

THE LOOKOUT

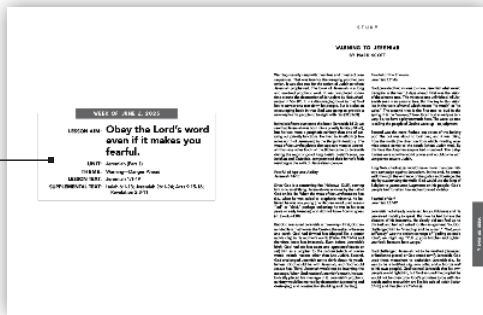
JUNE 2023

Unit: Jeremiah (Part 1) Theme: Warning—Danger Ahead

Overview: We see warnings everywhere. Bridge out. Slow down. Don't drink the water. Warnings even predate the fall of humankind (Genesis 2:16-17). In the perfect Garden of Eden, God warned Adam and Eve against failing to trust his goodness. For the June lessons we are studying the book of Jeremiah, written by the weeping prophet, who also wrote the book of Lamentations, the subject of our May study. Students will learn how Jeremiah was warned about fear overtaking him, how worshipping anything other than God ends in judgment, how relying on a man-made temple is trusting in the wrong thing, and how liars like Hananiah will meet their doom.

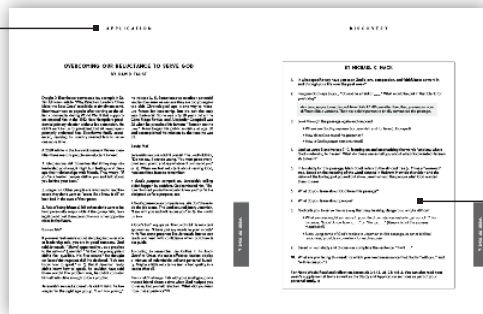
HOW TO USE

Each week has a **lesson aim**, **lesson text**, and **supplemental text**.



Tabs indicate the week of each lesson.

Each week features three sections: **Study**, **Application**, and **Discovery**.



Use the **Discovery** questions to study, discuss, and apply the Scripture passages in a group or class.

WEEK OF JUNE 18, 2023

LESSON AIM: **Put your hope
and security
only in the Lord.**

UNIT: Jeremiah (Part 1)

THEME: Warning—Danger Ahead

LESSON TEXT: Jeremiah 7:1-15, 21-23

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: Psalm 78:56-62; Jeremiah 26:4-9;
Ezekiel 13:10-16; Matthew 24:1-2

WARNING FOR TEMPLE WORSHIPPERS

BY MARK SCOTT

Misplaced trust can lead to feelings of betrayal or disappointment. A politician lies. A sports figure uses muscle-enhancing drugs. A believer (you can fill in the blank). Judah had given themselves false hope by placing their faith in the temple instead of the God who inhabited the temple. Jeremiah 7–10 forms what is called the Temple Address.

God’s people had undergone physical circumcision, but their hearts still required spiritual circumcision (Jeremiah 4:4). They had chased after their own lusts (5:8). They did not know how to blush over their sins (6:15). They had failed to ask for the ancient paths (6:16). Therefore, God remained committed to bringing disaster on them from the north—i.e., Babylon (4:6).

Misplaced Trust*Jeremiah 7:1-11*

God’s word came to Jeremiah again, and Judah was challenged to hear it. Jeremiah was to stand at one of the gates of the temple and *proclaim* (call) *the Lord of hosts’* (armies) message as the people entered the temple. Judah was told to *reform your ways and your actions*. The word *reform* means “to be pleasing or to be good” toward someone. If Judah would just do this they could continue to dwell in the temple and the Promised Land. Unfortunately, they were deaf to Jeremiah’s challenge. The *temple of the Lord* had become a good luck charm. They were trusting in *deceptive words that were worthless*.

Their presumptuous actions peaked in their blatant sinful behavior while speaking about the temple of the Lord as a magical formula. They were involved in several sins while placing their false hope in the temple. They were not executing justice. They oppressed the sojourner. They oppressed the *fatherless* and the *widow*. They murdered people who were innocent. They enthusiastically pursued the idol gods to their *own harm* (evil). They broke Commandments six through nine that God handed down to Moses. They made offerings to Baal. They boasted that they had been rescued but went on doing *all these detestable* (desecrating or unclean) things. The temple, in which they had placed their trust, had become a *den of robbers*. Jesus used this very phrase when he cleansed it (Matthew 21:12-13).

Antecedent Theology*Jeremiah 7:12-15*

Walter C. Kaiser emphasizes the use of “antecedent theology” when reading the Bible. His position is that instead of borrowing freight from later pages of the Bible to understand the text, the reader should interpret the Bible from what has gone before. That strategy of interpretation can be employed here. The tabernacle, after it had served its purpose during the years the Israelites were roaming in the wilderness, came to rest in Shiloh. (*Shiloh* means “place of rest”; the ark of the covenant temporarily rested there, as well, after the people of God had crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land—see 1 Samuel 4:4.)

The people were proud to have the symbol of God’s presence so close by—Shiloh was in the tribal area of Ephraim—but they put their trust in it as opposed to God himself. They continued to practice evil. God *spoke* to them and *called* them, but they did not *listen* or *answer* him. About 500 years earlier, God had allowed judgment to fall on his people. It was hoped a historical reference such as that would give God’s people pause about the way they were acting during Jeremiah’s day. God pronounced judgment on the people by casting them out of his sight.

This Is the Way*Jeremiah 7:21-23*

God had given Judah “the way” to follow. But their persistent sinful behavior, evident in verses 16-20, caused God to say, “Don’t even pray to me about this.” It was wasted breath.

The way of God is obedience. The people thought the key was jumping through all the hoops of their religion (e.g., burnt offerings, sacrifices, etc.). But they had their priorities in the wrong order. The formula from Egypt forward was deliverance, obedience, and sacrifices. God gave them deliverance (out of Egypt), then called for their obedience (the Ten Commandments), and finally gave them the rules about sacrifices (Leviticus 1–7). All the sacrifices in the world could not atone for a disobedient heart. If they obeyed God, then it would *go well with* them. Misplaced trust does not bode well with God. False hope will not get us home. ■

APPRECIATE WHAT YOU HAVE

BY DAVID FAUST

Visitors commented about the rustic beauty of the farm where I grew up, but I was so accustomed to the ponds, woods, and fields, I didn't consider them anything special.

On an April afternoon in 1974, I proposed marriage to Candy at Niagara Falls and she said yes. She and I were attending college then in upstate New York, and it was only a short drive to Niagara Falls. Because we lived nearby, we took for granted the falls' natural wonder.

Later, we ministered for 10 years with a church on Long Island. Visitors came from miles away to see the New York City skyline and the Statue of Liberty, but we didn't give those attractions much thought because we saw them so often.

Taking Blessings for Granted

Do you ever take God's blessings for granted? At times, your daily work may be frustrating and monotonous, but are you thankful to have a job? Are you glad your family members are around even with their irritating quirks? Despite your aches and pains, do you appreciate the health God has given you? Do you notice and thank the medical professionals who care for you . . . the janitors who clean up after you . . . the restaurant workers who serve you . . . and the neighbors who are kind to you?

Emmanuel Musinga came to the United States as a refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo, where his tribe faced violent persecution. He planted a church to serve the many Congolese refugees finding their way to Indianapolis. Emmanuel serves the church without pay and does other jobs to support his family, and he frequently mentions his deep gratitude for the opportunities our country provides for work, education, and

housing. Talking with him increases my own appreciation for the freedoms we enjoy in America.

Taking God for Granted

Ingratitude diminishes our love for God. We can become so accustomed to holy things—so familiar with religious routines—that we lose the wonder of worship. Do we appreciate the privilege of praying to the heavenly Father who invites us to cast all our cares on him? Have we lost the joy of our salvation and forgotten how he called us from darkness to light and from death to life? My friend's Congolese congregation rents a church building on Sunday afternoons and members contribute money to the church's savings account, hoping someday they can have a meeting place of their own. When is the last time you thanked the Lord for the building where your church meets, and for the freedom to gather there without interference?

The Jews took their relationship with God for granted, assuming it was enough simply to show up for worship. The Lord told Jeremiah to stand by the temple gate and greet those who arrived with a solemn warning: "Do not trust in deceptive words and say, 'This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord!'" (Jeremiah 7:4). Casual, occasional lip service cannot replace an authentic daily walk with God. These half-hearted worshippers needed to treat others justly, care for the vulnerable, and quit relying on fake gods. They needed to reform their conduct and appreciate their blessings.

By the end of the book of Jeremiah, they learned the hard way that those blessings could be taken away.

Personal Challenge: Make a list of physical and spiritual blessings your heavenly Father has given you. Offer him a prayer of thanks. ■

DISCOVERY

BY MICHAEL C. MACK

1. How have you shared God's truth and grace recently with someone who has strayed from him?
2. Have you ever realized or had someone advise you that your priorities were out of order? What happened? What did you learn or change?

Ask two people to read aloud **Jeremiah 7:1-15, 21-23** one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask a third person to briefly summarize the passage.

3. How would you summarize the main issues God was addressing through Jeremiah?
4. What specific ways and actions of the Israelites needed to be reformed/changed?
 - The people were using the phrase, "the temple of the Lord" like a magical incantation (sort of like saying "Beetlejuice" three times). What does this tell you about their spiritual condition?
 - Note the conditional (if . . . then) statements in verses 5-7. What do these tell you about God's expectations for his people?
 - How were the people acting presumptuously with God?
5. What do you learn about God from this passage?
6. What do you learn about people, especially those who profess to follow God?
7. In what ways did the Israelites have their priorities (seeking and obeying God first, followed by offering sacrifices at the temple, etc.) backwards?
 - What was God calling them to do to get their priorities in the right order?
 - Think about areas in which you—or Christians in general—get priorities in the wrong order. Examples of the right order are these: God—marriage—children; God—work—money; God—church—ministry. (There are many others.) How do we get these out of order and what can you do to put them in the right order?
8. In what one area of life do you want to improve at walking in obedience?
9. Based on our study and discussion, complete the sentence: "I will . . ."
10. What help do you need from God to live out his priorities this week?

For Next Week: Read and reflect on **Jeremiah 28:1-17**. You can also read next week's supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study. ■