii) 22:1-5 – Oracle against the Davidic kings
The Lord states that if the king acts in justice towards the poor, the innocent, and the alien... [meaning they are all to be considered equal under the Law]... then their kingdom will be established.

iii) 22:6-10 – Oracle against the king’s palace.
Even though the palace is considered to be wonderful by the leadership and people, it will all be destroyed. While people will observe and wonder about this, the obvious answer is because they have forsaken the covenant with their Lord.

iv) 22:11-12 – Oracle against Shallum [Jehoa haz].
The people are told not to weep for their dead king Josiah, but instead for their exiled king Shallum.

Jehoiakim is described as unjust, greedy, self-indulgent, and dishonest... any of which would be grounds for condemnation. Therefore, none should mourn for him.

Jehoiachin and his mother will be cast into exile, and they will never return, nor will any of his sons ever prosper in Judah.

vii) 23:1-4 – Oracle against the false shepherds.
A special woe [curse] is directed to the leaders and rulers who led the people astray. This includes kings and priests.

viii) 23:5-9 – Promise of a “New King” that will reign in Righteousness.
This is a promise of a Messianic King fundamentally different in His Righteousness.

ix) 23:9-40 – Oracle against false prophets.

Just when you think it can get no worse, Jeremiah condemns false prophets meaning anyone that does what they please and then justifies it as “the Word from the Lord.”

An astonishing insight into what was accepted as leadership and fallen human nature.

i) Vision of Figs – Chapter 24, 597 BC

i) 24:1-10 – Two baskets of figs.

The exile has now come, and Jeremiah “sees” two baskets of figs in front of the Temple... one basket has spoiled, the other is good.

The good figs represents the remnant of God’s people who have gone into exile... including Ezekiel who will be blessed by the Lord. God will give them a new heart to know Him, and they will turn back to Him with all their heart.

The bad figs includes Zedekiah and his rulers, and all the remaining people... even those in Egypt. They will be destroyed by plague, famine, and the sword.

j) Prophecy of 70 Years of Captivity – Chapter 25, 605 BC

i) 25:1-14 – 70 years of exile.

In the 4th year of Jehoiakim in 605 BC and before the first exiles are taken to Babylon including Daniel and his friends, Jeremiah predicts the exile will last for 70 years until the king of Babylon is defeated.

k) Cup of Wrath –

i) 25:15-38 – God’s wrath is compared to a cup of wine all the nations must drink. When they drink, they will become drunk [dull and careless] and will rise no more. The entire earth will suffer; people everywhere will be slaughtered... the result of God’s fierce anger.

l) Reaction to Temple Sermon – Chapter 7, 609-608 BC

i) 26:1-19, 24 – Jeremiah is threatened.

Life as a prophet can be difficult and risky. Jeremiah is told to stand at the Temple and preach its doom. Jeremiah obeys hoping the people will hear and repent. The people reject the message, thinking God would never allow His Temple to be destroyed and decide to kill Jeremiah. Some people and priests remind the crowd that Micah had preached doom during Hezekiah’s reign, but rather than killing Micah, the people repented and were saved.

ii) 26:20-23 – Uriah the Prophet’s death.

Uriah was a colleague of Jeremiah and preached a similar message. When king Jehoiakim tried to kill him, he fled to Egypt but was extradited and killed.

m) Jeremiah confronts the false prophets – Chapters 27-29, 593 BC

i) 27:1-22 – All nations will be subject to Babylon.

As the kings of the region conduct a war conference, Jeremiah employs a yoke as an illustration of the futility of confronting Babylon. Their only hope of survival is to submit, and if they refuse
the sword, famine and plague will overtake them. However, the false prophets argue things aren’t so bad.

ii) 28:1-17 – Jeremiah confronts the false prophet Hananiah.
Hananiah prophesies that within two years the Lord will bring Jehoiachin and the other exiles back to Jerusalem. Jeremiah foretells Hananiah’s death which comes to pass in seven months.

iii) 29:1-23 – Jeremiah writes to encourage the Israel captives in exile.
He tells them to settle there and prosper as they’ll be there a long time. Even so, the Lord is aware and watching over them. In this segment God provides encouragement that has comforted many through the ages... Jeremiah 29:11 - “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” When things seem bleak and lost, God comforts those He loves who receive His comfort in faith believing. Zondervan’s New International Dictionary of Bible Words explains, The Hebrew word translated as “Hope” invites us to look ahead eagerly with confident expectation. It also calls for patience, reminding us that the fulfillment of hope lies in the future.

False prophet in captivity Shemaiah is angry with Jeremiah because of Jeremiah’s letter which refuted Hananiah and Shemaiah’s prediction of a timelier release. Shemaiah encourages the Jerusalem leadership to stop Jeremiah. Jeremiah responds with a letter condemning Shemaiah and announcing his punishment.

n) Book of Consolation – Chapters 30-33, 587 BC just before the exile.
i) 30:1-31:40 – The Promise of Restoration of the Nation in the Land.
Although suffering has and will occur, restoration will come. This is the source of Hope Jeremiah wants his readers to understand. Zondervan’s New International Dictionary of Bible Words explains, Jeremiah reassured the Jews: "[You] will return from the land of the enemy. So, there is hope for your future" (31:16-17). God had not rejected his people. Despite sharpening images of what was to take place in the near and distant future, the Scripture never shifts from the conviction that relationship with God is the ultimate ground of hope. It is God himself who is the hope of Israel (Jeremiah 14:8; 17:13). It is only by focusing our gaze on him that we find a source of confidence and patience. "Find rest, O my soul, in God alone," encourages the psalmist. "My hope comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken" (Psalm 62:5-6). Locked tight in the grasp of history as it slowly unfolds, the individual can only wait expectantly. "I will wait for the LORD who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob. I will put my trust in him" (Isaiah 8:17). It is clear that Jeremiah understood that God will always preserve a remnant of His people.

ii) 32:1-5 – Jeremiah is imprisoned.
The Babylonian army was attacking Jerusalem. Zedekiah put Jeremiah in prison for his unfavorable prophecies.
iii) 32:6-44 – Jeremiah buys a field near his hometown from his cousin.
   While Babylon is attacking, this wouldn’t seem a prudent investment, but Jeremiah presents this as a symbol of hope that restoration will occur and thus the land has value.

   While still in prison (32:2), Jeremiah predicts that death and destruction will cease, and restoration (health, healing, peace, and security) will occur.

v) 33:14-26 – Promise of the Messiah.
   Jeremiah prophesied that the Davidic lineage will bring about an everlasting King and Kingdom. Messiah’s name will be “The Lord our Righteousness” marking this event as Supernatural and Eternal.

o) Historical Appendix – Chapters 34-35, 588 BC.
   i) 34:1-7 – Again Jeremiah warns Zedekiah.
      In 588 Jerusalem is under siege by Nebuchadnezzar and Israel will go into captivity. Jeremiah predicts Zedekiah will not be killed but will be taken prisoner.

   ii) 34:8-22 – Jeremiah informs the nation that Hebrew slaves should be set free.
      They initially agree because things look bad anyway, but when things seem to improve, they change their mind. This made God very angry… He announces they will all be free to die by the sword, plague and famine, and Zedekiah and his officials will all be handed over to the Babylonians.

   iii) 35:1-19 – An object lesson in obedience.
      As the Northern kingdom of Israel was being conquered by the Arameans, Jonadab son of Recab and his clan the Recabites are shown to be faithfully following the instructions of their ancestral leader (609-598 BC). Jeremiah contrasts their faithfulness with Judah’s faithlessness.

p) The Suffering and Persecution of Jeremiah – Chapters 36-38
   i) 36:1-32 – Jehoiakim destroys Jeremiah’s scroll – 605 BC
      Baruch was Jeremiah’s secretary who faithfully wrote down the Words the Lord gave Jeremiah. When the scroll is read to the king, he cuts off each section and throws it in the fire. Jeremiah has Baruch rewrite the scroll and adds the judgment that no descendant of Jehoiakim will ever sit on the throne of David. After Jehoiachin this would end the Solomonic lineage, however another son of David gave rise to Zerubbabel who ruled when the exiles returned.

      The Babylonians attacked Jerusalem and king Zedekiah seeks Jeremiah’s counsel of the Lord’s will. Jeremiah tells him nothing has changed and that he will surely be taken captive. When trying to leave Jerusalem, Jeremiah is charged with desertion, then beaten and imprisoned. Zedekiah wants to hear what Jeremiah has to say, and Jeremiah tells him God’s message hasn’t changed. Jeremiah is then held captive in the palace rather than being sent back to prison.

   iii) 38:1-13 – Jeremiah held in a cistern – 597 BC
Some of the leadership think Jeremiah is a threat who could undermine the military, so they throw him in an empty cistern. An Ethiopian eunuch learns of this and asks the king’s permission to free Jeremiah. Jeremiah then returns to being held captive in the palace.

iv) 38:14-28 – Zedekiah secretly questions Jeremiah

Jeremiah repeats his warning and advice that the Babylonians will surely defeat them, and the best option is surrender. Zedekiah is afraid of those who have already surrendered, but Jeremiah consoles him not to fear. Other officials are interested in what Zedekiah and Jeremiah have talked about, but Jeremiah remains silent and remains under arrest in the palace until the fall of Jerusalem.

q) Babylonian conquest of Judah – Chapters 39-45, 587 BC


The wall is broken and the Babylonians capture Zedekiah who tried to escape. His sons are killed before him, and his eyes are put out. He is taken in chains to Babylon, while the poorest are left behind to tend the fields. Nebuchadnezzar give Jeremiah a choice to stay of go to Babylon, he chooses to stay with Gedaliah the new vassal ruler of Judah.

ii) 40:1-6 – Jeremiah is freed from prison.

This section contains a more complete explanation of Jeremiah’s rescue from prison by the Babylonian military.

iii) 40:7-41:15 Gedaliah is assassinated by a pro-Egyptian faction.

Gedaliah is working at establishing himself as the vassal lord between the region and Babylon. When the Jews hear this, those remaining return to help with farming the land. Gedaliah is warned the Ammonites [a pro-Egyptian faction] are plotting against him, but he doesn’t believe it. Shortly afterward he is assassinated by Ishmael, leaving the remaining leaders afraid of what Babylon will do.

iv) 41:16-43:7 – Fearing reprisal some flee for Egypt.

Local leader Johanan gathers people to flee from Ishmael but asks for advice from Jeremiah promising he will do whatever the Lord reveals. The Lord tells Jeremiah that they should stay in Judah and that He will build them up and needn’t fear Babylon. Johanan and Jewish leaders do not believe Jeremiah, and they leave for Egypt.

v) 43:8-13 – Oracle of destruction in Egypt.

Jeremiah uses bricks to illustrate how the Babylonians will destroy the Egyptians and the Jews who fled there.

vi) 44:1-30 – Oracle of destruction for the refugees in Egypt.

Oracle of disaster for those who defied the Word of the Lord and went to Egypt ignoring God’s decree. The people still don’t believe Jeremiah and abandon God for worshiping idols. Jeremiah consoles those who remained that God will watch over them.

vii) 45:1-5 – A message to Baruch.
The Lord reveals to Jeremiah that Baruch will suffer as he has but will keep his life. He’s advised not to seek great things for himself.

r) Prophecies against the Nations – 46-51
   i) 46:1-28 – Oracle against Egypt.
   ii) 47:1-6 – Oracle against the Philistines.
   v) 50:1-51:64a – Oracle against Babylon.

s) Appendix – final compilation of the Book of Jeremiah by Baruch – Chapters 51-64
   i) 51:64b – The words of Jeremiah end here.
      The book is now ending with the final entries by Baruch.
   ii) 52:1-30 – The Fall of Jerusalem.
   iii) 52:31-34 – Jehoiachin’s fate.
      Final passage that recounts an historical footnote that Jehoiachin was released from prison when Evil-Merodach became king.

H) CONCLUSION:
   a) My friend Alliee DeArmond when closing down her decades old Biblical Bookstore, graced me with an unbelievable gift. A complete set of the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. It is a compendium of ancient commentaries of the “Church Fathers” from the infancy of the Church, with writings dated from 88-750 AD. The researchers and editors who assembled this treasure of early texts in describing Jeremiah, wrote the following:
      i) When one enters the world of the church fathers, it is a horizon defined by the sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. From creation to consummation, from the beginning of time to its ending. The Fathers defined reality with the vocabulary and claims of these sacred texts. They received the canon as a coherent and accurate description of God’s actions and of humanity’s place in the world. More precisely, they viewed these texts through an authoritative lens, namely the Apostolic portrayal of Christ and His meaning for all of history. To be faithful to the Apostolic witness was central to the vocation of the Fathers... [who first and foremost] remained pastors.
      ii) Jeremiah occupies a distinctive place among the prophets of Israel. The prophetic corpus credited to him [Jeremiah and Lamentations] is not only the largest in the Old Testament canon but also provides detailed accounts of his life and experiences at a key moment in Israel’s history. Jeremiah’s signature was a call to repentance. God’s definition of his mission was clear. “And I for My part have made you today a fortified city, an iron pillar, and a bronze wall, against the whole land – against the kings of Judah, its princes, its priests, and the people of the land. They will fight against you; but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, says the Lord, to deliver you”
(Jeremiah 1:18-19). This call to ministry came in 627 BC. Jeremiah’s message was a call to return to faith in YAHWEH, to the Law, and God’s Covenant.

b) Jeremiah’s ministry contemporaries were Zephaniah (640-626), Nahum (658-615), Habakkuk (608-598); and Jeremiah (650-582). Jeremiah’s father was the priest Hilkiah, which meant Jeremiah was well trained in reading, writing, and interpreting the Scriptures. Jeremiah was about 17 years old when he started his ministry. The main themes of his work focused upon judgment, repentance, and restoration. Jeremiah’s message was unpopular. In an era when “popular prophets” told the leaders and people what they wanted to hear, Jeremiah preached what God wanted His people to hear and respond to.

i) The prophet’s role was to keep the priests and kings in alignment with God’s will and purpose. When the leadership and the people had questions and sought God’s will, God would answer through the prophet. When the leaders and people ignored God and sought their own will and purpose, it was the prophet who declared God’s displeasure in their failure to honor their covenant relationship with God. God is consistently shown to remain faithful and true to His Covenant, while God’s people on the other hand, remained pretty consistently faithless and false.

ii) Where most of the prophets were either looking forward to God’s coming judgment or looking backward upon it to properly interpret it for the future, Jeremiah is caught up in the middle of the historical drama, which makes his message all the more compelling.

c) So, what’s the take away for modern day Christian leadership?
The message of the Cross has always been offensive... it shocks our sensibilities. Some Christians today are calling the Atonement purchased by Christ on the Cross “divine child-abuse.” They obviously don’t know the history and theology of God’s covenantal Law which lies behind Biblical substitutionary sacrifice. On the other hand, Grace as the free gift of God’s love in Christ Jesus is far less controversial and more attractive. The offer of God’s love and forgiveness is a paradox... it is free but it costs you everything. Both Law and Grace also form a paradox... both are true, both are absolutely necessary, both are completely supported and developed throughout Scripture. When discussing Law and Grace we must remember that they are given on God’s terms and conditions, not ours. That God hard-wired both into Scripture is God’s Call and reaffirmed by Jesus in His dialogue with the Samaritan woman in John 4:23-24 – “Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.” Christ followers have a choice... we can accept it or reject it. Follow this link for more explanation into “Jesus’ Mission of Redemption.” http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/3-leadership-dev/LD%20-%206.2%20Discipleship%20Studies%20-%20Jesus%20Mission%20of%20Redemption.pdf

d) Another piece of this modern-day puzzle is what should Christian Discipleship look like? It also begs the question, what does a normative relationship with God look like and what does God expect of
me personally?
The ancient Christian discipleship ideals of diligent study, submission, obedience, and perseverance are less attractive today. The discipline of discipleship sounds to much like legalism to some, who prefer instead “Free Grace”... meaning faith without any expectation of the rigors of discipleship. Jesus when He gave His Apostles the “Great Commission” stated in Matthew 28:18-20 - “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” It is obvious from this that Jesus intended that His followers would undergo character change and transformational life leading to spiritual maturity. Paul reaffirms this in Romans 12:1-2 – “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” Unfortunately, whether you believe deeply or love God dearly, the disciplines of transformational discipleship seems to be lost in the modern world. I've spoken to many folks who clearly want to go to heaven, but don't want to do any work to get there. Instead they prefer a “Four Spiritual Laws” contract that asks little of them but still guarantees Heaven... they want enough Grace to avoid hell and get into heaven, while denying God’s Lordship over our life. Another aspect of what Bonhoeffer called “Cheap Grace” is the so called “Prosperity Gospel” where God can be induced to provide wealth and happiness now at no cost and the benefits of eternity later. The term “Christian” emerged from Paul’s ministry and meant “little Christs”... in other words, they became “Christ followers”... people who acted and became increasingly Christ-like. Follow this link to understanding more about Christian character development. http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/3-leadership-dev/LD%20-%206.7%20-%20Character%20and%20the%20Transformational%20Process.pdf

e) Jeremiah was speaking into a world that loved pleasure and comfort... not unlike ours. They saw no problem in worshiping a few extra gods... after all, what could it hurt? And if these extra gods encouraged worshipping with alcohol, drugs and temple prostitutes... everyone was doing it so it must be ok, right? Jeremiah was sold out to God and preached God’s Word and standard for life and worship. This is a message that wasn’t popular then, and it’s not popular now... but it is no less problematic then and now. Our question prayerfully asked should be... “Lord, what do you want of me? How am I to serve You? Transform me Lord that I may hear You clearly and follow You more closely. Amen.” Follow this link to Developing a Spirit Driven Life. http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/3-leadership-dev/LD%20-%206.5%20-%20On%20Developing%20a%20Spirit%20Driven%20Life.pdf