

Lesson 12—May 17, 2020

DEVOTIONAL READING: Psalm 86:1-13
BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Jeremiah 21
PRINT PASSAGE: Jeremiah 21:8-14

Key Verse—O house of David, thus saith the LORD; Execute judgment in the morning, and deliver him that is spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor, lest my fury go out like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings. (Jeremiah 21:12, KJV)

.....

“This is what the LORD says to you, house of David: Administer justice every morning; rescue from the hand of the oppressor the one who has been robbed, or my wrath will break out and burn like fire because of the evil you have done—burn with no one to quench it.” (Jeremiah 21:12, NIV)

Just Rewards



Teacher's Resource Kit

- Townsend Press Commentary: Teacher's Edition
- Townsend Press Flashlight Commentary
- Bible Studies for Adults
- Bible Studies for Young Adults
- (Optional: Adults/Young Adults Leadership Resource Kit [materials for this lesson])

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, the participants should be able to do these things:

- Understand divine justice described by Jeremiah.
- Appreciate that God is a God of justice.
- Make a personal commitment to justice and advocacy for justice.



*Key Terms

Babylonians (verse 9)—Hebrew: *Kasdi* or *Kasdimah* (kas-dee'): inhabitants of Chaldea; "Chaldeans" (KJV).

Falleth (verse 9)—Hebrew: *naphal* (naw-fal'): to desert; "surrenders" (NIV).

Fruit (verse 14)—Hebrew: *peri* (per-ee'): actions (fruit used metaphorically); "deeds" (NIV).

*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 4)

Preparing the Lesson

- Refer to the *Townsend Press SS Commentary Teacher's Edition* for an additional lesson plan—with word studies, insights on teaching adults, learner matrices, etc.
- Review last week's student assignments ("Your Life" and Your World!).
- This guide offers two options for leading your class.

- Thoroughly review your student book for your adult or young adult class.
- See page 7 for how to plan each week's lesson.
- See page 6 for a student *Personal Growth Plan*.
- See page 113 for the *Faith in 3-D* as it explains how to live out their faith in the world.

WHY THIS LESSON MATTERS

Evil is pervasive throughout human society. Can people continue to do evil without consequence? Jeremiah tells us that God is a God of justice and will recompense evil.

THE LESSON IN FOCUS

Rev. Jerome R. Raynor was the pastor of our congregation for fifty-seven years before his death. His unique gift of expository preaching was sprinkled with common sense and unique metaphors that vividly explained doctrinal truths. One of his unique sermon titles was "Get Off Broadway." The text for this sermon was Matthew 7:13-14, which related to Christ's teaching about the ways of life open to humankind. In the closing section of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus clearly drew the line between the way that leads to destruction and the way that leads to life. Rev. Raynor styled the way to destruction as "Broadway," a metaphorical thoroughfare with all types of enticements that, if followed, led to God's eternal judgment and condemnation to hell. We were both warned and admonished to either get off "Broadway" or to stay clear of it. The text of this sermon and Christ's teaching has its foundation in Deuteronomy 30:15, 19. The choice of life or death or of the blessing or the curse was set before the new generation of Israelites preparing to enter the Promised Land. Essentially, it was this: obey God and live; disobey Him and die. Centuries after Moses' instruction, God, through Jeremiah, set before Judah and her leaders a similar choice that could avert the total destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. To remain in the city and resist them would mean death; to surrender as captives would mean life. Judah eventually chose to stay on "Broadway" and experienced God's full wrath because of

her disobedience. Jerusalem and the Temple were burned to the ground and those who were left alive were taken captive and exiled in Babylon.

THE LESSON IN CONTEXT

The passage chosen for the exposition of this lesson occurred while Jerusalem was under siege, in 589 and 588 BC. During this final siege, King Zedekiah sent two messengers to Jeremiah. Prior to this time, Jeremiah's prediction had been ignored or labeled as false. Now that the enemy was at the gate, Zedekiah wanted Jeremiah to intercede for the city and seek God's aid by miraculously overthrowing the Babylonians as He had done the Assyrians during the reign of King Hezekiah. Those who had previously laughed at and ridiculed him were now desperately seeking his advice and assistance. Chapter 21 records the king's request and Jeremiah's response (verses 1-10), and the royal house's responsibility and its failure to fulfill it (verses 11-14).

OPENING INQUIRY (Choose from the questions below)

1. Why was it futile for the Jews in Jerusalem to resist the Babylonian army? (verse 10)
2. What did God expect from the king and David's dynasty? (verse 12a)
3. Why did the inhabitants of Jerusalem feel secure? (verse 13)
4. Identify some false notions that cause some people who do not know God to feel secure.

INSIGHTS

This lesson clearly teaches that (1) there is a limit to God's patience with His rebellious children; and (2) all will receive their just rewards according to the path they choose to follow. For centuries, God had been longsuffering with the nation of Israel because of His covenant with Abraham. However, the time came when He chose to fulfill His promise to curse and not bless because of their idolatrous disobedience (see Deuteronomy 30:15, 19). They received their just reward because He gave them into the hands of the "gods" they chose to worship rather than Him. The warning and message to us

are the same today: God will not continue to strive with those who intentionally choose the path to destruction and not life. The saved must not take for granted His longsuffering, but must seek to live in obedience to His Word in view of the coming of Christ when all receive either blessings or curses.

EXPLORATION

How can this lesson assist the continued spiritual growth of your students? It can be used to remind them that there is a day of divine judgment coming when all will receive their just rewards, or the consequences attached to how they have chosen to live. God's grace is real, but His justice is also real. Locate and discuss other Bible passages that teach this principle or that illustrate it in the lives of others based on the path they chose to follow. For example, the rich man and Lazarus; the parable of the Rich Fool. Encourage your students to make the necessary life adjustments that will keep them on the path to life. Lead them in praise to God for His divine justice and challenge them to commit to living justly and righteously.

ADDITIONAL EXPOSITORY INSIGHTS FOR THE TEACHER

Commentary on Jeremiah 21:8-10

KJV

8 And unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death.

9 He that abideth in this city shall die by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth out, and falleth to the Chaldeans that besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be unto him for a prey.

10 For I have set my face against this city for evil, and not for good, saith the LORD: it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire.

NIV

8 “Furthermore, tell the people, ‘This is what the LORD says: See, I am setting before you the way of life and the way of death.

9 “‘Whoever stays in this city will die by the sword,

famine or plague. But whoever goes out and surrenders to the Babylonians who are besieging you will live; they will escape with their lives.

10 “‘I have determined to do this city harm and not good, declares the LORD. It will be given into the hands of the king of Babylon, and he will destroy it with fire.’”

Jeremiah's response to Zedekiah's request that he make entreaty and determine God's will concerning the siege was not what he expected. Despite their sin against God, Zedekiah had the notion that God would intervene on the city's behalf. The two messengers were sent back to Zedekiah with a message of doom, not one of hope (verses 3-7). Instead of overthrowing the Babylonians, God was going to aid them in bringing about the total destruction of Jerusalem. The Babylonians had been chosen by God to exact punishment on His rebellious people and no latitude would be given. The entire area, in accordance to the practices of warfare at that time, would be pillaged. God is merciful even in His judgment. He offers a way of escape, if accepted. Through Jeremiah, He offered a final chance for avoiding the total destruction of Jerusalem and for the sparing of lives (verses 8-9). Two options styled as the way of life and the way of death were open to them. If they surrendered to the Babylonians, their lives would be spared. If they refused and continued fighting, they would forfeit their lives. The destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of its people had been divinely ordained because of their persistent lack of repentance (verse 10). Choosing to surrender—"the way of life"—was the only way to secure personal survival. Refusing to do so—"the way of death"—was to commit personal suicide. Because it was God's will that the Babylonians do His work of punishing them, surrendering was an act of repentance and submission to His will. Continuing to fight this one-sided battle was actually an act of rebellion against God's will for them.

As God's people today, we must keep before us that the safest place to be is in God's will even when it involves discipline. The author of the book of Hebrews admonished his audience to prove their

status as God's children by submitting to His discipline as they do to their human fathers. These ways are still being presented to humankind as their final choice and chance to be obedient and choose life, or disobedient and choose death.



DISCUSSION STARTERS

(Please review the appropriate student book's related biblical exposition section.)

- **Adult Question:**

In view of the two choices open to humankind, how active and focused is the ministry of evangelism in your local congregation?

- **Young Adult Question:**

Evil is present all around us; we must make a personal commitment to do the right thing on a daily basis. As human beings, how can we maintain a just attitude in bad situations?

Commentary on Jeremiah 21:11-14

KJV

11 And touching the house of the king of Judah, say, Hear ye the word of the LORD;

12 O house of David, thus saith the LORD; Execute judgment in the morning, and deliver him that is spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor, lest my fury go out like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.

13 Behold, I am against thee, O inhabitant of the valley, and rock of the plain, saith the LORD; which say, Who shall come down against us? or who shall enter into our habitations?

14 But I will punish you according to the fruit of your doings, saith the LORD: and I will kindle a fire in the forest thereof, and it shall devour all things round about it.

NIV

11 “Moreover, say to the royal house of Judah, ‘Hear the word of the LORD.

12 “This is what the LORD says to you, house of David: Administer justice every morning; rescue from the hand of the oppressor the one who has been robbed, or my wrath will break out and burn

like fire because of the evil you have done—burn with no one to quench it.

13 “I am against you, Jerusalem, you who live above this valley on the rocky plateau, declares the LORD—you who say, “Who can come against us? Who can enter our refuge?”

14 “I will punish you as your deeds deserve, declares the LORD. I will kindle a fire in your forests that will consume everything around you.”

Leaders have the greater condemnation (see James 3:1) and the greater responsibility. God specifically spelled out His requirement for David's royal dynasty to continue after him (see 2 Samuel 7). Those leaders who followed Him were to obey the law of God and ensure that justice prevailed. If they failed, they would lose their right to sit on the throne in Judah. God issued a final appeal directed to the royal house (verses 11-12). There were two expectations the royal house was commanded to fulfill to lessen the severity of God's wrath toward Judah and Jerusalem. First, they must enact justice and righteousness immediately. Second, they were commanded to cease trusting in the supposed invincibility of the city of Jerusalem (verse 13). The royal house and the people believed the city was impregnable because of its strategic location. This notion fueled their resistance to surrender. They needed to know and understand that God was against them and there was no safety behind the walls of the city. The royal house would be dethroned, and the city burned because of their sins (verse 14). God has said that He will not continuously strive with humankind and that all will receive their just rewards based on the path they choose to follow in life. It is only His grace and His will that none should perish that He delays His coming judgment. Those who have chosen the way of life must remain faithful, stay in His will, and warn those who have not accepted His offer of salvation.



DISCUSSION STARTERS

(Please review the appropriate student book's related biblical exposition section.)

- **Adult Question:**
How should the reality of a coming judgment affect our daily lives?
- **Young Adult Questions:**
 - (1) *Oftentimes, we are faced with making the right decisions at work and/or in public places; however, behind closed doors, are we still making good, honest decisions?*
 - (2) *Think of a time when your parents or guardians advised you to do right, but you did things your way. What was the outcome?*

LIFE APPLICATION

- **Refer to Adult Book**
(See student lesson's "Your Life" section.)
 - The personal reminder in this lesson is that all will receive their just rewards from God, whether they have chosen the way of life or the way of death. Since you have chosen the way of life through Jesus Christ, make every effort to strive to become an obedient disciple and a godly example in this perverse society in which we live.
- (See student lesson's "Your World!" section.)
 - It may appear that evil and those who practice it have the advantage over those who have committed their lives to the Lord. It is

only God's longsuffering and His desire that none perish that He has not intervened with final judgment. One thing is sure according to His Word: the day will come when all will stand before Him to receive their just rewards for every deed they have done, good or bad.

- **Refer to Young Adult Book**
(See student lesson's "Your Life" section.)
 - In our lives today, we must make sound decisions in every situation. We must not let Satan deter us from following God's Word. Judgment will follow for all of us. A just reward is on the way.
- (See student lesson's "Your World!" section.)
 - In this world as Christians, we must remember to stay focused and remain faithful to our God. It is our responsibility to proclaim His Word, warn of judgment, and offer renewal through hope and redemption to an unjust and dying world.

NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

The lesson topic for Sunday, May 24, 2020, is "Do the Right Thing." The Devotional Reading is Psalm 72:1-7, the Background Scripture is Jeremiah 22, and the Printed Text is Jeremiah 22:1-10.



Closing Prayer

Dear God, thank You for Your grace and mercy that give us the chance to get things right with You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

MONDAY , May 18	"Justice for Aliens, Orphans, and Widows"	(Deuteronomy 24:17-22)
TUESDAY , May 19	"God Requires Godly Rule by Kings"	(Deuteronomy 17:18-20)
WEDNESDAY , May 20	"Who May Enter God's Holy Presence?"	(Psalm 15)
THURSDAY , May 21	"God's Justice for the Unjust King"	(Jeremiah 22:11-19)
FRIDAY , May 22	"The City Suffers for Its Disobedience"	(Jeremiah 22:20-23)
SATURDAY , May 23	"Injustice Ends the Line of David"	(Jeremiah 22:24-30)
SUNDAY , May 24	"Repent of Misdeeds and Unjust Actions"	(Jeremiah 22:1-10)

INTERACTIVE LEARNING APPROACH

YOUNG ADULT FOCUS

This lesson plan is designed to provide a more interactive approach to the teaching of today's lesson. The focus is on student-teacher involvement. It can be formulated to use with the *Bible Studies for Young Adults* quarterly.

Materials needed:

- The movie *Robin Hood*
- Computers/Speakers
- Wi-Fi

Interaction—Introducing the Lesson (10-15 minutes)

- Introduce today's topic: "Just Rewards."
- Have someone read the "Life Happens" section on page **65** aloud and then, as a class, discuss the corresponding questions.
- Share the Unifying Principle: "Evil is pervasive throughout human society. Can people continue to do evil without consequence? Jeremiah tells us that God is a God of justice and will recompense evil."

Exploring the Word (25-30 minutes)

- Show the clip "Empower Every Man" from the movie *Robin Hood*, directed by Ridley Scott. This can be found at www.wingclips.com. Share this: "Robin speaks out against the king and the way he rules his kingdom." Discuss how God is slow to anger but will surely not let evil continue without consequence.

- Give a brief overview of the book of Jeremiah.
- Have someone read Jeremiah 21:8-10.
- Discuss times and situations when one in extreme authority has no choice but to punish wrongdoing. What is good about such justice?
- Contrast the way of life and the way of death.
- Have someone read Jeremiah 21:11-14.
- What damage is done when people or nations live into arrogant attitudes (verse 13)? What responses counter such attitudes?
- God gave permission for the house of David to administer justice (verse 12) and also said He would punish as their deeds deserve (verse 14). Discuss how this can be both challenging and encouraging.
- As a class, wrestle with naming evils that continue to perpetuate in the world and why some persons or groups are not punished.

Life Application (10 minutes)

- Read aloud the "Your Life" section on page **69**.
- Explore opportunities for advocacy and justice that your group can engage in together.

Life Response (5 minutes)

- Read aloud the "Your World!" section on page **69**.
- Close in prayer and remind the students to prepare for next week's lesson.