

## **Sunday School Lesson May 24**

Good morning, I hope you are well and blessed.

**Summer quarter Sunday school books are available, for pick up in the church office. If you are unable to get by the church office and pick up a book, let me know and I will place one in the mail for you. Summer quarter lessons start Sunday June 7, 2020.**

Prayer: Most Holy God, hear our prayer. Father, thank you for your word and the time that you have given us to study it. Help us bind your words in our heart and live by them each day. Thank you for your mercies and goodness. We confess our need for you and we ask that you renew our hearts, minds, and lives, for the days ahead. Keep us focused on what is pure and right and give us the power to be obedient to your word. We ask that you bring healing mercies to our church family members, our friends and neighbors that are going through sickness and battling health ailments. Father, you know our burdens and concerns. We ask for your help, to overcome them. We pray that you will protect all personnel in the medical community as they continue to care for the sick. We pray for our national, state, and local leaders, asking that you give them the wisdom to handle daily situations as they lead our country. Forgive us of our sins and open our hearts and minds as we try to live a life glorifying and pleasing you. We ask these things in our Lord and Savior's name, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Lesson for May 24, 2020 "Repent of Injustice" Scripture passage is from Jeremiah chapter 22:1-10.

*Sources used for this lesson: The Bible, The Bible Knowledge Commentary by John Walvoord and Roy Zuck, Halley's Bible Handbook, the King James version, Dr. David Jeremiah, senior pastor of Shadow Mountain Community Church, and the founder of ministry Turning Point, David Guzik, pastor, Bible teacher, and author, Commentary on Jeremiah from The Pulpit Commentary, and The Present Word Adult Bible Lessons.*

Jeremiah's ministry spanned the final five decades of Judah's history. His call to service came in 627 B.C. in the 13<sup>th</sup> year of King Josiah's reign. Judah's

last good king. Josiah's reign was the final ray of light before the darkness of idolatry and foreign intrigue settled over the Davidic throne.

Here is a chronology list of kings of Judah who ruled during Jeremiah's prophetic ministry from 641 B.C. to sometime after the exile in 586 B.C.

Josiah - came to the throne when he was eight years old, and provided 31 years of relative stability for Judah. (2 Kings 22:1; 2 Chronicles 34:1). He died battling Pharaoh of Egypt at Megiddo (2 Kings 23:29). The best king.

Shallum or Jehoahaz, Josiah's son was made king (2 Chronicles 36:1). He was 23 years (2 Chronicles 36:1) and he reigned for only 3 months and was then exiled to Egypt by the Pharaoh (2 Chronicles 36:3).

Jehoiakim - Pharaoh then set up Eliakim or Jehoiakim, a son of Josiah to be king at the age of 25 (2 Chronicles 36:4). The king of Egypt made his brother Eliakim king over Judah and Jerusalem, and changed his name to Jehoiakim; but Neco took his brother Jehoahaz and carried him to Egypt. He ruled 11 years (2 Chronicles 36:5). Then he was exiled to Babylon with some Temple articles (2 Chronicles 36:6-7).

Jehoiachin - also referred to as Jeconiah and Coniah. He was 18, when he succeeded his father and became king. He ruled in Jerusalem for three months and ten days. King Nebuchadnezzar laid siege against Jerusalem and the young king along with the queen mother and the royal officials surrendered to Babylon (2 Kings 24:10-12). All this happened in accordance with the things prophesied against Judah due to the sins of Manasseh (2 Kings 24:2-4; 2 Chronicles 36:15-21). In this second deportation of Jews from Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin prisoner along with his mother, his wives, his officials, and the leading men in Judah (2 Kings 24:16). Nebuchadnezzar also took ten thousand others into exile, leaving only the poorest behind, and he raided the temple (2 Kings 24:13-14; 2 Chronicles 36:10).

Zedekiah/Mattaniah - with only losers left in Jerusalem, Mattaniah or Zedekiah was made king of Israel. In 2 Kings 24:17 it says, "The king of Babylon made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king in his place, and changed his name to Zedekiah". But 2 Chronicles 36:10 says he was Jehoiachin's brother. "In the spring of the year King Nebuchadnezzar sent and brought him to Babylon, along with the precious vessels of the house of the Lord, and made his brother Zedekiah king over Judah and Jerusalem". The term brother in 2 Chronicles can be more general and refer to kinsman or countryman or relative. In this case, Zedekiah was

Jehoiachin's uncle – which makes him Josiah's son. Zedekiah was 21 years old when he becomes king. He reigned for 11 years (2 Chronicles 36:11).

Calculating the years, Jeremiah was probably about fifty-two years old when Jerusalem was destroyed by Babylon in 586 BC. And then there's not a king after Zedekiah but a Babylonian-appointed governor named Gedaliah. The last three were not kings, but did have some form of ruling power over the Jews after the Babylonian exile.

Gedaliah - the son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan. Ahikam is a man who delivered Jeremiah from Jehoiakim's murderous intentions. Gedaliah reigned, (if you can call it that) for two months. He was murdered by Ishmael, who was from the royal family. Ishmael - he ran away with the people to the neighboring nation of Ammon. Johanan - lastly, the would-be hero Jehohanan rescues the Jews from Ishmael. But then he goes against God's will and brings the Jews to Egypt.

The period in which Jeremiah lived and worked was one of the most critical in Hebrew history. His public ministry began during the reign of King Josiah (640–609 B.C.) and lasted until sometime after the fall of Jerusalem and the beginning of the Babylonian captivity. He encountered strong opposition from King Jehoiakim (609–598 B.C.) and King Zedekiah (597–586 B.C.), and on more than one occasion, his life was threatened. After the fall of Jerusalem, the Babylonians permitted him to remain in his homeland; many of his fellow countrymen were taken into captivity. Later, he was taken to Egypt against his will by a group of exiles who found it necessary to flee Jerusalem for their own safety. In Egypt, Jeremiah died after a long and troublesome career.

From Stepping into the Word – Society often ignores or condones the oppression of the vulnerable. This was true in Jeremiah's day, and it is true today. We wonder if righteousness will ever be rewarded and if those who practice evil will ever face retribution. Chapter 21 of Jeremiah implied that judgment was certain. The sons of Josiah refused to follow in their father's footsteps in continuing the reforms Josiah had instituted. In chapter 22 God sends Jeremiah again to the palace with a message. Once more there are stern warnings of judgment, but this time there is also hope. If the king and the people will repent, God will restore the nation to a position of strength and peace.

This chapter 22 (Judgment against evil kings) starts with God instructing Jeremiah to the palace of the king Judah to proclaim a message. His message to king and to the officials and people who were there was for them to do what is just and right. The content of the message is was similar to the

chapter 21:12, but certain consequences were attached to the actions. If the king would be careful to observe God's commands he could expect continued blessings. But if he disobeyed those commands, God vowed that the royal palace would become a ruin. Verse 5 says, "But if you do not obey these commands, declares the Lord, I swear by myself that this palace will become a ruin."

To swear is a particular weighty way of making a promise. There is nothing and no one more significant, permanent, or powerful than God (Hebrews 6:13). Thus, God will make sure he fulfills this promise if Judah refuses to respond obediently.

Verses 2-5 list the duties of a king that started in Jeremiah 21:11-12 and continues here. The LORD ordered the king, his officials and his people to be fair. The king had to rescue people whom other people have robbed. The king had to defend the people who could not defend themselves. Widows and children, whose fathers had died, could not defend themselves. They should not have difficulties because the king used his power against them. He should behave fairly towards strangers. He should not kill people who had done no wrong deeds. That may refer to the sacrifice of children in the valley of Ben Hinnom (2 Kings 23:10). Sometimes kings killed people who were not guilty. However, the LORD told the rulers to kill people who did very bad things.

If the king obeyed the LORD's commands, his family descendants would continue. The king and his officials would continue to enter the palace. They would arrive in ways that showed their authority. If the king failed to obey the LORD, someone would ruin his palace. Nobody would live in it. There is nobody greater than the LORD. So the LORD used his own great name to show that it was a serious promise. "When God made a promise to Abraham, because he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, saying, 'I will surely bless you and multiply you.' And thus Abraham, having patiently endured, obtained the promise. Human beings, of course, swear by someone greater than themselves, and an oath given as confirmation puts an end to all dispute" (Hebrews 6:13-16).

The phrase "this palace" refers both to David's descendants and to the physical structure of their dwelling. If Judah's leaders disregard God, they will not only be dethroned, they will also be without a physical residence in Jerusalem. See Jeremiah chapter 39, to get the full story of how Jerusalem was taken by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon who slaughtered Zedekiah's sons and bound Zedekiah with bronze shackles to take him to Babylon.

The late Paul Harvey told about a man named Gary Tindle, who was charged with robbery. While standing in the California courtroom of Judge Armando Rodriguez, he asked permission to go to the bathroom. He was escorted upstairs to the bathroom, and the door was guarded while he was inside. But

Tindle, determined to escape, climbed up the plumbing, opened a panel in the ceiling and started slithering through the crawl space, heading south. He had traveled some 30 feet when the ceiling panels broke under him, and he dropped to the floor – right back in Judge Rodriguez’s courtroom!

When the guilty seem to have escaped judgment, it’s only for a short while. In due time, they will find themselves back before the judge. This is the predicament of the kings and court of Judah if they fail to adhere to God’s commands. They will not escape God’s judgment. As the true king of Israel, God loved justice. In their refusal to emulate God in this throne, for they had failed to live up to the calling that God had established for the Davidic kings.

Both Gilead and Lebanon were known for their forests and the royal palace in Jerusalem was known as the, “Palace of the Forest of Lebanon”. After God’s judgment the palace would be as desolate as a desert. The Babylonians would cut up the palace’s fine cedar beams and cast them into the fire. As people from other nations saw the destruction of this magnificent structure, they would ask why God had done such a thing. The answer was simple. God had judged the city because the people had forsaken the covenant and had worshipped other gods. God had judged the people with His promised curses because of their disobedience.

In verses 10 to 12 the message is to Shallum, which was another name for Jehoahaz, son of Josiah. Verse 10 says: “Do not weep for the dead king or mourn his loss; rather weep bitterly for him who is exiled, because he will never return nor see his native land again.” God is commanding His people not to mourn “him” which most likely refers to King Josiah who was the last good and godly king of Judah (II Chronicles 35:22-25). After Josiah’s death, his son Jehoahaz was made king in Jerusalem (II Kings 23:28-30). The message for the people was not to mourn for Josiah, who was a godly king (II Kings 22:1-2; II Chronicles 34:1-2) “but weep sore for him that goeth away.” The pronoun “him” here refers to Shallum who was an ungodly king (II Kings 23:31-32). The words “that goeth away” refers to being taken captive. After Jehoahaz became king, Pharaoh-Nechoh of Egypt came against Jerusalem and took Jehoahaz (or Shallum) captive to Egypt where he eventually died (II Kings 23:31-34; II Chronicles 36:1-4). He was the one God said the people should “weep sore” or mourn deeply for. The reason God gave for mourning for Jehoahaz and not Josiah was because “he shall return no more, nor see his native country.” But he will suffer the continual grief of hearing about the desolations of it.

verses 22:11-12. “For this is what the LORD says about Shallum, son of Josiah, who succeeded his father as king of Judah but has gone from this place: He will never return. He will die in the place where they have led him captive; he will not see this land again.”

The message to Jehoiakim is in verses 13-23. "Woe to him who builds his palace by unrighteousness, his upper rooms by injustices, making his countrymen work for nothing, not paying them for their labor. He says, I will build for myself a great palace with spacious upper rooms, so he makes larges windows in it, panels it with cedar and decorates it in red."

Verses 13-14 show clearly that God keeps a record of how we think about and get money and material possessions. If we get them by robbing or defrauding people in any form, it is to our discredit. Do you consider thoughts like these when making decisions about money matters? This consideration extends to where we choose to work, and or the clients we serve. To what extent are we guilty of defrauding people, if we facilitate people and businesses that defraud people?

Judah needed a firm hand to guide the "ship of state" but instead she got corrupt, petty king who cared only for personal gain. Jehoiakim sought to build a palace for himself, and did so at the expense of his subjects. They were forced to work for nothing as Jehoiakim lavished his money on panels of cedar wood. Jeremiah contrasted Jehoiakim with his father, King Josiah. Josiah had done what was right and just and defended the poor and needy. These were the actions God expected of a king. Because of Jehoiakim's heavy-handed oppression, the people would not mourn for him at his death. Instead of the lavish funeral normally given a monarch, Jeremiah predicted, Jehoiakim would he have the burial of a donkey. Which is when the animal died in the city it was dragged away from the spot where it died and thrown outside the gates. Jehoiakim died in 598 B.C. as Nebuchadnezzar was advancing on Jerusalem to punish the city for rebellion. God had warned Jerusalem of the consequences of disobedience when she felt, but she refused to listen. Now she could only watch in sorrow as her shepherds (kings) were taken away and her allies also faced exile. Jehoiakim had been hardheaded and hard hearted since childhood. God warned him, but he refused to listen. His prosperity always took a higher priority than his relationship with God.

Jeremiah said to the people of Judah, the word of the Lord has come to me and I have spoken to you again and again, but you have not listened or paid any attention. You were told, each of you, turn from you evil ways and you evil practices and you can stay in you land the LORD gave you and your fathers, but you did not listen, declares the LORD. Did the people really think they could turn from the Lord, forsake the Lord and live sinful lives and there not be consequences?

Verse 21 says: "I spoke to you in your prosperity, but you said, 'I will not listen.'" This is one inscription that could be written on many tombstones,

but hopefully we are all asking God in our prayers, to help us listen to him, before we reach a crisis in our life.

In verses 24-30 the message is for Jehoiachin (aka Jeconiah or Coniah). He reigned in Jerusalem three months and ten days. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD. Jehoiachin followed his father Jehoiakim to the throne. After a three month reign Jehoiachin surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar and was deported to Babylon where he lived the rest of his life. God indicated that even if Jehoiachin were as valuable to Him as a signet ring, He would still pull it off because of his sins. A signet ring was extremely valuable because a king used it to authenticate important documents. The tragedy that befell Jehoiachin was predicted by the prophet Jeremiah. God said that Jehoiachin would be removed from the throne (Jeremiah 22:24) and be taken to Babylon, where he would die (verses 26-27). The curse upon Jehoiachin went deeper than just his deposition and exile: "This is what the Lord says: 'Record this man as if childless, a man who will not prosper in his lifetime, for none of his offspring will prosper, none will sit on the throne of David or rule anymore in Judah'" (Jeremiah 22:30). The line of kings from David's family ended with Jehoiachin—a fact that had ramifications for the Messiah, who was to be the Son of David (2 Samuel 7:12-16).

The prophecy does not mean the king will have no children. It means his offspring are forbidden to sit on the throne of David. Jehoiachin had seven sons (1 Chronicles 3:17-18). By divine decree he will have no dynastic rights. The descendants of Coniah are forbidden to sit on the throne of David. He would be the last Judean King. Nebuchadnezzar would place Zedekiah (king 20) Jehoiachin's uncle upon the throne. But no king from the line of David would sit on the throne again until the coming of the Messiah Himself; the Lord Jesus Christ; who is "the Son of David".

The last king of Judah and Jerusalem was Zedekiah. He was the son of Josiah and his mother's name was Hamutal. (2 Kings 24:18) His original name was Mattaniah, which was changed to Zedekiah by Nebuchadnezzar when he carried off his nephew Jehoiachin to Babylon and left him on the throne of Jerusalem. Zedekiah was but twenty-one years old when he was thus placed in charge of an impoverished kingdom, B.C. 597. Zedekiah, like others kings, did what was evil in the eyes of God.

In 587 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar returned to Jerusalem one last time. King Zedekiah attempted to flee that final siege, and was captured and taken prisoner. He saw his sons slaughtered before his eyes, his own eyes were then burned out with red hot irons and he was taken away in chains to prison and exile. Jeremiah chapter 52 has additional information about Zedekiah.

From stepping into the world – This section in the lesson book provides much more thorough information. The destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity were devastating to Judah. This lesson reinforces how committed God is to justice. The king of Judah is rebuked for failing to defend the cause of the widow, the orphan, and the alien. A commitment to justice is not optional. To be a follower of Christ is to be passionate about justice for all people. To be passionate about justice is not “liberation theology”: it is simply theology. It is not the “social gospel”; it is simply the gospel. As the prophets called out the political and religious leaders of the nation for injustice, we learn that justice for all must be high on the list of priorities for our leaders.

If we have not cared much about justice or have seen it as contributing to the life of faith, the call to repentance found in today’s passage gives us true hope. God calls us to repentance today. The time to commit to God’s program of justice is now.

This week’s lesson reveals the consequences we must face when we fail to obey God and repent of our sins. Like the nation of Judah, we can choose to heed God’s Word or expect His judgment. God calls us to the same challenge he presented through Jeremiah. Either we will represent the character of God as expressed in Jesus, and in our actions expose and eliminate injustice to the oppressed, or we will risk experiencing God in ways we will not like or imagine.

The late Dr. John Brokhoff, preacher and professor, spoke of a little girl who came home from church one Sunday. She had just heard a sermon on the subject, “Let your light shine,” and she asked her mother for an explanation. The mother explained that the light shone when we were kind and good. The next Sunday in the nursery, the child caused an uproar, and the teacher had to get her mother. Her mother asked her why she acted so badly. Remembering what she was told the previous Sunday the little girl blurted out, “I have blown myself out.”

God forbid that will not happen to any of us.

**Closing: For the love that casts out fear, the faith that sustains and the hope that never perishes, be with us now and forever more. Amen. God watch over us and take care of us.**

Next week’s lesson May 31, 2020 “Return to Love and Justice” from Hosea chapter 11 and 12.