

## 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 been talking about the southern nation of Judah. There were some good kings, like Josiah, who led the people back to God. Sadly, these changes didn't last. Wicked kings brought back the worship of false gods. When the people sinned again, God warned them through his prophets to turn back.

### Slide #3

Refer to Lesson 105 Theme Poster. Last time, we learned about the prophet Jeremiah.

When God sent Jeremiah to the potter's house, what did he see? A potter making a vessel out of clay. But the vessel was messed up, so the potter remade it.

This scene at the potter's house was a warning for the people: They needed to turn back to God, so he would not have to destroy them. But the people didn't like Jeremiah's message, so they punished him.

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.

Raise your hand if you've had troubles like these. Read the following 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.).

Which of these troubles do you think Jeremiah had? Allow guesses.

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

## **Zedekiah's Reign**

After Josiah's reign, four evil kings ruled. During that time, God brought King Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian army to attack Judah. Nebuchadnezzar captured two of Judah's bad kings then chose Zedekiah to be the last king of Judah. Since Nebuchadnezzar had put him in power, Zedekiah was supposed to obey him.

### Slide #4

## 2 Chronicles 36:11–12

Refer to the Books of the Bible Poster. Turn to 2 Chronicles in your Bibles. What type of book is 2 Chronicles? Book of history.

Let's learn more about King Zedekiah. Find 2 Chronicles 36:11–12. Follow along as I read. Read the verses.

What kind of king was Zedekiah: good or evil? Evil.

Zedekiah did what was evil in God's eyes. He refused to humble himself before whom? (Reread verse 12 if necessary.) Jeremiah the prophet.

If you humble yourself before someone, you will listen to that person and obey what he says. Jeremiah was speaking God's messages, and King Zedekiah should have listened but would not.

Zedekiah also turned against King Nebuchadnezzar. But because God had put Nebuchadnezzar over him, Zedekiah was wrong to rebel.

The Bible tells us that Zedekiah, the priests, and the people all turned away from God. They not only worshipped false gods but also brought their idol worship into God's holy temple, making it unclean. Even though God had continued to send prophets to warn them, the people mocked, or made

fun of, God's messengers and would not listen.

Pass out the Class Notes.

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

Slide #5

Who will read #1 and give us the answer? Choose a reader. Messages. 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**

The people of Judah and King Zedekiah thought they could get away with rebelling against Nebuchadnezzar. But Jeremiah told them that the Babylonians would capture and burn Jerusalem, their capital city.

What do you think the people did when they heard Jeremiah's message? Allow answers.

The people didn't like hearing that the Babylonians were going to destroy them. So they punished Jeremiah. When Jeremiah tried to go visit his family outside the city,

the guard at the city gate accused him of escaping to join the Babylonians! The officials were so angry with Jeremiah that they beat him and put him in prison.

After a while, Jeremiah was released. But when he continued to speak God's warnings to the people, the king gave his officials permission to punish Jeremiah again.

### Slide #6

#### Jeremiah 38:6

Refer to the Books of the Bible Poster. Let's turn to the book of Jeremiah. In what part of the Old Testament do we find this book? Major prophets.

Find chapter 38, verse 6. Let's read about Jeremiah's punishment by the king's officials. 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!

Have the old rags, clothes, and rope ready.

What do you think happened to Jeremiah? I have a few items here that might give you a clue. Hold up the items as you mention each one.

How do you think old rags, worn-out clothes, and ropes could have anything to do with what happened next? Allow guesses.

Let's find out.

Slide #7

Slide #8

Slide #9

Jeremiah 38:9–13

King Zedekiah had a servant named Ebed-melech, who was from the country of Ethiopia. When Ebed-melech heard that Jeremiah had been thrown into the cistern, he went to see the king.

Who would like to read what Ebed-melech said in verse 9? Choose a reader.

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. They had come to capture Jerusalem just as Jeremiah said, so there were no supplies coming into the city. No bread was left.

Do you think King Zedekiah did anything to help Jeremiah? Allow guesses.

Follow along as I read verses 10–13. Listen carefully for the rags, the clothes, and the ropes. Read the verses. When you come to those items in the text, pause and point to the items or hold them up again.

So, the king gave his servant permission to rescue Jeremiah from the pit. God used Ebed-melech to save Jeremiah's life.

Who helped Ebed-melech rescue Jeremiah?  
30 men.

How did they use the rags, clothes, and ropes to get Jeremiah out of the muddy cistern? The men let them down into the cistern. Jeremiah tied them around himself so that the men could pull him out.

Slide #10

Slide #11

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 from God's judgment!

Slide #12

Slide #13

Slide #14

2 Chronicles 36:17–20

Let's read what happened in 2 Chronicles 36:17–20. Each verse tells us something different that the Babylonians did to Jerusalem.

Listen as I read verse 17. Read the verse.

Chaldeans is another name for Babylonians, so the king of the Chaldeans was King Nebuchadnezzar. What did he and his army do in this verse? Killed the young men and women (virgins) and elderly people.

Who will read verse 18? Choose a reader.

What did Nebuchadnezzar do with the vessels and treasures from the house of the Lord (the temple) and from the king and princes? Look at the end of the verse. Took them to Babylon.

In verse 19, let's read about two more terrible things the enemy king did. Choose a

reader.

What did Nebuchadnezzar burn? The house of God (the temple) and the palaces.

What did he break down? The wall of Jerusalem.

Listen for the last thing the Babylonian king did to the people. Follow along as I read verse 20. Read the verse.

Finally, many of the people who didn't die were taken into exile. That means they were taken to Babylon—far from their homes in Judah.

### Slide #15

Show the Lesson Theme Poster. This was a terrible judgment! The Babylonian army was cruel.

What about Jeremiah? Let's see what happened to him during this terrible time.

### Slide #16

Jeremiah 39:12

Turn to Jeremiah again, chapter 39. Who will read the words of King Nebuchadnezzar in verse 12? Choose a reader.

What did King Nebuchadnezzar say about Jeremiah? Look after him well and do him no harm.

God used King Nebuchadnezzar to protect Jeremiah so that he would live through the

judgment of Judah. Even though Jerusalem was destroyed, Jeremiah was not killed. Later, he even got to decide if he wanted to go with his people to Babylon or stay with those left in Judah. A few of the poorest people were left behind to work in the vineyards and fields so that the Babylonians could get food from the land. Jeremiah chose to stay with them, and he faithfully spoke for God to the end of his life.

### Slide #17

Let's finish the Class Notes. Who will read what happened to the temple in Jerusalem for #7? Choose a reader. Burned. Have students complete #7.

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

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

## **Application**

### Slide #18

Refer to the Lesson Theme Poster. Jeremiah went through some tough times, didn't he? His own people treated him in cruel ways instead of listening to him. He was beaten, put into prison for something he didn't do, and then thrown into a muddy cistern. At times, he was in great danger. And worst of all, he later saw his own people being killed and taken away as God brought judgment upon them.

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

God was faithful to Jeremiah through all his hard times. And because Jeremiah was obedient, God protected him from the Babylonians.

God is faithful to us, too, when we turn to him and trust him. Because we live in a world spoiled by sin, there will always be troubles—even for those who follow God. But when we become children of God by trusting in Jesus, he promises that he will always be with us, no matter what happens. Even when we die, we will go to live with him forever in heaven.

Think about some tough times that you or your family members have been through. How did God help you through your troubles? Did he give you extra strength, help you know what to do, or use 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.

# Limited License to Reproduce

A limited, non-exclusive, non-transferable, nonsublicensable license is hereby granted to a single local church or organization to print copies of the PDF materials in the Teacher Digital Resources if 1) you are the original purchaser; 2) you are using the copies for noncommercial purposes (such as for teaching in class) exclusively within your single local church or organization (multi-campus churches, and national/regional denominations are not covered under this license); and 3) you follow the instructions provided in the curriculum pertaining to the printable materials.

This license is for the specific purchaser of the product and does not include affiliated groups or organizations, or other churches or groups in the same denomination as the purchaser, not identified as the actual purchaser. There is no limit to the number of printed copies for use within the single local church or organization which is the actual purchaser. None of the material in this curriculum may be reproduced for any commercial promotion, advertising, or sale of a product or service, or to share with any other persons, churches, groups, or organizations.

The media (audio/video) portions are copyrighted and duplication is prohibited. This license is for materials in the Teacher Digital

Resources only and does NOT include reproduction rights for pre-printed teacher books, student guides, student take home sheets, or posters, except on an emergency basis when purchased quantities are not sufficient for a given week.

## **Bible Version**

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.