

# RUNNING *with* HORSES





# Overview of the Old Testament

## God's Creation



In the beginning, God created the whole universe as an expression of His majesty. At the center of creation was humanity, created in God's image. Placing Adam and Eve in a garden in Eden, God gave them the task of ruling and caring for the world with Him. Being deceived, they broke their relationship with God through their rebellious sin. As a result, they were exiled from Eden.

## God's Covenant



As humanity and sin multiplied on Earth, God made a promise with Abraham and established an everlasting covenant with him. Abraham and Sarah's future family would grow into a great nation that would bless the whole world. Many generations later, as the book of Exodus begins, Abraham and Sarah's descendants, now called Israelites, are slaves in a foreign land.

## God's Deliverance



Seeing the oppression and distress of the Israelites, God called Moses to lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. God delivered them and formed a covenant at Mt. Sinai with the Israelites so that they would be able to freely live out their identity as the people of God in the land promised to Abraham. God also had them build a tabernacle so that He could live with His people and lead them.

## God's Provision



Nearing the promised land, the Israelites became fearful of the people living in the land instead of trusting God to deliver the land into their possession. As a result, the Israelites had to wander in the desert for 40 years until a new generation was prepared to live faithfully in the promised land. During this time, God provided for their needs and taught the new generation to trust him.

## God's Promised Land



The Israelites were once again poised to take possession of the promised land. In a renewal ceremony on Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal, Joshua reads the words of the covenant to the Israelites. Their choice was to walk faithfully with God and experience his life and prosperity or to live in rebellion and experience the consequences of disobedience.



## God's Royal Covenant



Living in the promised land, the people turned away from God. In their rebellion, the Israelites rejected God's leadership and demanded a King. God first gave them Saul, who failed to serve Him faithfully. Next, God established David, a man after His own heart. God promised David that his throne would be established forever and his descendant would bless all nations.

## God's Forbearance



The Kingdom that David united fractured into two nations. The ten northern tribes retained the name, Israel. The two southern tribes established the kingdom of Judah. It was during this period that God sent prophets to both Israel and Judah, urging them to remember the covenant and repent of their rebellion. Israel, in the north, failed to listen and was exiled by the Assyrians in 721 B.C.

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## The life of Jeremiah

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## God's Discipline



Following in Israel's footsteps, Judah, in the south, also rebelled against God's covenant. As a result, God raised up the Babylonian Empire to execute judgment upon Judah. In 586 B.C., Jerusalem was destroyed, and the Temple was leveled. Most of the population was exiled to Babylon. During this time, God continued to send prophets to the exiles, promising to restore them.

## God's Faithfulness



Approximately 70 years later, the Persian Empire defeated the Babylonian Empire and allowed the exiles to return to their land. Under the leadership of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, the Temple in Jerusalem was rebuilt, and the walls surrounding Jerusalem were restored. As the people of God rebuilt, they waited for God to move again and send the promised Messiah.



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*The words of Jeremiah, son of Hilkiah, one of the priests at Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin. The word of the Lord came to him in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah son of Amon king of Judah, and through the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, down to the fifth month of the eleventh year of Zedekiah son of Josiah king of Judah, when the people of Jerusalem went into exile.*

Jeremiah 1:1-3, NIV

## Jeremiah

Born into a priestly family in the town of Anathoth, a Levitical city a few miles from Jerusalem.

### Ministry under Josiah

As the Assyrian Empire declined amid civil war, the Neo-Babylonian Empire gained strength. During this time, Jeremiah grew up and received his prophetic call. Despite King Josiah's reforms, Jeremiah's ministry faced opposition and threats against his life.

### Ministry under Jehoiakim

After the fall of Nineveh, the Neo-Babylonian Empire posed a major threat to the kings of Judah. Jeremiah's warnings of imminent defeat were unpopular, especially with King Jehoiakim, who regarded him as a primary opponent.

### Ministry under Zedekiah

Jeremiah witnessed the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem, the destruction of the Temple, and the Jewish exile. He remained in Judah until he was forcibly taken to Egypt, where he probably died.

## Kings of Judah

### King Josiah



Remembered for his religious reforms and attempt to purge idol worship from Judah.

2 Kings 22:1-23:30; 2 Chron. 34-35

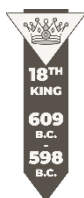
### King Jehoahaz



Ruled for three months before being imprisoned and deported by Pharaoh Necho of Egypt.

2 Kings 23:31-34; 2 Chron. 36:1-4

### King Jehoiakim



Appointed by Pharaoh Necho of Egypt. Jehoiakim did not follow the reforms of Josiah, but rather did evil.

2 Kings 23:34-24:6; 2 Chron. 36:4-8

### King Jehoiachin



Called Jeconiah in Jesus' genealogy (Mat 1:11-12). Ruled for three months and 10 days before Nebuchadnezzar exiled him.

2 Kings 24-25; 2 Chron. 36

### King Zedekiah



Appointed by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, until his rebellion led to the siege and destruction of Jerusalem.

2 Kings 24:17-25:7; 2 Chron. 36:10-13





## WEEK 1

*"If you have raced with men on foot and they have worn you out, how can you compete with horses? If you stumble in safe country, how will you manage in the thickets by the Jordan?"*

Jeremiah 12:5, NIV

### Questions

- How was Jeremiah's message of repentance and forthcoming judgment unpopular in Judah?
- How would the plot against Jeremiah's life in Jeremiah 11:18-19 cause him to doubt God's justice and Presence?
- What did God mean that Jeremiah wasn't ready to race with horses?
- How does Jeremiah's experience relate to your life and faith in God?
- How can sharing our honest doubts with God help us build a stronger relationship with Him?
- How can we view our current struggles as training for future challenges?
- What actions can we take to hold onto hope and trust in God's promises during difficult times?
- What does it mean that faith is trusting God even when we don't understand His ways?

### Notes



## WEEK 2

*"Then the Lord reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, 'I have put my words in your mouth.'*

Jeremiah 1:9, NIV

### Questions

- What were the primary insecurities that Jeremiah expressed when called by God?
- How does Jeremiah's calling relate to the concept of being chosen by God before birth?
- How does God reassure Jeremiah? What does that illustrate about His character?
- In what ways can we identify and embrace our unique roles within God's divine purpose?
- What are some practical steps we can take to overcome feelings of inadequacy in following God's call?
- How does the Holy Spirit empower us today to obey God's calling on our lives?
- How does understanding that God equips those he calls help you when you feel unqualified to share your faith?

### Notes





## WEEK 3

*"This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place."*

Jeremiah 7:3, NIV

### Questions

- What warning does God give in Jeremiah regarding ignoring calls to repentance?
- What does it mean to return to God, according to Jeremiah's message?
- How do the themes of repentance and true worship in Jeremiah 7 connect with the teachings of Jesus in the New Testament?
- Why is it important to understand that Jesus fulfills the call for genuine worship and the relationship that God desires?
- In what ways can we ensure that our faith does not become superficial or ritualistic?
- How can you personally identify and move away from empty religious practices in your faith journey?
- What practical steps can we take to return to a genuine relationship with God, as called for in Jeremiah 7?

### Notes



## WEEK 4

*But if I say, "I will not mention his word or speak anymore in his name," his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in;*

*indeed, I cannot.*

Jeremiah 20:9, NIV

### Questions

- How does the metaphor of God as a potter help us understand His sovereignty over our lives?
- What is our response to God when we understand we are clay being shaped by him?
- What challenges did Jeremiah face in his prophetic ministry, and how did these illustrate God's molding process?
- In what ways did Jesus also experience the shaping and molding process?
- In what ways does Jesus want to shape and mold you?
- How can we learn to trust God's plan during times of hardship?
- How can we learn to express our honest doubts and struggles to God as Jeremiah did?
- In what ways does honesty with God lead to a renewed commitment to God's divine purpose in your life?

### Notes





## WEEK 5

*"But you have not paid attention or listened to me. The descendants of Jehonadab son of Rekab have carried out the command their forefather gave them, but these people have not obeyed me."*

Jeremiah 35:16, NIV

### Questions

- What does God's praise of the Rechabites teach us about His expectations for our faithfulness?
- How can the commitment of the Rechabites relate to our understanding of faithfulness in our own lives?
- What are some societal pressures we face today that challenge our Christian convictions?
- What specific convictions do you feel called to uphold in your own life?
- In what practical ways can we demonstrate radical commitment to God in our daily actions?
- How does Jesus' example of commitment illustrate the importance of obedience to God's commands for believers today?
- How can we encourage one another to remain steadfast in our commitments to God?

### Notes

