

## Lesson 39: Crazy for God The Prophets, pt. 2

### A. Introduction

A typical 17-yr old is thinking about maybe going to college or what kind of career he or she is going to have, or who they are dating. A typical 17-yr old is probably on **Facebook** and **Instagram**, and **hash-tagging on Twitter**. One thing is for certain—most typical 17-yr olds are not thinking about being prophets to their own people.

Most teenagers don't want to rock the boat and make needless enemies, but this was what God was calling Jeremiah to do. He even feared for his physical safety and rightly so. Prophets usually ended up being stoned to death, imprisoned, or run out of town. This is not the kind of future that Jeremiah had envisioned for himself, nor would most of us pray for this or desire such a life. Most of us, if we are honest, want to live comfortable lives and basically get along with people. We don't really want to make waves or rock the boat, but that's exactly what God's prophets were called to do again and again.

We're continuing our study on the Prophets. In today's lesson we will look briefly at the life and ministry of Jeremiah, and in **Lesson 40, pt 3 of Crazy for God, the Prophets**, we'll finish up with a brief look at some of the minor prophets like Hosea, Joel, Amos, Jonah, Micah, Habbakuk and Haggai.

You may remember that the word prophet means "to speak on behalf of another." On the most basic level, these biblical prophets were messengers who spoke on behalf of God. In Hebrew, though, the most common word for prophet is nabi (pronounced na-VEE) which means "one who is called." Thus, the emphasis in the Bible is not so much on the prophet's role as a his or her status as one called by God.

Once again, I want to let you know that some of the material for today's lesson comes from **The Bible for Dummies** by Jeffrey Geoghegan, professor of Biblical Theology at Boston College, and Dr. Michael Homan, Professor of Biblical studies at Xavier University of Louisiana, and published by Wiley Publishing, Inc.

Their book, "**The Bible for Dummies**" is an excellent resource to give you a better understanding of the Bible. They explain everything in plain English along with some great illustrations and of course, their dose of humor and wit. So if you want to get a better overall understanding of the Bible as you are going through this Firm Foundation series, go to Amazon or Barnes and Noble and order this outstanding resource: **The Bible for Dummies**.

**Before we go any further, let's review last week's Lesson 38:**

1. There were certain tasks that biblical prophets performed. Name 4 of the 5 tasks that were mentioned in this lesson? **A. Predicting the future; B. Advising leaders like kings on a course of action that they should take; C. Enacting Change, calling for repentance and a change of behavior; D. Performing symbolic acts such as Isaiah walking around naked for 3 yrs to signify Israel's impending judgment or Ezekiel asked to cook food over manure briquettes to signify Israel's moral filth and degradation; E. Delivering oracles. They were God's spokesmen and would deliver his messages, "Thus saith the Lord...."**
2. The prophet of God speaks for whom? **God**
3. The word prophet means what? **One who speaks on behalf of another.**

4. More than the role of the prophet, what is most important emphasis in the life of a biblical prophet? **That he is called by God. It's not something you choose to do. It is a calling where God appoints you to be his spokesman.**
5. Who gives the prophet of God his message? **God**
6. What was the penalty for being a false prophet? **Death**
7. What is syncretism? **A merging of different religions, cultures, beliefs and thought.**
8. **Why did Ezra tell the Israelite men that they had to divorce their wives and children? Because he knew what syncretism would bring. Syncretism was one of the greatest temptations that Israel faced. Intermarriage with other religions and cultures would mean that the Israelites were no longer holy or set apart by God as His unique, peculiar people.**
9. What was the purpose of the false prophet? **To lead God's people astray to serve other gods.**
10. Why is it dangerous to seek out fortune tellers, or read your daily horoscope or have your palm read? **Because it can lead you astray into serving false gods of this age.**
11. Why was Isaiah's call to serve God unique? **Because he enthusiastically volunteered: "He am I Lord, Send me!"**
12. Where did the words of Handel's Messiah come from? **Isaiah 9. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government will be upon his shoulders; and his name shall be called: "Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."**
13. A number of Isaiah's prophecies specifically prophesy the coming of the Messiah (the Deliverer), such as Isaiah 7:14 where Isaiah prophesies that a "young woman will conceive and bear a son, and his name will be called Immanuel." What are these prophecies called? **Messianic prophecies, because they describe details about the birth and life of the coming Messiah, over 500 yrs before he was born.**
14. Sometimes prophets had to symbolically live out their message as well as speak it. What did God tell Isaiah to do for 3 yrs? **To strip and walk naked to symbolize how the Israelites would be stripped bare as they fell captive to the Assyrians.**
15. According to tradition, how was Isaiah put to death? **He was sawn in two.**

## **B. The Calling of a Prophet**

**Theme: God is loving, merciful, and gracious.**

**Theme: God communicates with man.**

As we said in last week's lesson, being a prophet was not an easy job. Most often God's messages were not very popular, and to be called by God to be his prophet was often times considered a fate worse than death.

We said that some of the most common tasks biblical prophets performed included:

- **Predicting the future.** Predicting future events.
- **Advising leaders.** A true prophet would tell the king what God really thought about his plans.
- **Enacting change.** Prophets worked hard to get people to change their behavior and beliefs.
- **Performing symbolic acts.** Because "a picture is worth a thousand words," sometimes prophets conveyed messages by dramatic action such as Isaiah walking around naked for 3 yrs.
- **Declaring oracles.** The prophet delivered God's messages.

God spoke through His messengers, the Prophets, to Israel and Judah to teach the Israelites His ways and to warn them of His judgment on sin. God also sent some of His messengers to other nations near the land of Israel.

### C. Jeremiah's calling (Jeremiah 1)

Jeremiah, also known as the "Weeping Prophet," is the most depressed person in the Bible, and you can hardly blame him. He's active from 626 to 580 BC, seeing firsthand the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians. Moreover, many of these horrible things could have been avoided if the people would have listened to his admonitions to repent.

Jeremiah was born in Anathoth, a small village 4-miles north of Jerusalem. He, like his father Hilkiah, was a priest, and he seems to have traced his heritage back to Moses, Israel's great deliverer and lawgiver. It is interesting to note that God appoints Jeremiah from the womb, and God tells Jeremiah what he told Moses, "I will be with you and tell you what to say. Then, to symbolize how He will put words to Jeremiah's mouth, God touches his lips. Jeremiah is about 17 yrs old when God calls him.

**Let's read some of Jeremiah 1 regarding Jeremiah's call:**

#### **Jeremiah 1:4-10 (GW)**

<sup>4</sup> The LORD spoke his word to me,

<sup>5</sup> "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. Before you were born, I set you apart for my holy purpose. I appointed you to be a prophet to the nations."

<sup>6</sup> I, Jeremiah, said, "Almighty LORD, I do not know how to speak. I am only a boy!"

<sup>7</sup> But the LORD said to me, "Don't say that you are only a boy. You will go wherever I send you. You will say whatever I command you to say.

<sup>8</sup> Don't be afraid of people. I am with you, and I will rescue you," declares the LORD.

<sup>9</sup> Then the LORD stretched out his hand and touched my mouth. The LORD said to me, "Now I have put my words in your mouth.

<sup>10</sup> Today I have put you in charge of nations and kingdoms. You will uproot and tear down. You will destroy and overthrow. You will build and plant."

Now, one of the arguments that is used by those in the pro-life movement is found here in Jeremiah 1 where God says to Jeremiah, "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. Before you were born, I set you apart for my holy purpose...." What this is saying is that God knows us before we are even born.

He has a plan for everyone and even before we are born, while still in the womb, God knows everything about us. So, what are we doing when we kill the unborn? Do you think this is pleasing to God? Do you think that this taking of human life is God's plan for that child? Is it God's will to abort the unborn and sell off their body parts like Planned Parenthood is doing? Something to think about especially if you consider yourself a follower of Jesus. Our God is the Author of Life and none of us has the right or the authority to take the life of an unborn child, simply because the pregnancy is an inconvenience or might alter the course of your life or disrupt your future plans.

As we go thru the **Firm Foundation series**, it is important that we allow God to inform our thinking. So many of us, myself included, have been brainwashed by this world, and our thinking lines up with what's culturally popular and acceptable today. But God has a higher standard, and it's found in His Word, and we need to let the Holy Spirit wash and transform our thinking so that it lines up with the thoughts and the heart of God, rather than that which is acceptable to man. My goal is not to please man, but to please God and do what He wants.

## D. The Potter and the Clay (Jeremiah 18)

God directed Jeremiah to **go down to the potter's house and** watch him molding **clay** into pots on his **wheel**. As Jeremiah watched, the potter discovered a flaw in **the pot he was shaping... in his hands**. **The potter** pressed the clay into a lump and **formed it into another pot**.

Let's read:

### Jeremiah 18:1-8 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD:

<sup>2</sup> "Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will let you hear my words."

<sup>3</sup> So I went down to the potter's house, and there he was working at his wheel.

<sup>4</sup> And the vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to do.

<sup>5</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to me:

<sup>6</sup> "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done? declares the LORD. Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.

<sup>7</sup> If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it,

<sup>8</sup> and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I intended to do to it.

### Here's what we can learn from this Jeremiah's visit to the potter's house:

- **First, we are the clay.** And Jeremiah knew, as he watched the potter shaping and molding the clay, that he was looking at a picture of himself, and of every man, and of every nation. We are the clay.
- **The wheel stands for the changing circumstances in our lives** which are under the control of the Potter. As our life is being shaped and molded by the Great Potter, it is the circumstances of our life, the wheels of circumstance, which bring us again and again under the potter's hand, under the pressure of the molding fingers of the Potter, so that he shapes the vessel according to his will.
- **God is the master potter.** Jeremiah saw the potter. God, he knew, was the Great Potter, with absolute right over the clay to make it what he wanted it to be. Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for beauty and another for menial use?" Of course he has. The vessel is shaped according to the image in the potter's mind.
- **An individual or nation is the clay in the Potter's hands.** He has a sovereign right to make it what he wants it to be. He has the skill and design to work with the clay and to bring it to pass. And if there be some imperfection in the clay, something which mars the design, spoils the work, the potter simply crushes the clay down to a lump and begins again to make it yet a vessel according to his own mind. In the verses which follow, this lesson is applied to the nation of Israel.
- **There is the sovereignty of the Potter over the clay.** Men make plans. God makes other plans.

## E. The Righteous Branch (Jeremiah 23)

Let's read **Jeremiah 23:1-6 (GW)**

<sup>1</sup> "How horrible it will be for the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep in my care," declares the LORD.

<sup>2</sup> "This is what I, the LORD God of Israel, said to the shepherds who take care of my people: You have scattered my sheep and chased them away. You have not taken care of them, so now I will take care of you by punishing you for the evil you have done," declares the LORD.

<sup>3</sup> "Then I will gather the remaining part of my flock from all the countries where I chased them. I will bring them back to their pasture, and they will be fertile and increase in number.

<sup>4</sup> I will put shepherds over them. Those shepherds will take care of them. My sheep will no longer be afraid or terrified, and not one of them will be missing," declares the LORD.

<sup>5</sup> "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will grow a righteous branch for David. He will be a king who will rule wisely. He will do what is fair and right in the land.

<sup>6</sup> In his lifetime, Judah will be saved, and Israel will live in safety. This is the name that he will be given: The LORD Our Righteousness.

### Here's what Jeremiah is prophesying here:

- 1) The Wicked shepherds will be removed. The wicked shepherds have scattered the sheep.
- 2) God will gather the remnant of Israel and bring them back. He will give Israel godly shepherds who will nurture and take care of them.
- 3) On another level for us today in the Church, these wicked shepherds are those pastors and leaders in the Church who do not nurture, feed or take care of the people God has given to them.
- 4) The Righteous Branch will be raised up from the line of David, and this righteous branch is the Messiah, the Deliverer, the Anointed One—the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 5) He will be a king whose righteousness will reign over the whole land. He will reunite Israel as a nation and do what is just and right.
- 6) He will be known as "the Lord our righteousness." This is another title for Jesus. He is the Lord, our righteousness. We are righteous only in and through Him. He is the One who has the ability to make us righteous through his sacrifice for us on the cross.

## F. The Yoke's on You, Hananiah (Jeremiah 27-28)

Some of the most memorable passages in Jeremiah relate to his ongoing battle with a false prophet named Hananiah. One of these bouts occurs when several of Judah's neighboring nations sends emissaries to Jerusalem to celebrate the coronation of Zedekiah. In order to get their attention, Jeremiah puts on a yoke, or an oxen harness, to symbolize that soon all of the nations in the area will be servants to Babylon. Jeremiah goes so far as to call the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, "God's servant." Moreover, Jeremiah warns the nations that if they don't submit to Babylon, God will punish them with the sword, famine and pestilence.

The people, as you may well imagine, don't want to hear this bad news, and Hananiah comes to their rescue. He says that Nebuchadnezzar's days are numbered. Moreover, he removes the yoke from Jeremiah and breaks it, symbolizing that God has broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. However, Jeremiah has a final word in this confrontation. He turns to Hananiah and tells him that, although he

broke the wooden bars of the yoke, God will make new ones of iron. Furthermore, Jeremiah predicts that God will kill Hananiah within the year. Shortly thereafter, the false prophet dies.

### G. The Sour Grapes of Wrath (Jeremiah 31)

The famous expression “sour grapes” comes from Jeremiah. However, rather than having the contemporary meaning of pouting, in the Bible, this expression has to do with accountability. Jeremiah says that one day soon, the people will no longer say, “The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge’ (Jeremiah 31:29). This proverb was apparently repeated a lot during Jeremiah’s day, since it is also quoted by Jeremiah’s contemporary—the prophet Ezekiel (Ezek. 18:2).

This proverb expressed what seems to have been most people’s view during the difficult times in which Jeremiah’s generation lived: their present problems were the result of their ancestor’s sins. Jeremiah assures the people that everyone is accountable for their own actions, and that children, though they may suffer from the effects of their parent’s sins, will not be judged for them.

### H. Jeremiah’s new covenant (Jeremiah 31)

Perhaps the most moving passages in Jeremiah are those describing God’s future plans for Israel—plans as Jeremiah puts it, “to give you hope and a future” (Jeremiah 29:11). Among those plans, God intends to establish a new covenant with Israel where people will obey God’s laws because they are written “on their hearts” and God will “forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more” (Jeremiah 31:33-34). This prophecy gave the Jews great hope following Jerusalem’s destruction by the Babylonians in 586 BC, and early Christians applied it to Jesus, whose death on the cross ushered in a new covenant providing forgiveness of sins.

Let’s read **Jeremiah 31:31-36 (ESV)**

<sup>31</sup> “Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah,

<sup>32</sup> not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD.

<sup>33</sup> For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

<sup>34</sup> And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

<sup>35</sup> Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar— the LORD of hosts is his name:

<sup>36</sup> “If this fixed order departs from before me, declares the LORD, then shall the offspring of Israel cease from being a nation before me forever.”

### Here's what God is prophesying through Jeremiah in this passage:

- God will cause Jews from all over the world to return to Israel and God is going to watch over them to build and to plant, which is exactly what He has been doing since Israel became a nation in May 1948. God has enabled the Jews to take a rocky, barren land that was filled with swamps and in some ways inhabitable, and turned it into a lush garden becoming an agricultural miracle.
- The New Covenant was made with Israel ([Jer. 31:31, 33](#)) just as the Mosaic Covenant had been ([v. 32](#)).
- **One key element of the New Covenant is the preservation of Israel as a nation. God is not finished with Israel and the Church has NOT replaced Israel in the New Testament.**
- The Church today, which is believers in the Messiah, the Deliverer, the Lord Jesus Christ, are partakers of this New Covenant as well, but that is not the ultimate fulfillment of this prophetic promise.
- There is still coming a day when Israel will recognize her sin and turn to Yeshua as her Messiah.
- God will re-establish and fully rebuild the holy city of Jerusalem in which he will inhabit.
- There are some today who teach that the church has replaced Israel, but they ignore so much of what God has to say about Israel like here in v. 36 where God says that for Israel to stop being a nation forever, the sun, moon and stars would have to stop their order, the rotation of the skies and the timely order of daylight, night and all the seasons would have to cease before God would break his covenant to Israel to keep and love them as a nation forever.

### I. Don't Go to Egypt! Jeremiah's relocation and death (Jeremiah 42-43).

After the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, the survivors come to Jeremiah and admit that they should have listened to him and repented of their wrongdoing. They also ask him what they should do next. Jeremiah tells them that whatever they do, "don't go to Egypt." (Jeremiah 42:19). Showing that they really hadn't changed, the people respond: "Truly, you are a prophet of lies!" And with this, they grab Jeremiah and take him to Egypt with them.

Although the Bible does not say how Jeremiah died, later traditions say alternately that he died of natural causes, or that he was stoned to death for his unpopular messages. Whatever the exact circumstances of his death, Jeremiah serves as an example of how hard a job it is to be called a prophet of God.

### J. Ezekiel

Like his contemporary, Jeremiah, Ezekiel lived through the destruction of Jerusalem, though he did so from 1,000 miles away, in Babylon. Ezekiel was a prominent citizen of Jerusalem. He was a Temple priest who was exiled to Babylon ten years before the demise of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. As a result, Ezekiel was the prophet to the Exiles there in Babylon.

### UFOs and Ezekiel's call:

**The Bible For Dummies** gives us this insight into the Ezekiel's call:

The Book of Ezekiel opens with an incredible vision in which God leaves Jerusalem and His Temple. In a swift flying machine that is called a chariot but is more like a chair-throne held up by some very unusual creatures. They are cherubim with lion's bodies and eagle's wings, but unlike typical cherubim that have only a human head, these have four different faces: human, lion, ox, and eagle.

From his fiery chariot God sends Ezekiel to prophesy against Israel. God hands Ezekiel a scroll with the tragic events about to unfold written upon it and commands him to eat it, which he does.

### **Let's read about Ezekiel's call:**

#### **Ezekiel 2:1-7 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> And he said to me, "Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak with you."

<sup>2</sup> And as he spoke to me, the Spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, and I heard him speaking to me.

<sup>3</sup> And he said to me, "Son of man, I send you to the people of Israel, to nations of rebels, who have rebelled against me. They and their fathers have transgressed against me to this very day.

<sup>4</sup> The descendants also are impudent and stubborn: I send you to them, and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD.'

<sup>5</sup> And whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house) they will know that a prophet has been among them.

<sup>6</sup> And you, son of man, be not afraid of them, nor be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns are with you and you sit on scorpions. Be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house.

<sup>7</sup> And you shall speak my words to them, whether they hear or refuse to hear, for they are a rebellious house.

In v. 2, we read where the Spirit of God enters into Ezekiel. He is going to most definitely need to be strengthened and empowered by God's Holy Spirit for the calling and mission that God is giving him. God says He is sending Ezekiel to the rebellious people of Israel. These are Ezekiel's people as well, and God tells him in advance that they won't listen to a word that he proclaims because they are rebellious and stubborn. Is this what success looks like? We often think that if a prophet were successful, the people would hear his message, turn from their sins, repent, and start obeying the Lord. But, God has a different definition of success. In this case, Ezekiel will faithfully proclaim all the messages that God gives him, but the people won't hear anything that he says because of their rebellious ways.

#### **Continuing in Ezekiel 2:8-3:3 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> "But you, son of man, hear what I say to you. Be not rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you."

<sup>9</sup> And when I looked, behold, a hand was stretched out to me, and behold, a scroll of a book was in it.

<sup>10</sup> And he spread it before me. And it had writing on the front and on the back, and there were written on it words of lamentation and mourning and woe.

#### **Ezekiel 3:1-3 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> And he said to me, "Son of man, eat whatever you find here. Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel."

<sup>2</sup> So I opened my mouth, and he gave me this scroll to eat.

<sup>3</sup> And he said to me, "Son of man, feed your belly with this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it." Then I ate it, and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey.

God shows Ezekiel the message that he wants him to deliver. He held out a scroll, which in our day would be like a book, and God's message that He wanted Ezekiel to deliver was written on the front and back, and its words were those of sadness, mourning and woe. **Then God tells him to eat the book and he does.** He opens his mouth to eat the book. Then God says, fill up your stomach with this scroll. And Ezekiel ate it and said, "It was as sweet as honey."

God tells Ezekiel to eat the scroll or book. In other words, Ezekiel needs to ingest, take in, absorb the words of the scroll so that they would become part of him, so that these words and this message would be at the core of his very being.

This is what God wants for you and I as well. When we approach the Bible, we are not just to read it. We are to eat it. Ingest it. Absorb it. Allow our mind and heart to be apprehended by it.

The Psalmist writes in **Psalm 19:7-11 (ESV)**

7 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;

8 the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;

9 the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether.

10 More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.

11 Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

Elsewhere in **Psalm 119:97-104 (ESV)** <sup>97</sup>

Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.

<sup>98</sup> Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me.

<sup>99</sup> I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation.

<sup>100</sup> I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts.

<sup>101</sup> I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep your word.

<sup>102</sup> I do not turn aside from your rules, for you have taught me.

<sup>103</sup> How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

<sup>104</sup> Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.

The Psalmist is saying that he meditates on the Word of God all throughout the day. Now meditation is not just reading the Bible, it's pondering what it says and seeking to apply it to our lives on a daily basis. Meditation is like a cow chewing its cud. You take a portion of Scripture and you chew on it, and think about it. God has not called for us to read His Word, He calls for us to meditate on it, daily. And the Psalmist declares that God's Word is sweet to the taste, sweeter than honey, and God's Word is what gives him understanding and wisdom.

Well this is something of what is going on here with Ezekiel, but to a much greater degree. God wanted Ezekiel to be immersed in this one task, representing Him, the Almighty God as His spokesman to the nation of Israel. And He tells Ezekiel ahead of time that they aren't going to listen to him, that it's going to be futile, and his messages will fall on deaf ears—but he is still supposed to proclaim God's message of repentance.

## **K. Them bones, them bones, them dry bones.**

The Bible for Dummies gives us insight into Ezekiel 37 wherein Ezekiel records a vision in which God leads him to a valley filled with dried bones. God asks the prophet, “Can these bones live?” Ezekiel wisely responds that only God knows the answer. Following God’s instructions, Ezekiel prophesies to the bones that they will live, and then he hears an increasingly loud rattle. The dry bones begin to move, eventually coming together and re-creating skeletons. Then the skeletons grow tendons, muscle, and flesh.

Now, you may think these sounds like “The Walking Dead” rather than the Bible. Actually, this vision is intended to provide the Israelite exiles with hope. Just as God reassembles the scattered remains of these skeletons and brings them back to life, so He will reassemble and revive Israel by bringing the exiles back to their homeland.

In Ezekiel chapters 40-48, Ezekiel has an amazing vision. He sees Jerusalem’s future Temple. He sees the glory of God which had departed from the former temple and now enters this new, idealized Temple. Now God will dwell with the people of Israel forever. God will now rule from what Ezekiel calls the “New Jerusalem.” Ezekiel records that there will be a life-giving river flowing from this Temple with part of the river flowing east toward the Dead Sea where it will turn the Dead Sea into fresh water which will be a miracle since the Dead Sea is 6x saltier than the Ocean, but it will become salt-free. The other half of this river will flow west toward the Mediterranean. Everywhere this river flows, it will bring life. Fishermen will crowd the shores because of the abundance of fish. Swamps and marshes will become fresh and there will be an abundance of trees on the riverbanks that will bear fruit all year long. The fruit from these trees will provide food and their leaves will provide healing.

Finally, God tells the people through the prophet Ezekiel that this New Covenant will also include Israel possessing all her land. God defines Israel’s boundaries here in Ezekiel 47. The northern boundary runs from the Mediterranean north of Tripoli in modern Lebanon and include the northern border of Syria. The eastern border will extend to the Jordan River and the Dead Sea. The southern border will extend to the border of Egypt. And the Western border will be the Mediterranean Sea.

## **L. The godly Jewish believers**

**Theme: Man must have faith in order to please God and be saved.**

**Theme: Man can come to God only according to God’s will and plan.**

However, there were always a small number who believed God’s Word given through His messengers.

- They trusted in the Lord and tried to follow His commands.
- They were accepted by the Lord because of their faith in Him.

**- Compare:**

*They were like Abel, Noah, Abraham, and many more who realized they were sinners and trusted in the Lord for His mercy and forgiveness.*

- They were waiting for the coming Savior whom God had promised would save them from Satan and the punishment for their sins.<sup>7</sup>
- Thousands of years had passed since God had first promised to send the Deliverer, but they knew that He would come at the exact time which God had planned.

**- Consider:**

*Whom are we like? Are we like the Israelites who refused to believe God, or are we like those few who wisely believed His words and trusted only in Him?*

## M. Conclusion

Israel's unbelief and rejection of God's promises brought deep grief and sadness to the Lord.

In **Psalm 81:13-16 (NLT)**

- <sup>13</sup> Oh, that my people would listen to me! Oh, that Israel would follow me, walking in my paths!  
<sup>14</sup> How quickly I would then subdue their enemies! How soon my hands would be upon their foes!  
<sup>15</sup> Those who hate the LORD would cringe before him; they would be doomed forever.  
<sup>16</sup> But I would feed you with the finest wheat. I would satisfy you with wild honey from the rock."

God was, indeed, saddened by Israel; but He had never changed His plans or forgotten His promises. God is still going to save Israel and fulfill His promises to Israel. In Isaiah 2:3, we are told that teaching will go forth from Zion and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

In [Isaiah 49:6](#), we are told that Israel is called to be a light to the nations. The covenants and promises that God made with Israel are still intact. The Gentile church has been strictly warned ([Romans 11](#)) not to explain away, spiritualize or minimize the unique role that God has assigned to the Jewish people in redemptive history. That role has never been reassigned and will be fully appreciated in the next age.

Their place in the plan of God is to be highly esteemed and supported, as it is the passion of God's heart.

## QUESTIONS for REVIEW:

1. What are three common tasks that Biblical prophets performed? **A. They predicted the future; B. They advised leaders; C. They enacted change; 4. They performed symbolic acts; 5. They declared the oracles of God.**
2. Approximately how old was Jeremiah when he was called by God? **17**
3. What does God say to Jeremiah in his call as far as how long God had known him? **God says he knew Jeremiah before he was even formed in the womb.**
4. When did God set Jeremiah apart for his holy purpose? **Before he was even born, while he is still in his mother's womb.**
5. God directs Jeremiah to go down to the potter's house and watch the potter molding clay. The clay is symbolic of what? **Us. We and nations are the clay. We are shaped and molded by God.**
6. The wheel represents what? **Circumstances that God uses to mold and shape us; the everyday pressures of life.**
7. Who is the Master Potter? **God**
8. What is another message that we can take away regarding the Potter and his rights as the artist and creator? **The sovereignty of God. Just as the Potter can smash a piece of clay and make it into something else, or toss it aside because of its imperfections, so also God can do the same with people and nations. He is in control as the Master Potter, Our Creator.**
9. In Jeremiah 23, the Righteous Branch prophecy deals with the wicked shepherds of Israel who have scattered and not taken care of the flock of Israel. Who are these wicked shepherds? **The leaders-priests and High Priests of Israel.**
10. Who is the Righteous Branch? **The Messiah, the Deliverer, Jesus Christ.**
11. Jeremiah declares a new name for the Deliverer in his Righteous Branch prophesy. That new name is The \_\_\_\_ Our \_\_\_\_\_. **The Lord Our Righteousness.**
12. In Jeremiah's prophecy on the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31) what does he say that God will do with his laws? **His laws will be written on our hearts.**
13. One key element of the New Covenant is the preservation of what? **Israel as a nation. God is not finished with Israel.**

14. Has the Church replaced Israel in the New Testament? **No.**
15. When God calls Ezekiel, he presents him with a scroll that has writing on both sides of it. What does He tell Ezekiel to do? **Eat it.**
16. How does he describe the scroll that he has just eaten? **It is sweet as honey.**
17. What is the meaning of “eating the book” for us today? How does this apply to our handling the Word of God? **We are to ingest the Word, eat it, so that it becomes a part of us, so that the Word of God apprehends our hearts and our soul. We do this by meditating on God’s Word.**
18. Ezekiel sees a vision of a valley with dry bones. Who does this represent? **The exiled Israelites in Babylon.**
19. What is the purpose of this vision? **It is intended to give them hope. God is going to re-gather them as a scattered people, revive them and bring them back to their homeland.**

- **God Next Lesson 40: Crazy for God, the Prophets, pt. 3**