

Lesson 106

God Judges Judah

Judah is captured by King Nebuchadnezzar.

Studying God's Word

Don't forget! Review the Optional Supplements and determine where you can use them.

Introduction

Refer to the Exodus to Malachi Timeline. We've already seen how the northern nation of Israel disobeyed God and was defeated by the Assyrians. The capital city of Samaria was besieged, or surrounded, until they had to surrender or starve to death. Many Israelites died and those who lived were taken away to foreign cities.

While the nation of Israel had no kings who did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, the southern nation of Judah did have some good kings who obeyed and trusted God.

Slide #3

Slide #4

Slide #5

Refer to Lesson 102 Theme Poster. King Hezekiah cleansed the land of idols and led the people back to worshipping the true God at the temple in Jerusalem. For his faithfulness, God saved Hezekiah and the people of Judah from King Sennacherib and the powerful Assyrian army.

Refer to Lesson 104 Theme Poster. Another good king was Josiah. When he heard the Book of the Law and realized how Judah had been disobedient to the Lord, he repented and sought the Lord with his whole heart. He rid the land of false gods and repaired the temple.

Unfortunately, the changes King Josiah made in Judah were only temporary—they didn't last. The kings after Josiah were wicked and brought back the worship of false gods like Baal. The people quickly turned from the Lord, too.

Who did God use to warn the people to turn back to him when they were sinning? They were people chosen to deliver God's messages. Prophets.

Refer to Lesson 105 Theme Poster. God called Jeremiah as a young man to be his prophet, and Jeremiah obeyed.

Why did God send Jeremiah to the potter's house? What did he want him to see? Allow discussion. Jeremiah saw the potter making a vessel, but the clay was spoiled so the potter remade the vessel.

God wanted to show that the people of Judah were like spoiled clay that was about to be squashed and remade into a new vessel. This was a warning for the people to repent of their idolatry before they were destroyed. Instead, the people punished

Jeremiah because they didn't like his message from the Lord.

Jeremiah is sometimes called the "weeping prophet" because he mourned over the people's stubbornness and rebellion.

Another interesting thing about Jeremiah is that he did not prophesy about events far in the future. Other prophets gave messages of judgment that didn't happen during their lifetimes. But Jeremiah knew that God's judgment was coming soon, and he was living among the people who would be judged!

As Jeremiah kept warning the people, his problems continued. To help us understand Jeremiah's troubles, let's think about some troubles you might have had.

I'll name a time of trouble. If you have been through a time like that, raise your hand. After reading each situation below, ask students to tell how they felt in that situation. If no one responds, you can ask students to imagine how they might feel or if they know someone else who has been through it.

Situations: You were blamed for something you didn't do. You were seriously hurt or injured. You were bullied/treated in a mean way. You were ignored/no one would listen to you. You were in danger (close to a fire, in a storm, etc.). Something you worked

hard on (chore, school project, toy, model) was destroyed or ruined.
Which of these troubles do you think Jeremiah had? Allow guesses.

Jeremiah had all these troubles because he did what God asked him to do. Today we'll see how God helped Jeremiah get through some troubles, and we'll see what happened to him during the judgment of Judah.

Zedekiah's Reign

Jeremiah began speaking for God during the reign of good King Josiah. But after Josiah came four evil kings: King Jehoahaz, King Jehoiakim, King Jehoiachin, and finally King Zedekiah, the last king of Judah. God brought the powerful nation of Babylon against Judah, and their attacks took place during the reigns of several of these bad kings. Both Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin were captured and taken to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar, who then assigned Jehoiachin's brother, Zedekiah, to be the next king of Judah—only, he was supposed to obey Nebuchadnezzar.

Slide #6

Slide #7

Slide #8

2 Chronicles 36:11–14

Refer to the Books of the Bible Poster. Turn to 2 Chronicles in your Bibles. What section

of the Old Testament is 2 Chronicles in?
History.

Let's learn more about King Zedekiah in 2
Chronicles 36:11–14. Who will read that?
Choose readers.

Zedekiah became king at age 21 and
reigned 11 years in Jerusalem. What kind of
king was he: good or evil? Evil.

What did he do? Refused to humble himself
before Jeremiah and the Lord; he rebelled
against King Nebuchadnezzar; he hardened
his heart against turning to the Lord.

Zedekiah did not listen and obey God's word
through Jeremiah, and he refused to turn to
the Lord. He also should have realized that
God was on the side of the Babylonians in
this punishment. It was God that brought
them against Judah, so Zedekiah was wrong
to rebel against King Nebuchadnezzar.

What did the priests and the people do?
They were unfaithful; they polluted the
house of the Lord.

It wasn't just King Zedekiah who was
sinning; the priests and the people sinned,
too! They were worshipping the false gods,
or abominations, of the nations around
them. They even brought false worship into
God's holy temple in Jerusalem.

The people ignored and mocked God's
messengers, the prophets, until God's anger
was aroused against them.

Pass out the Class Notes.

Let's start our Class Notes, which is a crossword. You'll write a word from the word bank into the puzzle to complete each statement.

Slide #9

Who will read #1 and give us the answer? Choose a reader. Josiah. Have students complete #1.

And #2, what sin were the people committing? Choose a reader. Gods. Have students complete #2.

Who will read #3 about King Zedekiah? Choose a reader. Lord. Have students complete #3.

Jeremiah's Troubles

Now, look at an example of how the people and King Zedekiah ignored Jeremiah's message and then punished him.

Turn in your Bibles to Jeremiah chapter 38, and while you're doing that, I'll give you some background on what happened during King Zedekiah's reign. King Nebuchadnezzar was not happy that Zedekiah rebelled against him and had asked Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, for help to fight against the Babylonians. Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah with his army and surrounded the city of Jerusalem. But they left the city when they heard that Pharaoh and his army were marching against them from the south. The

people of Judah thought they were saved and the Babylonians wouldn't return.

God sent a message to Jeremiah, and he told the people that Pharaoh would return to Egypt and the Babylonians would come back and fight against Jerusalem. The Babylonians would capture it and burn it with fire.

How do you think the people of Jerusalem felt when they heard this message? Allow discussion.

The people didn't like to hear that they were going to be defeated by the Babylonians. When Jeremiah tried to go visit his family outside the city, the guard at the city gate thought he was escaping to join the Babylonians! The officials were furious with Jeremiah and beat him and put him in prison.

King Zedekiah eventually ordered Jeremiah to be removed from that prison and kept in the court of the guard. While Jeremiah was there, he continued to deliver God's messages to the people. He warned them that Babylon would defeat their city. The city officials finally had enough. They went to the king and said Jeremiah was scaring the people and doing them harm. King Zedekiah gave them permission to punish Jeremiah.

Slide #10

Jeremiah 38:6

Let's read what they did in Jeremiah 38:6.
Choose a reader.

Where did they cast Jeremiah? Into the cistern of the king's son.

What is a cistern? Can you tell from the description? A pit that stored water.

A cistern was a deep pit dug into the ground to collect water when it rained. But there was no water in the cistern where they put Jeremiah, only mud. Poor Jeremiah sank down in the mud. He was stuck!

Will he die down in the pit, forgotten and alone, or will God get him out of there?

Slide #11

Slide #12

Slide #13

Slide #14

Jeremiah 38:7-13

Listen and follow along as I read Jeremiah 38 starting at verse 7. Read verses 7-13.

Who did God use to rescue Jeremiah from the cistern? Ebed-melech the Ethiopian.

Ebed-melech was from the country of Ethiopia. He was a servant in the king's palace, and he went to King Zedekiah to ask to help Jeremiah.

What did Ebed-melech tell the king would happen to Jeremiah in the cistern? He would die of hunger.

At this point, the city was surrounded by the Babylonians, who returned as Jeremiah said they would, so there were no supplies coming into the city. No bread was left.

How did Ebed-melech get Jeremiah out of the muddy cistern? He got 30 men to help and used rags, clothes, and ropes for Jeremiah to tie around himself so they could pull him out.

Slide #15

Slide #16

Show the Lesson Theme Poster. Here is Jeremiah getting pulled out of the cistern by Ebed-melech and the other men. I'm sure Jeremiah was glad to get out of there!

Let's fill in some more of the crossword puzzle. Who will read #4 and give us the answer? Choose a reader. Jerusalem. Have students complete #4.

For #5, what happened to Jeremiah when the people didn't like his messages from God? Choose a reader. Cast. Have students complete #5.

And #6, who will read that? Choose a reader. Rescued. Have students complete #6.

God's Judgment

Jeremiah was saved from the muddy pit, but the Babylonians still had Jerusalem surrounded. There would be no escape!

Slide #17

Slide #18

Slide #19

2 Chronicles 36:17–20

Let's read what happened in 2 Chronicles 36:17–20. Choose readers.

Who did God bring against Judah? King of the Chaldeans.

Chaldeans is another name for Babylonians, so this was King Nebuchadnezzar. What did he do when he took over the city? Killed the young men and women (virgins) and elderly people; took the vessels and treasures from the house of the Lord (temple) and the king and his princes; burned the temple and palaces; broke down the wall of Jerusalem; took into exile the people who were still alive.

Slide #20

Show the Lesson Theme Poster. This was a terrible judgment! The Babylonian army was cruel. They didn't show compassion (mercy) on old people or women. They killed the people of Judah and stole everything of value from the temple and the palaces, then they destroyed the city with fire. The few people who didn't die in the

fighting were taken as captives to Babylon, far from Judah.

What about Jeremiah? What do you think happened to him during all this destruction? Allow guesses.

Slide #21

Jeremiah 39:11–12

Who will read Jeremiah 39:11–12? Choose a reader.

How did God protect Jeremiah after King Nebuchadnezzar took over? God had Nebuchadnezzar give the command to the captain of the guard to look after Jeremiah and do him no harm.

God used King Nebuchadnezzar to protect Jeremiah. God also told Jeremiah that he would deliver Ebed-melech from the Babylonians because he trusted in the Lord.

Jeremiah was one of the few prophets who experienced the judgments he warned the people about. He prophesied about events that happened while he was alive. He lived through the captivity of Judah and the fall of Jerusalem. When the city was besieged by the Babylonians, Jeremiah continued to warn the people, but he was imprisoned and cast into a cistern! Amid all these troubles, God was still watching over him. He used Ebed-melech to rescue Jeremiah from the pit. Then God showed his love and mercy to both men by sparing them from

the destruction of Jerusalem. They were not killed by the cruel Babylonian soldiers. Jeremiah even got to decide if he wanted to go with his people to Babylon or stay in Judah with the poorest people Nebuchadnezzar left behind. He chose to stay, and he faithfully spoke for God to the end of his life. One of the prophecies Jeremiah gave from the Lord was that the captivity of Judah would last 70 years. Then God would restore his people and bring them back to their land.

Slide #22

Let's finish the Class Notes. Who will read what happened to Jerusalem for #7?

Choose a reader. Defeated. Have students complete #7.

Who will read #8 about the people of Judah? Choose a reader. Captives. Have students complete #8.

And the last one, #9? Choose a reader. Judgment. Have students complete #9.

Application

Slide #23

Refer to the Lesson Theme Poster. Jeremiah was given a challenging job from God to warn the people that an enemy was coming against them. Even though he was faithful to deliver God's messages to the people of Judah, they refused to listen. The Babylonians burned Jerusalem and took away the survivors as captives.

Think about how terrible this was for Jeremiah to see. It's no wonder Jeremiah was sad and became known as the "weeping prophet."

Some people think that God's children, those who have turned from their sins and trusted in Jesus to save them, will not experience troubles. But we see from the account of Jeremiah that isn't true. Jeremiah experienced many terrible things even though he was trusting God and being faithful!

Does that mean that Jeremiah was being punished or that God didn't love him? No.

Jeremiah was faithful and obedient to the Lord, and it broke his heart to see the people's stubbornness against the Lord. This is very similar to the way Jesus wept over the unrepentant people in his day.

What can we learn about God from the account of Judah's punishment and Jeremiah's role in it? Allow discussion.

Refer to the Attributes of God Poster. We see that God was merciful to wait so long before bringing the punishment on Judah. His desire was for his people to return to him, but they would not.

We also see God showing mercy to individual people. He spared Jeremiah and Ebed-melech and the other people who went into exile. And God continued to send

messages of hope even after his people were living in foreign countries. He had not forgotten them or stopped loving them. And this is similar to what we see happening today. God has promised that judgment is coming, but he still extends mercy to those who will trust in Jesus for salvation.

Hard times do not mean that God has forgotten you. Remember that no matter what you're going through, God is there with you and he loves you. You can always turn to him for help, comfort, and strength. God has promised to never leave you or forsake you.

Think about some tough times that you or your family members have been through. How did God help you through your troubles? Think about how God gave you extra strength, helped you know what to do, or used other people to help you. Allow discussion. You might refer to some of the situations from the beginning of class and ask students to share their experiences.

Lesson Review

We all learn best with review and repetition! We encourage you to play a lesson review game.

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