



**Abundant Harvest Church
Sunday School**

Lesson 13 – May 24, 2020

REPENT OF INJUSTICE

Evangelist Mary E. Foster

REPENT OF INJUSTICE

BIBLE BASIS: Jeremiah 22:1 -10

BIBLE TRUTH: God calls His people to repent of injustice, or suffer the consequences.

MEMORY VERSE: “Thus saith the Lord; Execute judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place” (Jeremiah 22:3, KJV).

LESSON AIM: By the end of the lesson, we will: **RECOGNIZE** that the covenant relationship between God and His people requires justice; **REPENT** for injustice; and **BECOME** agents of deliverance for the oppressed.

LESSON OVERVIEW

LIFE NEED FOR TODAY'S LESSON: Society often ignores and even condones the oppression of the vulnerable. Will righteousness be rewarded, and will evil face retribution? Through the prophet Jeremiah, God exhorts the people to either repent of injustice and deliver those who are oppressed or face destruction.

BIBLE LEARNING: God detests injustice, especially when His people are the causes of it.

BIBLE APPLICATION: Christians will hate injustice and seek to correct injustices in society.

STUDENTS' RESPONSES: Believers will commit to repenting of the ways in which they have been complicit (i.e. involved with others in wrongdoing) in injustice, and becoming just people.

KEY TERMS TO RECOGNIZE

- **Covenant** – an agreement between two groups that involves promises on the part of each to the other. The concept of covenant between God and His people is one of the most important theological truths of the Bible.
- **Injustice** – the acts or conditions that cause persons to suffer hardship or loss undeservedly.
- **Judgment** – discernment or separation between good and evil. God judges among people and their actions according to the standards of His law. Judgment can refer either to this process of discernment or to the punishment meted out to those who fall under His wrath and condemnation.
- **Repentance** – the turning away from sin, disobedience, or rebellion and a turning back to God. In a more general sense, repentance means having a change of mind or regret for past conduct.

LESSON SCRIPTURE

- 1 Thus saith the LORD; Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak there this word,
- 2 And say, Hear the word of the LORD, O king of Judah, that sittest upon the throne of David, thou, and thy servants, and thy people that enter in by these gates:
- 3 Thus saith the LORD; Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place.
- 4 For if ye do this thing indeed, then shall there enter in by the gates of this house kings sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, he, and his servants, and his people.
- 5 But if ye will not hear these words, I swear by myself, saith the LORD, that this house shall become a desolation.
- 6 For thus saith the LORD unto the king's house of Judah; Thou art Gilead unto me, and the head of Lebanon: yet surely I will make thee a wilderness, and cities which are not inhabited.
- 7 And I will prepare destroyers against thee, every one with his weapons: and they shall cut down thy choice cedars, and cast them into the fire.
- 8 And many nations shall pass by this city, and they shall say every man to his neighbour, Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this great city?
- 9 Then they shall answer, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD their God, and worshipped other gods, and served them.
- 10 Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him: but weep sore for him that goeth away: for he shall return no more, nor see his native country.

LIGHT ON THE WORD

- In God's covenant with King David, God promised that a descendant from David's family line would be the eternal king who would rule over God's people and all nations of the world (**Isaiah 9:6-7; Micah 5:2, 4**).
- Unfortunately, since not even David's son managed to remain faithful to God throughout his reign, God allowed the kingdom to split, and the throne of David was not as powerful.
- When His people and their kings continued in sin, God allowed Babylonia to conquer them and overthrow the king on David's throne.
- The Lord would not fail in keeping His covenant, though. Through the royal line of David, the King of kings was born, and He will reign forever.

LIFE NEED FOR TODAY'S LESSON

AIM: Students will understand the role of justice in God's covenant with His people.

THE NATION OF ISRAEL CYCLE OF SIN



The book of Jeremiah is a major prophetic book of the Old Testament directed to the southern kingdom of Judah just before the nation fell to the Babylonians. The prophet Jeremiah delivered God's message of judgment in spite of fierce opposition from his countrymen.

INTRODUCTION

- This lesson passage is particularly powerful, because this chapter is nestled in between two chapters that express that the destruction and exile of Judah are inevitable.
- This chapter finds the prophet Jeremiah expressing the grounds for the Babylonians leading the people of Judah away from their land, and those grounds are the people of Judah's blatant disregard for the covenant. However, their dismissal is not permanent. God always provides an opportunity to return home.
- No matter how far away they go and even if they cannot immediately return physically, they can return to the "hometown" values, which are epitomized by the covenant.

BIBLE LEARNING

AIM: Students will grasp the magnitude of God's wrath against those who practice injustice.

I. RESPONDING TO GOD'S CALL TO THE POWERFUL (JEREMIAH 22:1-5)

- The message that God has the prophet speak to the king of Judah and his entourage is a simple set of imperatives (i.e. laws, rules, requirements) that capture what God wants from the government of Judah. These imperatives are:
 1. Make decisions based on fairness;
 2. Look out for those who have not been given adequate opportunity because an individual or institution robbed them;
 3. Do not add any extra burden to people who already have a hard time whether they are immigrants, children, or disenfranchised women;
 4. Do not harm people just because you can.
- The message is addressed to leadership, because if they respond to God's call, then people whom they lead will be impacted by their decisions.

I. RESPONDING TO GOD'S CALL TO THE POWERFUL (JEREMIAH 22:1-5)

- Jeremiah addresses a specific king of Judah, though he is not named here and his identity is unknown. We are told that this king “sits on the throne of David.”
- The present message is primarily for the king as the ruler and representative of the people, but His servants and all inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem are also addressed here.
- The unnamed king and his people are told to “execute judgment and righteousness.”
- In verse 3, the justice God wants practiced is to come to the defense of those who have been robbed by “delivering” them from those who have oppressed them.
- Then, in verse 3, the three categories of people in society who tend to be marginalized, forgotten, or in need of special care are listed as: the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow.
- To do justice and righteousness means to maintain God’s laws for all and treat everyone rightly in society, but it especially means to care for those who cannot care for themselves.

I. RESPONDING TO GOD'S CALL TO THE POWERFUL (JEREMIAH 22:1-5)

- There were three ways the king and his people must not treat the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow.
 1. They must not wrong, oppress, or cheat them
 2. They must not act violently toward them
 3. They must not shed their “innocent blood”, which indicates that such people have done no wrong but are simply being abused since they are defenseless.
- If the king and the people turn from their wicked oppression of the defenseless, God will respond by extending grace toward them.
- He will withhold His just punishment and allow the king, his servants, and the people of the city to remain in their homes. He will ensure political stability, and they will continue to thrive.
- Although the word is not used in verses 4 and 5 of Jeremiah chapter 22, it is clear that God is looking for **repentance**. **Repentance** includes turning from our sin and acting differently. God required that the king and his people repent.

RESPONDING TO GOD'S CALL TO THE POWERFUL TODAY

- It is clear from the beginning to the end of the Bible that one of the most basic ways in which God's people should "love their neighbor as themselves" is to care for those who lack care and defend the defenseless.

Students' Response to God's Call to the Powerful in Today's Society

- It is incumbent on us as believers to pray that those in government leadership positions will endorse the enactment of laws that protect those who are marginalized or disenfranchised, so that these groups are not neglected and receive the support they need.

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

QUESTION 1

What are the consequences for the Israelites if they refuse to practice justice?

QUESTION 2

In what ways does our nation and its leaders refuse to answer God's call?

LIGHT ON THE WORD

- In this passage, the Lord has a charge for the kings of Judah. He charges the kings to execute justice on behalf of the poor and oppressed, defend the widows and the fatherless, and refuse to shed innocent blood.
- As long as the tenure of these kings are filled with justice, the Lord will bless them abundantly. But if their reigns are filled injustice, the Lord will not hesitate to pour out His judgment on the kings and their people.
- Not only do we see God's emphasis on justice, we see how He holds leaders accountable for their actions.
- As people of God, we must be a people filled with justice, but we must also hold our leaders accountable for overseeing justice in our nation.

II. REMEMBERING GOD'S COVENANT WITH GOD'S PEOPLE (JEREMIAH 22:6-10)

- The prophet imagines the nation in ruins. When people from other places inquire about how Jerusalem arrived at this point of despair, their answer will contain three actions that were committed: (1) abandoning the covenant, (2) worshiping other gods, and (3) serving other gods.
- The cause of destruction is rooted in the charge of idolatry which is about incorrectly prioritizing God. The actions of the leadership and the people toward others are fundamentally connected to an improper view of God.
- God does not mind destroying what we consider important if our importance is rooted in the marginalization of other people.
- In verses 6 and 7, Jeremiah continues to describe the coming judgment if the people will not repent of their wickedness. Here he addresses the king more directly.
- What was once fertile and forested, God will now make like a desert. What was once richly inhabited will now be like empty, forgotten cities. Nothing of the former glory will remain. All will be destroyed.

II. REMEMBERING GOD'S COVENANT WITH GOD'S PEOPLE (JEREMIAH 22:6-10)

- Verses 6 – 8 explain why God is planning to destroy the people. The prophet envisions travelers along the road near Jerusalem, turning to the side and catching a glimpse of the ruins of the empty city.
- The causes for their punishment was many and interrelated (**2 Kings 17:6-10**). Jesus Himself tells us that the two greatest commands are to love God and to love your neighbor as yourself (**Mark 12:28-31**).
- Verse 9 emphasizes that they failed to love God.
- The final verse of this message from Jeremiah appears to be a reflection on how one ought to respond to this message of judgment from the Lord. The judgment will be so severe that it is better to be dead than to be alive in exile as a refugee.

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

QUESTION 3

Why do you think the Lord does not hesitate to pour out judgment against His own people?

QUESTION 4

What are some things that we consider more important than God considers them? What lie have we sold ourselves that contributes to the growth of injustice?

LIGHT ON THE WORD

- God calls His people to respond to His simple plea to execute justice in their lives and repent of injustices in which they have been complicit.
- The leadership and people of Judah have left behind the values of justice that God demanded that they embrace.
- Although people ignore the hateful words of politicians that make whole populations feel forsaken, the Lord wants us to fully integrate those populations into the family of God.
- This should compel us, not only to sympathize with our brothers and sisters, but also to repent for when we did not prioritize their safety, salvation, and vindication.

STUDENTS' RESPONSES

AIM: Students will remember that our God is both gracious and just.

- In our prayer life, it is important to have a correct image of God to whom we are praying. Yes, we indeed do pray to a gracious God, but we also need to remember that we are praying to a God who loves justice. Let that guide what we pray for and whom we pray for.
- Let us actively seek those that need to be covered in justice and salvation. Whether it is providing money, volunteering, or organizing, let us be moved to help and set people free.
- We should remember our covenant values and remember people's humanity, act in justice, and not add any extra obstacles to those who are already burdened.
- We should actually work to alleviate those burdens. What can we do at the local church level to alleviate the burdens?

NEXT WEEK'S SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

LESSON TOPIC: RETURN TO LOVE AND JUSTICE

BIBLE BASIS: HOSEA 11:1-2, 7-10; 12:1-2, 6-14

INSTRUCTOR: EVANGELIST MONIQUE FOSTER