



10

God Warns Judah

Key Theme

- God alone is to be worshipped.

Key Passages

- Jeremiah 2:5–7, 4:1–2, 4:6–7, 5:19

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe why God was angry with Judah.
- Describe God's judgment on Judah.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

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.

- Memory Verse Review Sheet for each student



Activity 1: God Warns Judah Class Notes

Students will fill out the God Warns Judah Class Notes as you study the lesson.

- Student Guides
- Pencils
- God Warns Judah Class Notes Answer Key



Studying God's Word

God was angry with the people of Judah because of their many years of idolatry. Just as He punished Israel, He would judge Judah by sending a nation from the north to destroy their land.

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



Activity 2: Four in a Row

Students will review the lesson by playing a game of four in a row.

- Four in a Row Review Questions Sheet
- Beanbag, rolled up sock, or other item
- Masking tape
- Red and black construction paper—8 sheets each



Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the lesson key passages 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 the final decades of that kingdom. The 10 tribes of the Northern Kingdom had been carried away, and the region was repopulated with Gentiles who intermarried with the Jews left behind. In the South, there was a series of good and bad kings.

Jeremiah was one of the prophets God sent to warn Judah, and his messages began during the reign of Josiah (Jeremiah 1:2, 3:6). Josiah was the sixteenth king of Judah and was one of the best kings. He was working 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. God sent warnings to Judah through all of these men. 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). Jeremiah gave the final warnings of the coming destruction to Judah. He 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 through Jeremiah 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, despite the short periods of correct worship (2 Kings 23:26). 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 (20:2), had his writings burned (36:23–26), was thrown into a miry dungeon (38:6), was carried away captive in chains (40:1), and faced many other trials.

Frankly, it is all a little depressing. But the judgment he was proclaiming was deserved as 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 only 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 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, 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. This is our blessed Redeemer. This is our blessed hope.

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 horrid 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 both Isaiah (last week) 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 from our sinful selves and adopted us into His family.

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



BEFORE THE THRONE

Almighty Lord, you alone deserve all my worship. I was grieved when I read your Word in Jeremiah and saw how you pleaded with your people to return to you. You longed for them to remember you. Why were they so cold to you after all you had done for them? Didn’t their fathers and grandfathers teach them about you? Lord, that could be me. Sometimes I go my own way, and I forget about you. I’m not always faithful to tell the next generation about you. Thank you for opening my eyes to the importance of remembering who you are and all you’ve done throughout history and in my life. Thank you for this chance to tell the next generation all about you. Help me to be faithful to teach the Word. Quicken the hearts of the students to believe.

► **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.





COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- Write on the board, “Where do idols come from?”
- They will complete the Memory Verse Review Sheet. If time allows, have the students recite the verse together, to each other, or to you.



Review

In our last several lessons, we looked at prophecies delivered about the coming Messiah. Micah and Isaiah both delivered these messages in order to offer hope to the people of Israel and Judah. But you only need to offer someone hope if there is something to fear. These two prophets had also been prophesying warnings of judgment that was to come upon these two kingdoms. We have already talked about the fall of Samaria and the captivity of the northern kingdom of Israel in 721 BC. After Assyria conquered Israel, Assyria was conquered by the Babylonians under the leadership of Nabopolassar in 626 BC. *Refer to the History of Israel poster for the timing of the events.*

Our lesson today moves forward in history and is focused on Judah after the fall of Israel. The power of the Assyrian Empire is now being transferred to the Babylonian Empire.

Jeremiah comes on the scene in the reign of Josiah as we read in the opening verses of Jeremiah. *Read Jeremiah 1:1–3.*

? Does anyone know the nickname that is often given to Jeremiah? *He is often referred to as the weeping prophet.*

This nickname is appropriate. Jeremiah was constantly harassed for his proclamations and calls to repentance, including being thrown into a well and prison.



God Warns Judah Class Notes

MATERIALS

- Student Guides
- God Warns Judah Class Notes Answer Key
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Have students fill in the class notes as you study the lesson.

We will be completing these class notes in your Student Guides as we study the Bible

passages. Try not to work ahead. Fill in the blanks as we come to them. I'll let you know when to fill in something.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

As we complete the class notes today, we will see that the Lord was angry with the people of Judah because of their idolatry, and He would judge them.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

Refer to Lesson Theme Posters and History of Israel Poster. We are moving ahead in history today—over 100 years! Last time we talked about Isaiah and his prophecies to Judah. Now we are going to talk about another prophet, Jeremiah. He, too, spoke God's messages to the southern kingdom of Judah. God sent Jeremiah to Judah to warn the people. They were disobeying God, worshipping false gods, and had turned their backs on the one true God. God sent warnings to Judah through many prophets, including two we have already talked about this year—Micah (*Lesson 8*) and Isaiah (*Lesson 9*). But Judah would not listen. Jeremiah came with God's final warning to Judah. He called the people to turn away from their sin and turn back to God. Jeremiah knew if they did not turn back to God, that God would send another nation to destroy them. We will be looking in the Bible today to see why God was so angry with Judah. What were they doing? And what was planned for them because they would not listen to God's prophets and turn from their sin? What was the warning God gave Judah through Jeremiah?

Let's find out. Turn to Jeremiah 2:5–7. Let's read these verses and see what God's Word has to say about the southern kingdom of Judah. *Choose students to read Jeremiah 2:5–7 aloud.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? Who was speaking in these verses? *Jeremiah 2:5. The Lord.*
- ? What were the people following? *Jeremiah 2:5. Idols.*
- ? Who had they gone far from? *Jeremiah 2:5. The Lord.*
- ? What had they become? *Jeremiah 2:5. Idolaters.*
- ? Look at #1 on your class notes. How will you complete that based on what we just read in Jeremiah 2:5? *1a. They had gone far from God. 1b. They had worshipped idols.*
- ? What had the people forgotten? *Jeremiah 2:6–7. Allow discussion. What God had done for them while leading them out of Egypt and into the Promised Land.*

It seems that the people had forgotten all that the Lord had done for them when He brought them out of the land of Egypt—out of the cruel slavery they had been in for hundreds of years. Look at Jeremiah 2:6 again.

➤ Write on the board, "Where do idols come from?"

➤ 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.

Jeremiah 2:5–7

➤ The Bible occasionally refers to the nation of Judah as Israel. Even after the nations were split and the northern nation of Israel was taken by Assyria, Judah was sometimes referred to as Israel. This may be worth noting to your class to avoid any confusion.

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

➤ Use the map and timeline as visual aids throughout this lesson to help students realize that this event is real history and that Judah was a real place.

God had led them through the wilderness, through deserts and pits, through drought and death.

- ? Where had God brought His people? It's in Jeremiah 2:7. *To a bountiful country of fruit.*
- ? Right. Which land is God referring to here? Where did the Lord lead His people as they moved through the wilderness, after they left Egypt? It was a land flowing with milk and honey! What was it called? *The Promised Land. Refer to the Map of Judah. Point out Egypt on the map. Then show the students where Judah is on the map.*
- ? So, what else had the people done to make God angry? Someone read #2 on your class notes. How will you complete that sentence? *Forgotten.*

Discover the Truth

God had led His people out of slavery in Egypt; He brought them safely through the wilderness and into the Promised Land. But now, many years later, they had forgotten the Lord God. They weren't seeking Him. In fact, they were turning against Him and were worshipping false gods. This is what made God angry. God does not like to share His glory. God wants His people to obey Him and worship Him alone. The people in Judah were not doing this. God called His prophet Jeremiah to go to Judah and warn the people about God's anger.



READ THE WORD

God gave Jeremiah a message to give to the people of Judah. God told the people, through Jeremiah, to return to Him. God was angry yet He warned the people again that they must turn back to Him. Turn to Jeremiah 4:1–2. *Choose a student to read.*

Jeremiah 4:1–2

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? How do we know it is the Lord who was speaking in these verses? *Jeremiah 4:1. It says, "says the Lord."*
- ? Right. And what was the Lord asking the people to do? He said it twice in this one verse. *Jeremiah 4:1. Return to Him.*
- ? How will you complete #3 on your class notes? *Return to Him.*
- ? In that same verse, Jeremiah 4:1, the Lord told them to put away the abominations—out of the Lord's sight. What does that mean? What are the abominations? Look back to #1 on your class notes for a hint. *Allow discussion.*

The abominations included the false gods—the idols the people were worshipping in place of God. Remember, they had turned their back on God and had turned to idolatry and disobedience against Him. He wanted them to get rid of everything that had to do with their false worship.

- ? He wanted the people to return to Him. What did the Lord want them to think or believe about Him? *Re-read Jeremiah 4:2. The Lord lives in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness.*
- ? Who did the Lord want the nations to glory in and bless themselves in? *In Him, in the Lord.*
- ? Based on Jeremiah 4:2, how would you answer #4 on your class notes? *Truth, judgment, righteousness.*

Discover the Truth

God warned the people again through Jeremiah. God really wanted His people to return to Him, to put away the idols—the abominations—they had put up. They were worshipping false gods, not the one true God. God wanted the people to stop and to come back to Him and give Him the glory He deserved as their Creator and the only true God. The Lord wanted the people to recognize that He lives in truth, in judgment and in righteousness. He wanted the nations to bless Him and glory in Him—not in the idols they had built.



READ THE WORD

The Lord called for the people of Judah to return, but they would not listen. God's punishment was coming. What was the warning? What was God going to do? How would God punish His people for their disobedience and idolatry?

Jeremiah wrote it all down so we would learn from the past. Go to Jeremiah 4:6–7. Jeremiah told the people what God was going to do to them. *Choose students to read the passage aloud.*

Jeremiah 4:6–7

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

Wow! This does not sound good for Judah.

- ? First, what is Zion? It's mentioned in Jeremiah 4:6. Do you know? *Allow discussion.*
- Zion is another name for the city of Jerusalem, the capital city of Judah.
- ? What was coming to Zion? *Jeremiah 4:6. Disaster from the north, great destruction.*
- ? Disaster and destruction from the north. Jeremiah told them to take refuge! Do not delay! How would you complete #5 on your class notes? *Disaster from the north and great destruction.*
- ? How does the Bible describe the force from the north that would bring destruction on Jerusalem? *Jeremiah 4:7. A lion from his thicket.*
- ? Who was on the way? Sent from God to destroy the nation? *Jeremiah 4:7. Destroyer of nations is on the way.*

Wow. Disaster was coming from the north. Jeremiah told the people a lion was coming who would bring destruction. Jerusalem would be attacked and destroyed.

? But was it a real lion? What does the Bible mean by this? *Allow discussion.*

Well, I'm not sure one lion—even the fiercest of lions—could destroy an entire city and nation. No, God used the word *lion* to describe the enemy that would come. It would be a fierce enemy, like a lion. It would be the nation of Babylon.

? Someone read #6 on your class notes for us. How will you complete that? *Lion, Babylon.*

The lion was coming, a destroyer of nations! And he would make the land desolate and lay the cities to waste. The people would be run out or killed.

Now look at Jeremiah 5:19. Once more, Jeremiah spoke for God and told the people WHY this destruction was going to come to them. But first the people asked a question. *Assign a reader.*

? What did the people want to know? It is at the beginning of Jeremiah 5:19. *Why does the Lord our God do all these things to us?*

? They asked why. And what did God tell them, speaking through Jeremiah? Why was God's punishment finally coming on them? The answer is in Jeremiah 5:19. *They had forsaken—or forgotten—God. They had served other gods.*

? How will you complete #7 on your class notes? Someone read it for us. *Assign a reader. They had forsaken Him and served other, foreign gods.*

? That's right. And what was the Lord going to do with the people from Jerusalem? Can you figure it out? It is at the very end of Jeremiah 5:19. *Allow discussion.*

God was going to send the people out of the land and they would serve "aliens" in a land that was not their own.

? Serve aliens? What does God mean by that? *Allow discussion.*

God was sending His people out of their nation of Judah. They would go to Babylon and they would be slaves and serve the Babylonians—people in a different land. Babylon was the nation coming from the north to destroy Judah. The Babylonians were the aliens, or foreigners.

? How will you complete #8 on your class notes? *Stranger, foreigner.*

? How will you complete #9 on your class notes? *Babylon.*

Discover the Truth

The warning came. The people had disobeyed God and turned away from Him over and over. God told them to return to Him—but they would not. And now God acted—He was going to send a nation—Babylon—fierce as a lion, to come and destroy their land. And the people would be moved out

Jeremiah 5:19

of their own land and taken to another land to serve the aliens, or strangers, in that land. Babylon was a fierce nation, an enemy who would come from the north and cause destruction in Judah. They would carry out God's punishment against the people. *Hold up the Map of Judah again and point out Babylon on the map.*



Four in a Row

MATERIALS

- Four in a Row Review Questions Sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM
- Masking tape
- Beanbag, rolled up sock, or other appropriate item
- Red construction paper—8 sheets
- Black construction paper—8 sheets

INSTRUCTIONS

Use masking tape to make a 16-section square on the floor. The square should be four sections wide by four sections high. Each section should be equal in size. Cut 8 red circles and 8 black circles from the red and black construction paper. Use a paper plate as a pattern.

Divide the students into two teams—red team and black team. Give each team eight paper circles—either red or black. Students will toss the beanbag to a square. They will answer a question. If correct, they can put a marker in that square. To win the game, teams must get four circles in a row—achieved by answering the questions correctly.

Did you listen to today's lesson? Get in two teams. Team red and team black. We are going to play a game of Four in a Row. I want each team to throw the beanbag onto

an empty square on the grid. I will then ask a question about what we have been learning. If your team answers correctly, mark the grid where the beanbag landed. If you don't get it correct, the team 2 will have the opportunity to answer and earn a space on the grid for their team. We will alternate teams until one team gets four circles in a row. *See the Four in a Row Review Questions Sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for the review questions.*

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

We learned a lot of details in today's lesson. And we need to remember that everything God writes in the Bible is important. God warned His people over and over again. He wanted them to turn back to Him but they would not. They loved other things in their lives—their idols—their false gods—more than God. They would not listen to Him and He finally judged them for their disobedience.



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

Just like the people of Israel had turned away, now the people of Judah turned away from God. God had been very patient as they worshipped other gods—for hundreds of years. But their disobedience to God could not go on any longer. They would not return to God. They turned to their

false idols. They did not love God. They had forgotten what God had done for them. The time had come to punish them. God would send the fierce, lion-like nation of Babylon to destroy them and take them away to a foreign country.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

God is mighty. He is wonderful and loving. Our God is also kind and merciful. He is the Creator. Everything we have comes from Him. Yes, God is patient and good, and He wants what is best for us. But, since He is our Creator and He is the one true God, He requires something from us. He must be the only one that we worship as God. Our worship is what He deserves. He required that of the people of Judah.

The God of Judah is the same God we worship today. And God still demands that we honor, glorify, worship, and obey Him alone. If we love anything more than God, it's considered an idol.

? **What are some examples of idols that can take the place of God in our lives today?** *Allow discussion. TV, friends, family, cars, books, school, video games, shopping, clothes, looks, money, etc.*

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

It's easy to get so distracted with the things of this world that we let our love for God be replaced by other things or people. But God wants us to love Him with all of our heart, soul, and mind. That is the first and the greatest commandment. That means we are to love God more than our friends. We are to love God more than our sports and more than our TV shows. We are to love God more than our video games, our vacations, our money, and our stuff—more than anything! He is the only God. He is the only one worthy of our praise and honor and worship. Let's be careful to guard our hearts and minds so we don't get caught up in the worship of anything other than the one true God.



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 because He alone is worthy of our worship.
- Thank God for His patience with us when we sin against Him.
- Ask God to give us a tender heart that will be sensitive to the Holy Spirit who corrects us when we turn away from Him.