

**GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH**  
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

**Read the Bible in a Year Challenge**

Week 38

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<b>Monday</b>	Jeremiah 46-47	Psalm 63	1 Peter 1
<b>Tuesday</b>	Jeremiah 48-49	Psalm 64	1 Peter 2
<b>Wednesday</b>	Jeremiah 50-51	Psalm 65	1 Peter 3
<b>Thursday</b>	Jeremiah 52	Psalm 66	1 Peter 4
<b>Friday</b>	Lamentations 1-2	Psalm 67	1 Peter 5
<b>Saturday</b>	Lamentations 3-4	Psalm 68	2 Peter 1

**Sunday:** *Enjoy the lessons from Scripture as they are read aloud in Sunday worship. The Bible study summary for each Sunday of the year is found as a separate document on the parish website, under “Adult Education, Bible Study”.*

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**The Jeremiah readings:**

1. See the study summary for week 35 for an introduction to Jeremiah.
2. Chs. 46-50 continue the oracles against nations. Notable throughout is the prophet’s interactions with the geopolitics of the world around him.
  - a. The first poem in ch. 46 accurately records the ascent of Nebuchadnezzar from being victorious general at the battle in 605 B.C., in which Babylon defeated Egypt under Neco at Carchemish, to be king.
    - i. The subsequent account of the fall of Egypt probably predates the description of the battle, and thus is an oracle of Egypt’s defeat.
  - b. Oracles are issued against Philistia (modern day Lebanon), Moab (part of modern Jordan), and Ammon (north of Moab, with her capital being modern Amman).
    - i. Moab is personified as a woman. Cf. Isa. 15.5.
    - ii. The Ammonites rejoiced at the fall of Jerusalem (Ezek. 25.1-7).
      1. The Ammonite king was a principal author of the assassination of Gedaliah (cf. 40.11ff.)
  - c. Oracles are issued against Edom (the southern Transjordan state extending to the Gulf of Aqabah, with a capital S.E. of the Dead Sea), against Damascus, against Arabia, Elam (N.E. of the Persian Gulf, *i.e.*, in modern Iran), and against Babylon (the city and empire in the fertile crescent by the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers).
    - i. The oracle against Edom reflects some influence from the prophet Obadiah.
    - ii. The oracle against Damascus is actually against the Syrian cities as whole.
    - iii. In referring to Arabia, the prophet is referring the Bedouin tribes of the Syrian desert, E. of the Transjordan. (This is the same usage of “Arabia” found at Gal. 1.17).
  - d. The long poem (50.1-51.58) which comprises an oracle against Babylon may post-date the prophet. It bears the hallmarks of having been written by a disciple during a later era (*ca.* 538 B.C. , just prior to the fall of Babylon).
    - i. Thematic elements include the fall of Babylon and the return of the Jews from exile.

1. The law of retaliation is operative. Because the heathens have profaned the Temple (*cf.* Lam 1.10), their destruction is certain.
3. In A. D. 594-593 ambassadors of the kingdoms neighboring Judah met in Jerusalem, to form a coalition of states for the overthrow of Babylon. The “oracle in the Euphrates” (51.59-64) reflects this time period.
  - a. The ambassador Seraiah was the brother-in-law of Baruch.
4. The book ends with an historical appendix (ch. 52), in which the destruction of Jerusalem is reviewed. Material is recapitulated from 2 Kgs. 24.18-25.30 (excepting 25.22-26, the account of the assassination of Gedaliah, which is found in Jeremiah at 40-41).
  - a. The sections from 2 Kgs. have probably been inserted to demonstrate how Jeremiah’s prophecies have been fulfilled.

### **The readings from Lamentations:**

1. The place of Lamentations in the canon of scripture varies by tradition. In Jewish tradition the book is part of the Writings (*e.g.*, like Esther), one of the five scrolls read on feast days. In Greek and Latin tradition the book is part of the Prophets, and is attributed specifically to Jeremiah.
  - a. The title comes from the opening (in the Hebrew text), *'ekâ* (“Oh how”), a characteristic beginning of lament.
  - b. In the year 587 B.C. the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple, and deported the population, leaving only the poorest and weakest (*cf.* 2 Kgs. 24.8-25.30; Jer. 39, 52).
    - i. Five poems of mourning were composed in response to this crisis in the political, social, and religious life of Israel.
      1. Some kind of ritual mourning continued to be carried out on the site of the Temple after its destruction (Jer. 41.4-5; Zech. 7.1-5). It is possible that these laments were used in that setting.
    - ii. The poems bear the hallmarks of single authorship. A very ancient tradition assigns this authorship to Jeremiah.
      1. The long form of lament gave rise to the term “Jeremiad”.
    - iii. The poems are arranged into stanzas based on the 22 letter Hebrew alphabet, and have poetic peculiarities.
      1. Parallelism, dominant in Hebrew poetry, is missing in a large portion. The “lament” meter of 3 + 2 stresses is dominant, but also missing in portions.
  - c. The theological issue presented in Lamentations is this: How is Israel to understand her trauma in religious terms?
    - i. The options included returning to Canaanite worship, worshipping the “stronger” Babylonian gods, or remaining faithful to the LORD and seeking to understand the present suffering.
      1. Lamentations is, therefore, an early attempt to articulate option three, that of fidelity to God.
2. Lamentations begins by looking at the present, facing reality in all starkness, and then seeks to understand this by looking to the past.
  - a. The history of the LORD delivering His people from bondage, of entering into covenant with them, and giving them an inheritance in Canaan, provides the lens through which to examine the calamity.

- i. Faithfulness would have precluded what has been visited upon the people. The devastation must be understood, therefore, in terms of unfaithfulness.
  - 1. The present suffering is not a sign of the LORD'S weakness, but of His strength.
    - a. Israel has become an enemy of God, and this is the cause of the destruction. The sin of Israel is her unfaithfulness to the covenant.

3. Lamentations may be outlined as follows:

- a. The ruin of Zion: 1.1-22.
  - i. Lament over Zion and lament of Zion.
- b. The day of the LORD'S wrath: 2.1-22.
- c. The poet (the people) cry out to the LORD from the depths of their desolation.
- d. Jerusalem is revisited: 4.1-22.
- e. The prayer of the people: 5.1-22. Deliverance comes from God.
  - i. The common theme of "Why?" now becomes "How long?"

**The psalms: N.B.** *In The Bible Challenge the Psalter is read twice (once in each half year). We may all be led into new insights, particularly in focusing on praying each psalm (preferably aloud). See the summary for week 1 for a general introduction.*

- 1. See the study summaries for weeks 11 and 12.

**The readings from the First Letter of Peter:**

- 1. Peter's authorship of this letter is generally accepted, although the style of writing reflects the craftsmanship of a secretary fluent in Greek (and the citations from the Old Testament used in the letter are from the Greek *Septuagint*). A slender majority view (of Petrine provenance) would date the letter to A.D. 63-65, immediately preceding the apostle's martyrdom under Nero.
  - a. If the letter was written by a disciple of Peter, is probably dates to about A.D. 70-90, *i.e.*, after official persecution has begun in the empire.
- 2. The letter is addressed to "resident aliens," *i.e.*, to Christians who live in a hostile pagan world. Most of the recipients are of pagan origin themselves, and as recent converts are in danger of renouncing their faith in the face of official persecution.
  - a. The apostle recalls to them the greatness of their vocation, and demonstrates that persecution is a sign of their calling.
    - i. Those who are alien in a hostile world have their home in the Church.
  - b. The letter is a pastoral document which emphasizes vocation. As a pastoral encouragement/admonition it is not written to establish doctrine.
- 3. 1 Peter may be outlined as follows:
  - a. Address and greeting: 1.1-2. The letter does not follow the Greek form of opening, but the Jewish form as used in official correspondence.
    - i. Peter addresses the recipients as "resident aliens" (*e.g.*, without the rights of citizens) of the *Diaspora* (Jews living outside the Holy Land).
      - 1. Believers are elected into the new covenant by the coöperation of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
        - a. This "baptizes" the Christian election (into the new covenant) as a parallel to the election of Israel (into the old covenant) by the LORD.

- b. The Christian vocation and the responsibilities of vocation: 1.3-2.10. Salvation is brought about by the Father, through the Son, revealed by the Holy Spirit.
  - i. The apostle celebrates the Father's initiative in the Christian election using a form of blessing common in Jewish tradition. *Compare* 1.3 with Gen. 9.26; Pss. 66.20; 68.20; 1 Kgs. 1.48.
  - ii. Christians live in hope by and through the abiding word of God. The promises made to Israel are fulfilled in the Church.
    - 1. The Christian inheritance is imperishable (unlike land, which while permanent can be taken away).
  - iii. Believers are exhorted to holiness (1.13-25).
  - iv. Believers are to live as God's children (2.1-3). The injunction to "put off" malice, etc. follows the language of baptism (*cf.* Rom. 13.12; Eph. 4.22, 25).
  - v. Believers are a "chosen race" (2.9). This verse applies four titles from the Old Testament to the Christian Church.
    - 1. Basic to the dignity of the Christian election is the initiative of God.
    - 2. The Church constitutes a household of God (2.4-10).
- c. Witness as Christians: 2.11-3.12.
  - i. The apostle enjoins obedience and right-living. As those elected into God's household, Christians are to be above reproach.
    - 1. 2.18-3.7 represent a "domestic code" as found commonly in ancient writings, both religious and secular. *Cf.* Col. 3.18-4.1; Eph. 5.22-6.9.
      - a. Christian wives may hope to win over pagan husbands not by preaching but by good example (3.1).
- d. Persecution for the faith: 3.13-5.11.
  - i. Believers are to have confidence. They are persecuted because they believe (3.13-17).
    - 1. At 3.15 the apostle refers to Jesus as "lord" using the word as found at Isa. 8.13, *i.e.*, as an explicit reference to God.
  - ii. Jesus Christ is the basis for confidence.
    - 1. His victory over sin is applied to Christians in their baptism (3.18-22).
      - a. The reference at 3.18 to Jesus preaching to those "in prison" is one of the origins of the creedal statement that He "descended into hell".
    - 2. Through suffering the believer renounces sin (4.1-6).
  - iii. The Christian life is lived in expectation of the *parousia* (the second coming of Christ) (4.7-11).
  - iv. Persecution must be faced realistically (4.12-5.11).
    - 1. Actual persecution should result in joy (4.12-19). It is a gift of God. The apostle writes at a time of actual persecution.
    - 2. Elders and the faithful are exhorted (5.1-5).
    - 3. Final exhortations (5.6-11): God brings the faithful through suffering to glory.
- e. Conclusion: The true grace of God is expressed. Believers must stand firm in their faith: 5.12-14.

### **The readings from the Second Letter of Peter:**

1. There is near universal agreement that this letter is pseudonymous, probably written as late as A.D. 130 (*i.e.*, as the latest-written New Testament writing). This conclusion flows from:
  - a. The letter incorporates Jude, weakening the likelihood of authenticity.
  - b. At 3.15-16 the letter refers to a “collection” of Paul’s letters, which did not exist before the end of the first century at the earliest (*e.g.*, not less than more than three decades after Peter’s death).
  - c. The letter relies on a wide range of traditions about Peter, *i.e.*, it synthesizes diverse information about the apostle.
  
2. 2 Peter is written to a pluralistic Church of Jewish Christians and Gentile converts. It is an “early catholic apology,” *i.e.*, a defense of the Christian teaching on eschatology. The letter lacks a christological focus, being more concerned with the problem of theodicy (the theology of God’s judgment) and the delay of Jesus’ second coming.
  - a. The letter can be best understood in the context of first and second century debates about justice and afterlife.
  - b. The letter is an argument responding to attacks on the faith.
  - c. The letter is written in good academic Greek, unlike most of the New Testament.
  
3. 2 Peter will be reviewed in outline form in next week’s study summary.