

Lesson 105

God Warns Judah

God promised to judge Judah for their idolatry.

Overview

Lesson Focus

God was angry with Judah because of their many years of idolatry and sin. God called Jeremiah to be his prophet, delivering God's message of coming judgment to the people of Judah and Jerusalem. Jeremiah obeyed God even when the people persecuted him and refused to listen. He wept over their stubbornness.

Key Passages

Jeremiah 1:4–9, 18:3–6, 18:11–12, 20:1–2, 13:17, 14:17–18

Objectives

Students will be able to:

Describe how God warned Judah of coming judgment.

Understand why God was about to send judgment.

Memory Verse

Ephesians 2:4–5 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses,

made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.

Prepare to Share

Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

Jeremiah is often referred to as the “weeping prophet” because of the nature of his ministry, and the label fits. Jeremiah primarily prophesied in the southern kingdom of Judah during its final decades. Jeremiah was sent to warn Judah of a fate similar to the northern kingdom, and his messages began during the reign of Josiah (Jeremiah 1:2, 3:6), the good king who worked to rid Judah of idol worship, turning them back to worshipping the one true God (2 Kings 22–23). Jeremiah was not the first prophet to be sent to Judah; Micah, Isaiah, Joel, Obadiah, and others preceded him, and he was a contemporary of Daniel, Ezekiel, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah. Judah had periods of restoration, like the period when Isaiah was prophesying under King Hezekiah, but they were constantly backsliding just as Israel had done (Jeremiah 3:6–10). Like the others, Jeremiah called for repentance and for the people to turn back to God. Because of their unfaithfulness to God, Judah was described as an adulterous wife, just like her sister Israel.

For their adulterous idolatry, God pronounced that a lion from the north would come and lay siege to their city (Jeremiah 4:5–8). Judah was to be wiped out for their continual wickedness (2 Kings 23:26), despite the short periods of correct worship. Jeremiah foretold the coming destruction of Judah and Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians. This destruction would come in three phases. We'll get to that in the next lesson.

Because he was constantly and harshly warning the kings of coming judgment and calling them to repentance, Jeremiah was persecuted. During his ministry, Jeremiah faced death threats (Jeremiah 11:18–23, 26:8), was beaten and placed in stocks (Jeremiah 20:2), had his writings burned (Jeremiah 36:23–26), was thrown into a cistern (Jeremiah 38:6), was carried away captive in chains (Jeremiah 40:1), and faced many other trials.

The judgment he was proclaiming was deserved. Judah had persisted in following after false gods rather than the God who had delivered them from Egypt and established them in the promised land. God judged the people of Judah, and he warned them that because they had forsaken him and served foreign gods they would be taken hostage and serve foreigners in another land (Jeremiah 5:19). As bleak as that future appeared, God also gave the people the message that they would not be completely wiped out, but a remnant would turn back to God and cry for

relief (Jeremiah 5:18). God made it clear that the captivity described in Jeremiah chapter 5 would last 70 years (Jeremiah 25:12).

In spite of all the warnings and proclamations of coming disaster, there was also a foreshadowing of eternal hope. Jeremiah spoke of the days when the Lord would raise to David a Branch of righteousness—a King who would reign and prosper. He would be called “The Lord is our righteousness” (Jeremiah 23:5–6). This was a foreshadowing of the coming Messiah.

We can live in this same hope as we face periods of conflict or brokenness in our lives, families, country, and world. Like Judah in Jeremiah’s time, we live in a world cursed because of our sin, our idolatry, and our unrepentant hearts. The hope Jeremiah spoke of is the same for us. Jesus Christ will come to restore all things one day. He will restore this broken creation. Jesus Christ offers a plan of redemption for sinners through his life, death, and resurrection that can assure those who repent and believe a place with him in eternity.

Historical/Apologetics Background

As we look at the opening passage of Jeremiah, we have a clear time frame for the ministry of Jeremiah. He was a young man when God first called him to be a prophet to the nations (Jeremiah 1:1–8), probably in his twenties, and possibly as old as 90 when he died. He began

prophesying in 630 BC, the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah (Jeremiah 25:3), and the closing passages recount the release of Jehoiachin in 562 BC—indicating a span of 68 years of ministry. Unlike most of the prophets, Jeremiah was alive to actually see his prophecies of Jerusalem's destruction come to fulfillment, living through those terrible days when kings were captured, and the city and temple were burned and leveled. We will see as we continue our lessons that Jeremiah's role to Judah was not finished. His influence would continue into the 70 years of captivity that he had prophesied.

We have looked at some very specific prophecies from Micah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. The statements they made were proclaiming in very particular detail what would happen in the future. Many people doubt that these statements are actually prophecies of the future. Rather, they say that an editor added those things back into the text after they had already happened. They doubt that the prophets really received messages from God and recorded what he told them. They doubt the absolute truthfulness and authority of the Bible.

As you face skeptics who want to attack the authority and authenticity of God's Word—whether inside or outside the church—remember, the Word of God speaks for itself. Show your friends where God's Word speaks specifically about the topic you are discussing. This way, those you are talking with will be forced to

combat the words you show them in the Bible. Most skeptics are quick to deny man's opinions but will find it more difficult to deny the Bible and the very words it contains.

We can cling to the truth proclaimed in Scripture. There we find the knowledge of who God is, what he has done for us in Christ, and how he works in us through the Holy Spirit. As we study God's Word, we trust that the God of the universe is speaking and that we have the privilege of receiving his words. We must heed the warnings, obey the commands, and trust in the promises, knowing that we are submitting to the Creator of the universe who has graciously saved us and adopted us into his family.

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