



11

God Judges Judah

Key Theme

- God judges sin.

Key Passages

- 2 Chronicles 36:1–21; Jeremiah 5:18–19

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

Write on the board, “How did the Babylonians treat the Israelites?”

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: Three Steps to Destruction

The students will examine the account of the fall of Judah in 2 Kings 23–25 to understand the three steps and five kings involved in the judgment.

- Three Steps to Destruction Answer Key
- Student Guides



Studying God’s Word

For hundreds of years God warned Judah and called them to repent through His prophets. 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.

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Read through 2 Chronicles 36.
- Go Before the Throne.
- Print one Babylon and Judah Map.



Activity 2: Clearing Up the Confusion

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

- Five Clearing Up the Confusion Scripts



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 Babylon 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.

► **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

- Write on the board, “How did the Babylonians treat the Israelites?”
- 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.



Review

Last week we learned of God’s warnings delivered through the prophet Jeremiah to Judah and Jerusalem.

- ?
- Who can recall some of the reasons God was going to bring judgment and the language He used to describe Judah’s enemy? *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. Jeremiah told the people a lion was coming who would bring destruction. Jerusalem would be attacked and destroyed. 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.

God was bringing a nation from the north to wipe out Judah, since they were not willing to repent. Babylon was about to sweep in and exercise judgment on the people of Judah on behalf of God. Our lesson today will look at the three stages of the captivity and destruction of Judah and Jerusalem. We are going to start with an activity today where you will get to examine the biblical account of the fall of Judah.





Three Steps to Destruction

MATERIALS

- Student Guides
- Pencils
- Three Steps to Destruction Answer Key from the Resource DVD-ROM

INSTRUCTIONS

This activity will take a major portion of the class, so plan accordingly.

There is a lot of detail in the account of the captivity of Judah and it is found in four different places (2 Kings 23–25; 2 Chronicles 35–36; Jeremiah; Daniel). I am going to ask you to work in groups to examine the text and come up with an outline describing the major events, the timing of the events, and the leaders involved in the phases of destruction.

Turn to the Three Steps to Destruction activity in your Student Guide. You are going to read through 2 Kings 23:26–25:12

and record the details you find there. Try to understand the timing of the events from King Josiah on. As a starting point, King Josiah died in 610 BC. From there, you should be able to determine the timing of the other events and the relationship between all of the kings mentioned. You will also want to note the actions of the **oppressor**. Have the students work in groups and assist them where necessary. The key points with references are indicated on the answer key. All of the references are from 2 Kings.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Go over the answer key with the class.

God is faithful and He executed the judgment He had promised through Jeremiah. But there was still hope—a remnant remained and God would use that remnant to restore Israel and bring the Messiah.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

The passage you just examined in 2 Kings has a parallel in 2 Chronicles. Let's read 2 Chronicles 36:1–21 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

- Write on the board, "How did the Babylonians treat the Israelites?"

2 Chronicles 36:1–21

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? What similarities and differences do you see comparing this passage to the 2 Kings passage? *There are not as many time references in this section (we could not construct the timing from this passage). This passage is much more condensed. There are a few distinctions, with verses 15–16 being extra information not found in the 2 Kings passage.*

- ? **How old was Jehoiachin when he became king?** *Verse 9 says he was eight.*
- ? **How does that compare to 2 Kings 24:8?** *This passage says he was 18, not 8. This is his more likely age since 2 Kings 24:15 refers to his wives. Here is an example of where the multiple records help ensure us that we have an accurate Bible. A probably copying error in the 2 Chronicles passage is corrected by an accurate copy in 2 Kings.*
- ? **Looking at verses 15–16, what extra information do we find?** *There is a reminder that God had sent many prophets to warn the people.*
- ? **How did the people treat the messengers?** *They mocked and scoffed at the prophets.*
- ? **Why did God send those messengers?** *He had compassion on His people and Jerusalem, where the Temple resided.*
- ? **Why did God eventually send Babylon to judge Judah?** *The wrath of the Lord accumulated until there was only one solution.*
- ? **Who is the king of the Chaldeans?** *Chaldea is another name for Babylon, so this refers to Nebuchadnezzar. Think of Abraham coming from Ur of the Chaldeans as a reference (Genesis 11:28).*
- ? **How did the Babylonians treat the people in Jerusalem at the final phase of the captivity?** *Verse 17 describes the ruthless nature of the killing in Jerusalem with men and women being killed without compassion. Verse 20 says that those not killed were carried away as servants.*
- ? **What happened to the Temple and its articles?** *All of the articles left from the previous two phases of the captivity were taken, and the Temple was burned.*
- ? **What did this carrying away to serve the Babylonians fulfill?** *Jeremiah's prophecy from Jeremiah 5:18–19, which was discussed last week, was being fulfilled as they were carried away to serve in another land. Jeremiah 25:9–12 is also in mind in this passage, but this will be covered in the next lesson.*
- ? **How long would this captivity last?** *70 years.*

Jeremiah 5:18–19

Discover the Truth

MERCIFUL

In His mercy, God had sent many prophets to warn the people of coming judgment, but they refused to listen, even scoffing and mocking those sent by God.

God was also expressing the love that He had for Israel and for Jerusalem, but His justice demanded that He deliver judgment for their sin.





Clearing Up the Confusion

MATERIALS

- Five 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.



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

As we think about the way God treated the people of Israel and Judah, we must be careful not to think that we are so different from them. Reading these warnings to Judah and seeing God's justice delivered, we cannot forget one of God's attributes that we have not talked about much—immortality. God's nature and character does not change. He has always been, and will always be, sovereign, holy, just, merciful, faithful, and gracious.

Even in the judgment, God offered an opportunity to repent. He also promised to leave a remnant that would continue to the time of the Messiah. We have the opportunity to look back on this history and see how God brought all of these things together in the birth, life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus. And now we have the opportunity to call those who have not yet turned from their sins and trusted in Christ to do so. We can trust God to carry out those promises He has given to us in Christ.

The kings of Judah failed to honor and worship God, but there was a king coming who would be truly righteous. Not only would He lead the people in true worship, He would offer His life in place of theirs. He would bear the sins of His people on the Cross. Let us not forget that God judges sin

IMMUTABLE

in true righteousness and that we can look to Christ to clothe us with His perfection. That should give us great hope and cause us to praise Him for His kindness toward us.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

- ? What have you learned (or had confirmed) about Scripture as we studied this passage today? *Discuss various answers.*
- ? If you find yourself thinking, "I can't believe the people of Judah saw what happened to Israel and didn't turn to God," what are you forgetting about mankind? *We are all descended from Adam and have his sin nature. If we think we are smarter or less inclined to sin than others, we are likely deceiving ourselves. We are freed from the penalty of sin in what Christ has done, but we still battle against the flesh and must be mindful of our own sinful tendencies (1 John 1:8–9).*
- ? What do the actions of the Babylonians tell us about the nature of mankind? *We see the lust for power and wealth demonstrated in the Babylonians, as well as a general ruthlessness in the killing that took place. It demonstrates that the human heart is corrupt and seeks to satisfy itself. Nebuchadnezzar was willing to allow a king to sit in Jerusalem as long as he was subject to Babylon. When that ended, the response came swiftly. They also show that they had no respect for God as they burned the Temple.*
- ? What future events does our study today set up? *This sets up the return of the Jews to rebuild the Temple and the walls of Jerusalem. These topics will be covered in future lessons.*



MEMORY VERSE

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



GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Thank God for His willingness to offer repentance and hope to sinful people.
- Praise God for His unchanging character.
- Ask God for wisdom in sharing and applying the truths of Scripture.