

With the fall of Jerusalem and Jeremiah's apparent fading into oblivion in Egypt, you may ask, "Why another Study? What more can be said?" Surprisingly, the answer is "Everything!"

Fortunately, Jeremiah has written another book of the Bible, Lamentations. In it we find that, far from his spirit being finally crushed, he has left us with one of the most ecstatic expressions of unquenchable faith that has ever been penned, and this from an enforced exile in Egypt! So read on to the **real** end!

1. I don't know about you, but I finished Studies 12A and 12B with a certain sense of frustration. I mean, what an unexpectedly messy ending! Surely one could have expected, after all he had suffered, that Jeremiah would have accepted and enjoyed the favour of the Babylonians, would have said to the Jews: "I told you so! Now we have to wait 70 years for a new beginning" and then would have retired to a quiet ministry of comforting the poor who stayed in the land.

But no, nothing so neat as that! The reality couldn't have been more different. While reviewing Studies 12A and 12B, make up a list of all the "messy" ups and downs that you can think of that seem to spoil the ending of Jeremiah. You can do this quite easily by looking at the subheadings in both Studies.

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- a) Jeremiah is put into the miry cistern — but then unexpectedly and miraculously he is released.
  - b) Zedekiah has a final opportunity to save many lives, but then throws it away.
  - c) Nebuchadnezzar's orders to free Jeremiah and treat him well are bungled and he is bound in chains. But, finally the mistake is rectified and Jeremiah is treated well by the Babylonians.
  - d) Things change for the better when the godly Gedaliah sets up a centre of refuge in Mizpah, but then he is murdered by the evil Ishmael!
  - e) The Jews are saved from Ishmael's grasp by Johanan, but after consulting Jeremiah, who had always been right, he then makes the stupid mistake of running off to Egypt taking a reluctant Jeremiah and Baruch with him.
  - f) The Jews, in Egypt, even after seeing the results of their sin and hearing again Jeremiah's rebuke, refuse to listen!
  - g) The Jewish women, instead of turning back to God, turn to idols.
  - h) Any other examples the group might have found.

2. The above is enough to depress anyone! As a normal human being Jeremiah's emotions must have soared and dropped many times with such fluctuations in his fortunes. Now run over the answers to 12C.1 and briefly try to describe Jeremiah's emotions, in terms of "ups" and "downs", at each event.
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- a) Down, then up.
- b) Up then down.
- c) Up then down, then up again!
- d) Up then down.
- e) Up then down.
- f) Down.
- g) Down.

3. Clearly, under such intense pressure, Jeremiah was near to breaking point. However, as a great man of God, he managed to retain his sanity. Read his words in Lamentations 3:1-27, surely one of the most sublime expressions of **HOPE** under duress that we can find in all literature.

- a) In Lamentations 3:1-20 Jeremiah pours out his intense grief at all he had been through. Discuss some of the experiences that would have caused him most intense pain.
  - b) The mark of a true man of God is not the absence of the ups and downs of life or of his feelings, but the way in which he copes with these. What is Jeremiah's declared source of comfort in Lamentations 3:22-23?
  - c) What can we learn from the way in which Jeremiah coped with such appalling and intolerable circumstances? (Lamentations 3:24-27)
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- a) Personal answers.
- b) Jeremiah had learned that God's love for him was so great that his compassions **never** fail; they are renewed **every** morning. In spite of everything that he had been through, he could still burst into rapturous praise as he extolled — "**great is your faithfulness!**" To him, God's faithfulness was so much bigger than all his temporary setbacks put together. When he calls this to mind he has **HOPE**. Yes! Surely Jeremiah is the supreme prophet of **HOPE**.
- c) When we live through such terrible experiences, the secret is to **learn to wait patiently** on God. Even if the circumstances seem to be nonsensical, God is sovereign and in his own perfect time he will fulfil his gracious purposes to those who truly **HOPE** in him.

4. This is what the Bible calls **living** by faith — not **blind** faith, but faith based firmly on God’s revealed promises. Where does true faith come from, according to Romans 10:17?

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True faith comes from hearing the word of Christ (God’s word).

5. Jeremiah certainly knew all about God’s word. He knew it personally as a prophet, through the messages he received from God. But, he **also** knew it, just as we do, from reading God’s written word. Look at the simply astonishing prophecy of Isaiah in chapter 44:24 to 45:6, which Jeremiah must have read many times. About 130 years before Jeremiah, Isaiah had promised a benefactor who would allow and encourage the Jews to return to their land.

- a) This benefactor is first introduced to us, unnamed, in Isaiah 41:2. How is he described in this verse?
- b) But in Isaiah 44:28 this king is actually named. What was his name?
- c) What astonishing titles does God give to this king in verses 44:28 and 45:1?
- d) What would Cyrus do, according to this prophecy? (44:28)

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- a) As one from the east, called in righteousness to God’s service.
  - b) Cyrus, future king of Persia (see PERSIA on Map 2).
  - c) “My shepherd” and “His (the Lord’s) anointed”.
  - d) After conquering the oppressive nations, he would rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. This was an act of munificence unparalleled in history.

Unfortunately we don’t have the time for an in-depth study of Cyrus, but it makes fascinating reading. Read through the points on the next page where we have gathered together some background information on Cyrus to whet your appetite!

6. **CYRUS (Background Information)**

The points below reveal that Cyrus played the double role of:

1. **Fulfiller** of God's promise to Jeremiah to return the exiles from Babylon, after 70 years in captivity.
  2. **Foreshadower** of the coming Messiah — Jeremiah's "righteous Branch".
- a) "I have stirred up one from the north... one from the rising of the sun (the east) who calls on my name." (Isaiah 41:25)
  - b) "From the east he was called in righteousness to his (God's) service." (Isaiah 41:2)
  - c) God himself likened Cyrus to his shepherd (Isaiah 44:28) — a coincidence with David and Jesus.
  - d) Cyrus was actually named in the prophecies of Isaiah. (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1,13)
  - e) The truly remarkable thing is that the name "Cyrus" (Hebrew = "*Koresh*") was a word derived from Persian which was unknown to the Jews at the time that Isaiah was writing!
  - f) Cyrus was not merely an anointed one (common to all kings) but "the **Lord's** anointed one", a distinctive messianic title. (Isaiah 45:1)
  - g) Cyrus is not named by Jeremiah but there are several passages that obviously make reference to him: Jeremiah 50:14 and 29. Archers were Cyrus' main weapon (Jeremiah 50:41-42 = bow and spear). Jeremiah 51:11-12 describes the way Babylon would be taken — compare with Isaiah 45:1-2.
  - h) Josephus says that Daniel and the Jews told Cyrus of the prophecies relating to him. Cyrus recognized the truth of these prophecies and declared: "The Lord, the God of heaven... has appointed me to build a temple for him in Jerusalem in Judah." (Ezra 1:2)
  - i) Cyrus, like Jesus, was condemned to die by a jealous king when he was yet a baby. He was rescued by a nobleman who switched the baby Cyrus for a dead one, and then adopted him.
  - j) At the age of 10, the same jealous king recognised the boy and made a further attempt on his life which fortunately was again unsuccessful.
  - k) When Cyrus directed a rebellion against a cruel king of the Medes, he said to his Persian troops: "I have been divinely ordained to fulfil this mission."
  - l) Cyrus' life was preserved through many battles; several of his victories were accompanied by miraculous events that won the day.
  - m) Cyrus was well known for his fairness. He sent the exiles back to their own land; he abolished idolatry.

We recommend that you return to this later to browse through it when you have some spare time.

7. So here is a man, a non-Jew, called by name, endowed with two key messianic titles and who was to fulfil the promises God had made to Isaiah and Jeremiah. At the time of this apparently “messy” ending to Jeremiah’s ministry, God had his plan to restore Judah through the magnanimity of this foreign king!
- a) Now read what actually happened, in 2 Chron.36:17-23. Of course, this account was written long **after** the events had occurred. So from this vantage point, how does the situation now appear? Does it still seem as messy as before?
  - b) On the other hand, Jeremiah had to view all these things **before** they took place, when all was in chaos. But in spite of that, how does he respond? (Compare Lam.3:19-22,31-32 with Romans 8:24-25)
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- a) I expect you will agree with me, it is **not** a messy ending but a gloriously triumphant one now that the Lord had brought all his purposes to fruition through his servant Cyrus. Praise the Lord!
  - b) The wonderful testimony that Jeremiah has left is that **although he didn’t live to see God’s promises come to pass** he still held on in the certain HOPE of their eventual fulfilment. That is the true sign of a man of God.
8. Now let’s see how well-grounded Jeremiah’s hope really was and how gloriously his faith was vindicated. When we turn to the events recorded by Ezra, 70 years after Jeremiah, we see the quite amazing way in which this promise was fulfilled in every detail. We, too, must surely marvel at the greatness of God’s faithfulness to his servant Jeremiah.
- a) In what way did King Cyrus fulfil the promise God had made to and through Jeremiah? (Ezra 1:2-4)
  - b) Who moved him to act as he did? (Ezra 1:1)
  - c) To what further lengths did he go in fulfilling God’s promise? (Ezra 1:6-11)
  - d) And what was the eventual outcome of his actions? (Ezra 6:14)
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- a) This amazing foreign king made an edict allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem and to rebuild the temple that Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed, exactly as Jeremiah had predicted.
  - b) The Lord moved his heart to do this.
  - c) Furthermore, he sent with the returning exiles all the valuable articles that Nebuchadnezzar had stolen from the temple. He even encouraged his own people, the Persians, to contribute with the most generous gifts.
  - d) They finished the building of the temple just as the Lord had commanded.

9. We can only marvel at the way God raised up Cyrus to fulfil his purposes. But of course we must always remember that, remarkable as Cyrus was, he was only the **shadow** of another who was to come. Who was that person, to whom Jeremiah pointed so faithfully? (Jer.33:15-16)

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The Messiah who was to come — Jeremiah’s “righteous Branch”. Cyrus was the **shadow**, but Christ is the **reality**. A hope that is based on him can never, never be frustrated.

10. Jeremiah, too, was a truly remarkable person, although from a quite different background to Cyrus. Indeed, he must be one of the greatest examples ever of HOPE in God, sustained during some of the darkest moments. What an inspiration he is to any who are struggling to hang on to their faith in similar situations today. The story of Jeremiah’s unshakable testimony to his Lord at ALL TIMES — “Great is your faithfulness” — is one of the Lord’s great provisions for his people. But wonderful as is Jeremiah’s example, it too pales into insignificance against the example of the one whose coming he proclaimed. Who was this and how can he help us even more than Jeremiah’s example? (1 John 5:4-5; Romans 8:35-37; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18)

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Again it was, of course, the righteous Branch, the Messiah, our Lord Jesus. He is our **perfect** example. But more, he actually provides us with the **power** we need to follow that example and to enter into his triumph. So we, too, will soon be standing in the presence of our Lord and Saviour and praising him, along with Jeremiah and hosts of others. This was Jeremiah’s great HOPE; it is ours also! For if Jeremiah’s hope in the fulfilment of God’s promises was vindicated so marvellously, how much more will ours be, when Jesus returns in glory.

11. And so we come to the end of our study of this most intriguing book of the Bible and of the life and times of its brilliant author. Let’s apply it one final time to our own lives. It could make such a difference!
- a) For sure, some of you will already have passed through periods of extreme stress as did Jeremiah, only to have come out into the bright light of the Lord’s overruling grace. Spend some time encouraging each other by sharing these experiences and some of the surprising blessings which resulted.
  - b) Others of you may be facing such a crisis now; perhaps your world seems to be falling apart. In a spirit of fellowship, discuss how the truths learned in this course can apply to these particular sorrows. How can Jeremiah’s amazing confidence in the greatness of God’s faithfulness bring you HOPE, and help you to win through to the triumphant outcome the Lord undoubtedly has in store for you? (1 Peter 1:3-7; Hebrews 6:19-20a)

12. Now pray together about specific problems. Then close by using these lovely Bible prayers. Encourage one another with these words, and seek to make them a reality in your lives.

“May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you **IS FAITHFUL** and he **WILL** do it.”  
(1 Thessalonians 5:23-24)

“The Lord **IS FAITHFUL**, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.”  
(2 Thessalonians 3:3)

“For in this **HOPE** we are all saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? **But if we hope for what we do not yet have**, we wait for it patiently.”  
(Romans 8:24-25)

“May the **GOD OF HOPE** fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may **OVERFLOW WITH HOPE** by the power of the Holy Spirit.”  
(Romans 15:13)

May the dear Lord Jesus richly bless you all with certain **HOPE** in his great **FAITHFULNESS**.