



11

God Judges Judah

Key Theme

- God judges sin.

Key Passages

- 2 Chronicles 36:11–12, 36:15–20

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe how the Babylonians treated the Israelites.
- Explain how God judged Judah's sin.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

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Students will practice the memory verse by completing the Memory Verse Review Sheet using the letter clues. If time allows, they will recite the verse to a partner or to the teacher using only the letter clues.



Activity 1: God Judges Judah Class Notes

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Students will fill out the God Judges Judah Class Notes as you study the lesson. Pass out the class notes before you begin to teach.



Studying God's Word

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For hundreds of years God warned Judah through His prophets and called the people to repent. They didn't turn from evil, so God used Babylon to destroy Judah. The Babylonians killed most of the people, destroyed the Temple of God, and took survivors to Babylon as slaves.



Activity 2: Clearing Up the Confusion

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Students will act out a scene discussing God's attributes.

Lesson Preparation

WHAT YOU WILL DO

WHAT YOU WILL NEED



COME ON IN

- Print the Memory Verse Review Sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.

- Memory Verse Poster
- Memory Verse Review Sheet for each student



GOD JUDGES JUDAH CLASS NOTES

- Print one God Judges Judah Class Notes from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student. Keep the answer key for your use.

- God Judges Judah Class Notes for each student
- God Judges Judah Class Notes Answer Key
- Pencils



STUDYING GOD'S WORD

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.
- Print one Babylon and Judah Map from the Resource DVD-ROM.

- Student Take Home Sheets
- Babylon and Judah Map



CLEARING UP THE CONFUSION

- Print five Clearing Up the Confusion Scripts from the Resource DVD-ROM.

- Clearing Up the Confusion Scripts



Memory Verse

Isaiah 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

► **Pace your lesson!** Use the clocks to mark the time you want to finish each section. This will help you stay on track and finish on time. You may need to shorten or drop sections as necessary.





Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

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

God hates sin. We can have no doubt about that after looking at the calls of the prophets for Israel and Judah to repent. As we walk through biblical history, we have already seen God's judgment on Israel—they were wiped out by the Assyrians back in 721 BC. Now we look to the fall of Judah, beginning in 607 BC. Jeremiah was one of the last prophets to call Judah to repent, but they continued to rebel against God—and now it was their turn to face judgment. The fall of Judah and Jerusalem to the south was very similar to the fall of Israel and Samaria to the north. Despite numerous warnings from prophets over many centuries, the kings and people continually sought to worship false gods (with a few exceptions). Through the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah, God had finally fixed a day of judgment for Judah. The lion from the north (Jeremiah 4:5–8), Babylon, was about to attack and carry away the rest of the Jewish nation.

Just as God used Assyria to deliver judgment to His people in Israel about 125 years earlier, He was about to send Babylon to deliver judgment to Judah. Babylon's king at this time was Nebuchadnezzar. This wicked king was the one God chose to bring His judgment to Judah.

Nebuchadnezzar was the son of the previous Babylonian king, Nabopolassar. God used King Nabopolassar to destroy and conquer the Assyrians in 626 BC. This was after the Assyrians had destroyed the Northern nation of Israel. God would now use Babylon again—this time to bring judgment on Judah.

Historically, one strategy for gaining complete power over an enemy was to remove most of the conquered nation to other lands. If you remember from the lesson on the fall of Israel, this was what the Assyrians did to the Jews in the Northern nation of Israel. In our account today, we will see that the Babylonians were to do the same. In order to completely weaken the nation of Judah, they would move the people out and settle them in other nations.

The destruction of Judah by Babylon occurred over three phases. The city of Jerusalem and the Temple were not totally destroyed until the third phase.

During the first phase (607 BC), Nebuchadnezzar moved King Jehoiakim and many of the princes and nobles out of Judah as described in Daniel 1:1–4. His goal was to train them to be good Babylonians and to

put them into service in his court. In the second phase (599 BC), Nebuchadnezzar took King Jehoiachin captive and moved the king and thousands of others to Babylon (Jeremiah 52:28; 2 Kings 24:10–16). These were devastating events for the people of Judah. But the worst was yet to come.

Now came phase three. Imagine yourself as one of the Jewish inhabitants of Jerusalem in 588 BC. Nebuchadnezzar had been harassing your nation for almost 20 years, and now his army was camped around the city again! Would you survive this time? Would you be taken away this time? Would you be separated from your family? Or worse yet, would you have to watch them die at the hands of the Babylonians? All of this and more did occur when Babylon finally came to put an end to Judah.

A clear picture of the devastation caused by this judgment is found in 2 Chronicles 36:15–21. Because the people had mocked God, His warnings, and His messengers, because they had despised His words and scoffed at His prophets, the wrath of the Lord came against them. The Babylonians, here called the Chaldeans, came into Jerusalem. They killed the young men and had no compassion on the men, women, aged, or weak. All the articles from the house of God were taken to Babylon. They burned the house of God, burned the palaces, destroyed all the precious possessions, and broke down the wall of Jerusalem. And those citizens of Jerusalem who were not killed during this rampage were moved far away to Babylon and became servants there.

But in spite of the devastation of Judah and Israel, all was not lost! God already had a plan to restore Jerusalem, to rebuild the Temple, and to continue the line of Abraham through King David and on to the coming Messiah.

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

As mentioned earlier, the history of the final fall of Judah and Jerusalem is a bit complex, coming in three phases over 19 years and involving four different kings of Judah. The first phase occurred after the good King Josiah (who was the sixteenth ruler in the Southern Kingdom) died. His son Jehoahaz ruled for only three months (2 Kings 23:30–32). Then, Pharaoh Necho from Egypt captured him and set another son of Josiah, Jehoiakim, over Judah, making him pay tribute to Egypt (2 Kings 23:33–35). As had been the pattern, these two sons of Josiah did what was evil in the sight

of the Lord. Judah was beginning to crumble, and the first phase of her destruction was about to begin.

The Babylonian leader Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptians and took control of all of Egypt's lands, including Judah (2 Kings 24:7). So, for the first three years of his reign, Jehoiakim was subject to Egypt, but for the last eight he was subject to Babylon (2 Kings 23:36–24:4). In 607 BC, Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem and defeated Jehoiakim, who had rebelled against him (2 Kings 24:1–2). The Babylonians carried away some of the articles of the Temple and many of the young nobles, including Daniel (Daniel 1:1–4). This began the 70 years of captivity that Jeremiah had prophesied (Jeremiah 25:11).

The second phase of the captivity happened about seven years later. Nebuchadnezzar had restored Jehoiakim to the throne in Jerusalem, but he later died and his body was thrown outside the gates of the city (Jeremiah 22:18–19). Jehoiakim's son Jehoiachin (also called Jeconiah or Coniah) reigned for three months after his father's death. In 599 BC, the Babylonians returned and carried away more than 3,000 Jews, including Jehoiachin, along with all of the articles of the Temple (2 Kings 24:10–16; Jeremiah 52:28). The brother of Jehoiakim, Zedekiah, was set up as the puppet king under the control of Nebuchadnezzar. His reign extended from 599 until 588.

588 BC marked the third phase of Judah's captivity. Nebuchadnezzar returned and utterly destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple and the people were either killed, taken away into captivity, or left to tend the land for the remainder of the 70 years (2 Kings 25:8–21;

2 Chronicles 36:15–21). It would be another 49 years before Cyrus would allow the captives to begin returning to rebuild Jerusalem. So the 70 years of captivity, which will be discussed in the next lesson, lasted from 607 BC with the first deportation by Nebuchadnezzar until 537 BC when Cyrus fulfilled the prophecies Jeremiah and Isaiah made hundreds of years prior. In an interesting parallel, the return to rebuild Jerusalem also happened in three phases . . . but we will have to save that for another lesson.

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Father in heaven, I know that all Scripture is given by your inspiration, and is profitable for me. But there are times when I read my Bible and honestly wish I could change the events! I love happy endings. And the destruction of a people and the Temple is not a happy ending. But Lord, you did ordain a happy ending. Sweet Jesus. King of Kings. He is the happy ending. Thank you for the hope that you give in the darkness. You bring beauty from ashes. Even though the Temple was burned, you remembered your people and spared a remnant of the line of David who would bring forth a son we could call Savior. He would save His people from their sins. Give me grace, dear Lord, as I teach this week.



COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- They will complete the Memory Verse Review Sheet. If time allows, have the students recite the verse together, to each other, or to you.

This time at the beginning of class should be used to review the memory verse. We have provided an activity sheet on the Resource DVD-ROM for you to use. You may have other ideas and ways to encourage your students to memorize the verse.



After all the students arrive, pray with them before beginning the lesson.



REVIEW

Using the Lesson Theme Posters provided with each lesson, quickly review the previous lesson(s) with your students. Take 5 to 10 minutes to reinforce the important truths the students have heard so far in your class.

Ask the children questions about the previous lessons as you display the Lesson Theme Posters. Reflect briefly on the passages you read, bringing the objectives and themes back into focus. This will refresh the truths in your students' minds and maintain continuity as you teach through the lessons.



God Judges Judah Class Notes

MATERIALS

- God Judges Judah Class Notes
- God Judges Judah Class Notes Answer Key
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Print the class notes for each student. Pass them out at the beginning of class. Have students fill in the blanks as you study the lesson.

We will be completing these class notes as we study the Bible passages. Do not work ahead. I'll let you know when to fill something in.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

As we complete the class notes today, we will see how the Lord used Babylon to punish Judah because the people would not repent of their idolatry and turn back to Him.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

Refer to the Lesson 10 Lesson Theme Poster. God had warned the people of Judah through His prophet Jeremiah. God called them to turn back to Him, turn away from their idolatry, and give Him the honor due His name. But they would not listen. They would not return to God. So God gave Jeremiah a message of destruction—that Judah would finally be conquered and

- Use the History of Israel Poster included with your teacher kit to show your class where the biblical accounts you study chronologically fit into this timeline.

destroyed by the wicked nation of Babylon. That is what God said He would do and that is what God did.

We are going to read about that today. Let's look at what the nation of Judah was like right before God's judgment took place. Turn to 2 Chronicles 36:11–12. Let's read that. *Assign readers.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Let's answer a few questions about these two verses so we can better understand what Judah was like in those days.

Observe the Text

► After completing each point on the class notes, have the students re-read the statement together or call on individual students to read it.

? So who was the King of Judah during this time? *2 Chronicles 36:11. Zedekiah.*

Complete #1 on your class notes. *Zedekiah.*

? And how old was King Zedekiah when he became king? *2 Chronicles 36:11. 21 years old.*

? Where did he reign? *Jerusalem.*

? How long did he reign in Jerusalem? *2 Chronicles 36:11. 11 years.*

Yes. Zedekiah was the king of Judah at this time, and he reigned in Jerusalem—the capital of Judah.

? What did this king think of the Lord his God? *2 Chronicles 36:12. He did evil in the sight of the Lord.*

He did evil in the sight of the Lord. Jeremiah had come to the king with warnings, yet the Bible says that the king would not humble himself to listen to God's prophet, Jeremiah.

? Who can tell me what the answer to #2 on your class notes is? *Evil in the sight of the Lord. Complete #2 by circling the correct answer.*

? What was God's message through Jeremiah to the people of Judah? *Refer to Lesson 10 Lesson Theme Poster. Return to the Lord.*

Yes. For years Jeremiah warned King Zedekiah to turn from his wicked ways and the false gods and turn back to the true God. The Bible records that King Zedekiah would not humble himself before Jeremiah. He would not listen to Jeremiah even as Jeremiah spoke the words of the Lord!

? How will you complete #3 on your class notes? *Jeremiah.*

Discover the Truth

God sent Jeremiah to Judah to warn the people and to tell them to return to the Lord. But they would not listen. King Zedekiah was king and the nation continued to ignore the Lord's message as Jeremiah spoke it. They continued to do what was evil in God's eyes. After years of warnings, they

would not change their ways. They were disobedient, rebellious, and sinful toward the holy God. And God was finally about to judge them.

- ? Look at #4 on your class notes. How will you answer that? *No.*



READ THE WORD

The people would not listen. And God acted. Listen to the words of God from 2 Chronicles 36:15–20. I am going to read this to you. Listen carefully and follow with me in your Bible. *Read the verses aloud, slowly and dramatically, so the students understand their serious nature.*

2 Chronicles 36:15–20

EXAMINE THE WORD

Those verses are hard to read. God's judgment on Judah had finally come. Look back at 2 Chronicles 36:15–20 while we answer these questions.

Observe the Text

- ? What had God continued to send to the people? *2 Chronicles 36:15. Warnings.*
- ? Why was God so patient with the people? Why did He continue to send His prophets? *2 Chronicles 36:15. He had compassion on the people and on His dwelling place.*
- ? What does He mean by His dwelling place? *Refer to the Lesson Theme Poster from Quarter 2, Lesson 7. His dwelling place was the Temple that God instructed King Solomon to build in Jerusalem.*

God continued to warn His people. He had compassion. He loved His people.

- ? Based on what I just said, how will you complete #5 on your class notes? *Warn.*
- ? But did the people listen to God's messengers? *2 Chronicles 36:16. No.*
- ? No, they did not. How did they treat the messengers of God? *2 Chronicles 36:16. They mocked them, despised God's words, scoffed and made fun of the prophets God sent.*
- ? How did the Lord finally react? The end of that verse tells us. *2 Chronicles 36:16. The Lord's wrath rose against the people.*
- ? What did the Lord God do? *Re-read 2 Chronicles 36:17. He brought the Chaldeans against them.*
- ? Who were the Chaldeans? *Allow discussion.*

Refer to the Babylon and Judah Map from the Resource DVD-ROM. The Chaldeans were Babylonians. Take a look at this map. The Babylonians were a great and powerful nation. They controlled most of the nations around Judah. They were a wicked, cruel, and vicious nation!

- ? Take a look at #6. Someone read that for me. How will you complete it?
Nation.
- ? And who brought this wicked nation of the Chaldeans to come up against the people of Judah? *2 Chronicles 36:17. The Lord God.*
- Yes. Remember, this was God’s judgment. He used the Chaldeans, or Babylonians, to accomplish His plan.
- ? How will you complete #7 on your class notes? *God.*
- ? What did the Chaldeans do to the people? *2 Chronicles 36:17. Killed their young men; had no compassion or mercy on the young men and women or on the aged or the weak.*
- ? What did the Chaldeans do to God’s dwelling place? *2 Chronicles 36:18. Stole all the treasures from the Temple and took them to Babylon.*
- ? After they emptied the Temple of all the treasures, what did they do to the Temple and to Jerusalem? *2 Chronicles 36:19. They burned the house of God, broke down the wall of Jerusalem, burned the palaces with fire, and destroyed all the precious possessions.*
- ? That sounds like total devastation. But some in Judah escaped with their lives. What happened to them? *2 Chronicles 36:20. They were carried away to Babylon. They became servants in that city.*
- ? Let’s look at #8 on your class notes. What did the Chaldeans do to the people and land of Judah? *Read and discuss each answer. Have students circle all the answers.*

Discover the Truth

Wow! It is not good to anger God! The people of Judah did that. God warned them over and over again about their sin and disobedience but they would not listen. God must judge sin. And we can clearly see His judgment in this instance. God is the one who sent the Chaldeans, or Babylonians, to destroy the nation of Judah, the city of Jerusalem, and the Temple of God.

The Babylonians were fierce. Remember, Jeremiah had warned the people that a “lion” would come from the north. *Refer to Lesson 10 Lesson Theme Poster.* Well, the lion had come. And the “lion” was Babylon. The Babylonians destroyed the land and took over the nation and the people.

Complete #9 on your class notes. Someone read that for me. *Babylon.*





Clearing Up the Confusion

MATERIALS

- Clearing up the Confusion Scripts

INSTRUCTIONS

Choose four students to act out this scene. Give each student a script, and keep a script for yourself. Depending on your class, you may want to play the part of Blair. If time allows do the skit again with different actors.

God has many attributes. He can seem very confusing sometimes. Today we are going to see a skit about some kids who got a little confused about who God is and some of the things the Bible said He did. Let's watch. *Perform the skit.*

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

You know, many people have trouble understanding how God can be loving and kind AND at the same time be holy and just. God sends many blessings but He hates sin and one day will punish all sin. You might hear people argue that the God of the Old Testament was somehow different from the God of the New Testament. That He has changed somehow.

? What do you think? Can God change? What attribute of His tells us that God cannot change? *Refer to the Attributes of God Poster. Immutable.*

Yes. God is immutable. He cannot change. You have been reading a lot about God's judgment over the past several lessons. God judged Israel and now Judah. It can all seem pretty depressing if we don't look at the whole picture of God's character. His judgment may seem undeserved if you only look at the punishment and not at what led up to the judgment. But remember, God showed His mercy and patience a long time before He judged the people.

Refer to the Attributes of God Poster. We cannot pick just the attributes we like for God. He is all of these (and more!), and He is all of these completely and perfectly. God's character is made up of many attributes.

And we can praise Him that although He is just and must punish our sin, He is also merciful and has shown His mercy and love to us through Jesus Christ, the Savior.



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

The Lord judged the sin of the people of Judah, and He used Babylon to do it! The Babylonians conquered Judah by killing most of the people, burning the Temple, and taking all the special treasures from it. They tore down the wall and anyone left alive was taken to be a slave in Babylon!

This was God's punishment and judgment on Judah's sin. God used another nation, Babylon, to conquer Judah. He did the same thing over 100 years earlier when the Assyrians came and took over Israel. *Refer to the History of Israel Poster.*

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

God's people, God's Temple, God's city—destroyed by a wicked nation, all according to God's plan. Again, it's not a good thing to make God angry. It's not a good thing to ignore God's warnings. It's not a good thing to continue in disobedience against God. Why? Because God is holy, He hates all sin, and He must judge sin.

That means He must judge our sin, too. And we know that we are all sinners before God—the Bible tells us that. So, what do we do? God must judge our sin. What hope do we have? Will we all be condemned to eternal death in hell?

No! God has a plan that can save us from His punishment. God is just, that's true. But He is also merciful. And because of His mercy and love for us, He made a way that we could be forgiven of our sins. Now, He still must judge sin and punish it. But His way includes Jesus Christ, the perfect God-man, who took the punishment—God's punishment—for sin. And all who repent of their sins and turn to Jesus in faith and trust, will be saved from God's punishment. The word *repent* means to change your mind about something. In this case, *repent* means that you make a decision to change the way you have been living because you realize that you've been living your own way, apart from God. You tell God you are sorry and know in your heart that you don't ever want to sin like that again.

The Bible tells us about God's plan. It is in John 3:16. God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever would believe in Him would have eternal life. This is the gospel. When we repent of our sins, and believe and trust in Jesus, we receive salvation because of what Jesus did for us when He suffered and died on the Cross.

HOLY
JUST

(Refer to Attributes Poster)

? I mentioned these earlier, but does anyone remember which attributes remind us that God must judge sin? *Holy, just.*

Yes. God will judge the sin of all people who haven't listened to His warnings, like He judged the sins of Judah. God is Holy. He cannot tolerate sin. He is just. He must judge the sin of those who have not repented of their sins and trusted Jesus. I'm so thankful that God, in His mercy, provided a way for us to be saved from His wrath and the punishment we deserve—through Jesus. Aren't you?



► Pass out the Student Take Home Sheets and remind the students to practice the memory verse this week.



MEMORY VERSE

Isaiah 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

- Praise God that in His mercy, He has provided a way—through Jesus—for us to be saved from His wrath and the punishment we deserve.
- Thank God for all of His many attributes and for the Bible where we can learn about Him.
- Ask God to help us learn from those who have gone before us, that we would always be faithful to worship the one true God.

