



**Sunday School Lesson Summary for July 22, 2007
Released on Wednesday, July 18, 2007**

“Jeremiah Announced the Consequences of Disobedience” (Committed to Accountability)

DEVOTIONAL READING: 2 Chronicles 7:11-16.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Jeremiah 7; 2 Kings 23:36-37.

PRINTED TEXT: Jeremiah 7:11-15; 2 Kings 23:36-37.

TIME: 609 B.C.; 609-597 B.C.

PLACE: Jerusalem

GOLDEN TEXT: “I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim” (Jeremiah 7:15).

HOW TO SAY IT

CHALDEANS. Kal-*dee*-unz.

EPHRAIM. *Ee*-fray-im.

JEHOIAKIM. Jeh-*hoy*-uh-kim.

JEREMIAD. jair-uh-*my*-ud.

JOSIAH. Jo-*sigh*-uh.

ZEBUDAH. Ze-*bu*-duh.

LESSON TEXT

JEREMIAH 7:1-4, 8-15

11 Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the Lord.

12 But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel.

13 And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the Lord, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not;

14 Therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh.

15 And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim.

2 KINGS 23:36, 37

36 Jehoiakim was twenty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Zebudah, the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah.

37 And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his fathers had done.

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each student will be able to:

1. Explore the Bible passages to see how Judah disobeyed God and how He punished them.
2. List at least five sins for which God held His people accountable.
3. Examine his or her life for signs of these sins and take measures to resist them.

LESSON OUTLINE

- I. GOD'S AWARENESS (Jer. 7:11-12)
- II. GOD'S ACTIVITY (Jer. 7:13-15)
- III. JEHOIAKIM'S REIGN (2 Kings 23:36-37)

INTRODUCTION

Trusting in Lies

"If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it." This was the strategy of Adolf Hitler's minister of propaganda, Joseph Goebbels. Goebbels and the Nazis perfected the modern art of misinformation, the concept of *the big lie*. Goebbels thought that the more outrageous the lie, the better, because the populace would think it was too extreme to be false.

As strange as that theory may seem to us, the Nazi propaganda machine successfully deceived the German people for over a decade. Yet the *big lie* technique did not originate with the Nazis. The history of human governments is littered with examples of lying kings and conquerors. Jeremiah the prophet was incensed by the ongoing deception of God's people by the leaders of Judah.

Jeremiah was particularly enraged by the deceptions of those who claimed to be speaking for God. He denounced this as villainy. As a true prophet of God, Jeremiah revealed God's displeasure: they "have spoken lying words in my name, which I have not commanded them" (Jeremiah 29:23). Jeremiah also castigated the people who trusted "in lying words, that cannot profit" (Jeremiah 7:8).

We as believers are called to be discerning of the truth. We have confidence that the Word of God is truth (John 17:17). Scripture is given to us as a measuring stick for all matters in life. Scripture is "the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

While some leaders in government are more truthful than others, history promises that the future holds more lying leaders. Today's *Honest Abe* may be replaced by tomorrow's *Deceiver*. The unfailing Word of God stands above all of this. God is the God of truth (Deuteronomy 32:4). God's Word is not a mixture of truth, opinion, and falsehood. It is all truth, and it has the power to transform and change us (2 Corinthians 6:7). The more we study God's Word and incorporate its teachings into our lives, the less likely we are to trust in lies.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The writings contained in the book of Jeremiah are drawn from his four-decade ministry as a prophet of God to the nation of Judah. The book opens with prophecies from the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign, approximately 627 B.C. (Jeremiah 1:2). The book closes with events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. (39:2).

This week's lesson is drawn from one of the prophet's warnings against evil among the people of Judah. It is a biting condemnation of hypocrisy, particularly in worship.

False Security

Routines and habits provide a sense of security. We put out the trash on Wednesday, mow the grass on Friday, do laundry on Saturday, and go to church on Sunday. We work the same job and live in the same house for many years. What happens when the routine is disrupted—our trash day is changed to Monday, the washing machine breaks down, or we lose our job? Such changes can make us feel insecure.

In today's lesson, Jeremiah wants his people to know that routine does not equal a strong, secure relationship with God. We may appear religious because we do certain things on a regular basis, yet be far from the will of God. Our relationship may be empty and false. This is as true today as it was in Jeremiah's time.

God does not call Jeremiah to evangelize the pagan masses of the ancient world. His message is for the (supposed) people of God, the citizens of Jerusalem (see Jeremiah 7:1-4).

Jeremiah's prophecy of doom for Judah is not new. It has been preached since the time of Isaiah. Yet through decades of national crisis and foreign threat, the southern kingdom of Judah has survived. *The temple* is some 300 years old by this time. It has survived threats from enemies such as the Assyrians, the Egyptians, and the Chaldeans (Babylonians).

But that is exactly the point for Jeremiah: the presence of this house of worship has given the people a false sense of security! They believe that the temple is a sign of God's continued favor and protection. Jeremiah mocks the temple worshipers by repeating their falsely confident refrain, This is "*The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord*" (Jeremiah 7:4). Tradition, history, and edifices count for nothing when hearts are false.

QUESTIONS

I. GOD'S AWARENESS (Jeremiah 7:11-12)

1. What promise did God first offer the people through Jeremiah?

God promised that if the people changed their ways, He would allow them to remain in their land (Jer. 7:3, 5-7). They would have to change, though, because up until then their living had been very sinful (vs. 9). Their rationale was that because God's temple was in Jerusalem, no harm was going to come their way (vs. 4).

2. In what ways were the people sinning against God and denying any repercussions (Jeremiah 7:11)?

Prior to our lesson (vs. 9,10), Jeremiah charged that the people of Judah have violated six of the Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy 5:7-21). They are thieves (Commandment Eight). They have committed *murder* (Commandment Six). They are adulterers (Commandment Seven). They have given false witness (Commandment Nine). They have worshiped *other gods* and made idols of them (Commandments One and Two).

Jeremiah warns that God knows of these *abominations*. God does not overlook them just because the people are going through the motions of worship at the temple. Most offensive to God is the mix of His worship with the worship of false gods like Baal of the Canaanites. This false worship is a sure way to bring about the wrath of the Lord (see Judges 2:13, 14).

By living the way they were and then daring to go into God's house to worship Him, the people were desecrating the temple. Their lifestyles caused God's temple to become nothing more than "a den of thieves." God asked them whether that was how they considered His house. No matter how they lived, they apparently felt that they could find asylum from their deeds in the temple. Did they think they would find protection from God in the same way robbers find protection in a cave?

3. What did God say regarding their attempts to hide their sin?

It would not work that way, for God had seen clearly what they were doing. He emphasized how significant this was with the words "Behold, even I have seen it" (vs. 11).

It is not possible to live sinfully without God's knowledge of it. It is just as impossible to live contrary to God's Word and then try to cover it by church attendance! It was this kind of inconsistency that Jesus rebuked when He cleansed the temple in Jerusalem. He quoted this verse as He drove the money changers out of the temple precincts (see Matt. 21:13).

4. To what did God say the people should look to be reminded of what He can do when displeased (v. 12)?

In order to get the people to understand what He could do to them if they were disobedient, God reminded them of what had happened at Shiloh. God was referring to what we read in 1 Samuel 4.

Shiloh was the original location in the promised land of the house of the Lord.

Although we do not have details, the Old Testament hints in several places that God allowed this former sanctuary to be destroyed, perhaps by the Philistines (see Psalm 78:56,58-61). The ruins of this temple are still around in Jeremiah's day. Those ruins should serve as a warning that building a house for God does not guarantee God's favor.

II. GOD'S ACTIVITY (Jeremiah 7:13-15)

5. How did the people react to God's pleas for change (v. 13)?

Jeremiah's final accusation at this point is that the people of the temple repeatedly have turned a deaf ear to God's pleas for change. Although they are regular worshipers, they have forgotten the one whom they worship.

"Daily '*rising up early.*' It speaks to us- of the anxiety of Jehovah for His people. He who has important business on hand, or dear ones in trying circumstances, will show diligence in some such way. He will be unable to rest. So it is with God and his Church. Not that he can be said to *fear* or be uncertain as to the issues. But the interest he has in the fortunes and spiritual state of His people is of this description. It is no impassive God who is presented to us in Scripture. A profound concern for the interests of our race ever fills the mind of God. His deepest affections are engaged. He mourns the sin and rejoices in the salvation of men" (The Pulpit Commentary -Spence, H.D.M.)

6. What did God say He would do (v. 14)?

History has a habit of repeating itself, even in tragic ways. Jeremiah reminds the hearers that God had *cast out all their brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim.*

When God spoke of "the whole seed of Ephraim", He referred to the nation of Israel. The name "Ephraim" is used as a synonym for "Israel" because the leading tribe of the nation was Ephraim.

Let us be forewarned, God can and will abandon any church that tolerates and grows comfortable with a hypocritical lifestyle and empty, meaningless worship practices. The warnings in Revelation 2 and 3 are important to heed!

7. How did God say He would destroy Judah, and how serious was He (v. 15)?

The Hebrew word that has been translated "cast" means "to throw out, down, or away," and it can be used in both a literal and a figurative sense. It was a stern warning: God was tired of Judah's sinfulness and was going to throw them out of His sight by sending them into captivity. So serious was God that in the next verse He

told Jeremiah, "Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry or prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee" (Jer. 7:16).

II. JEHOIAKIM'S REIGN-FAILED LEADERSHIP (2 Kings 23:36-37)

8. How had Jehoiakim become the king of Judah (2 Kings 23:36)?

According to Jeremiah 1:1-3, Jeremiah ministered during the reigns of several kings: "The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah,...to whom the word of the Lord came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah.

Jehoiakim had become the king because of Pharaoh Necho of Egypt, who had put Jehoahaz-Jehoiakim's predecessor-in prison so that he could no longer rule in Jerusalem (see 2 Kings 23:31-33). It was Pharaoh who appointed Eliakim to reign in Jehoahaz's place-changing his name to Jehoiakim (v. 34).

All of this meant that Jehoiakim and his nation, Judah, were not entirely free. They were vassals of Egypt and had to pay heavy taxes to that nation (v. 35).

We are told that Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he began his reign. He reigned for a total of eleven years.

9. What demonstrated exactly how evil Jehoiakim was in God's sight (2 Kings 23:37)?

One of the incidents for which Jehoiakim is most noted is recorded in Jeremiah 36. It was during the fourth year of his reign (v. 1) when the Lord spoke to Jeremiah and told him to write in a scroll all the things He had said against Israel, Judah, and all the other nations (v. 2). God hoped Judah would listen (v. 3).

Ultimately, King Jehoiakim took a knife and cut the scroll into pieces as it was being read, tossing each section into the fire in the fireplace (vss. 22-23). As they saw the response of the king, others lost their fear (v. 24), and the king ordered Jeremiah and Baruch (Jeremiah's secretary) to be arrested. The Lord, however, had hidden them so that they could not be found (v. 26).

As for King Jehoiakim, God said-regarding his upcoming death, "He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem" (Jer. 22:18-19). God's justice will always prevail.

CONCLUSION

The one thing we can take away from our lesson this week is that there are consequences to disobedience. Regrettably, it is much easier for us to tell our children that than to take steps to obey what we know is right in God's eyes. He has promised to bless us when we obey Him. When we disobey, there are dire consequences, and we dare not think that we can get away from God at such times. Scripture warns us that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 10:31). During this coming week, seek to obey God as He shows you what to do.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. Sin blinds us to the truth that God sees everything (Jeremiah. 7:11).
2. Even the presence of institutions dedicated to God is no guarantee of God's presence (v. 12).
3. We put ourselves in the worst possible position when we refuse to listen to God (v. 13).
4. We should be thankful for the things God gives us, but we must never put our trust in them (v. 14).
5. It is better to learn from the mistakes of others than from our own mistakes (v. 15).
6. The only evaluation of our lives that counts is God's (2 Kings 23:36-37)

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

God holds us accountable to serve Him without hypocrisy (i.e., without double standards, two-facedness, or insincerity).

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, God of ancient Israel and of the church, have patience with us. Please don't give up on reminding us of our hypocrisy and sin. Give us the spiritual strength to change and the joy that comes from serving You with clean hands and a pure heart. We pray this in the name of the one who never acted with hypocrisy, Jesus Christ Your Son, amen.

ANTICIPATING NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

In our lesson next week (July 29, 2007), we read of the people of God in exile, suffering deserved punishment. While they were there, away from the comforts and familiarities of home, the Prophet Jeremiah invited them to turn back to God and trust Him. Read Jeremiah 29:1-14 in preparation. *Good studying!*

LESSON SUMMARIZED BY

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