

## Unit III: Called to God's Work of Justice

# Just Rewards

DEVOTIONAL READING: Psalm 86:1-13

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Jeremiah 21

PRINT PASSAGE: Jeremiah 21:8-14

**Key Verse—** O house of David, thus saith the LORD; Execute judgment in the morning, and deliver him that is spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor, lest my fury go out like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings. (Jeremiah 21:12, KJV)

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“This is what the LORD says to you, house of David: Administer justice every morning; rescue from the hand of the oppressor the one who has been robbed, or my wrath will break out and burn like fire because of the evil you have done—burn with no one to quench it.” (Jeremiah 21:12, NIV)

### Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Understand divine justice described by Jeremiah.
- Appreciate that God is a God of justice.
- Make a personal commitment to justice and advocacy for justice.

### \*Key Terms

**Babylonians** (verse 9)—Hebrew: *Kasdi* or *Kasdimah* (kas-dee’): inhabitants of Chaldea; “Chaldeans” (KJV).

**Falleth** (verse 9)—Hebrew: *naphal* (naw-fal’): to desert; “surrenders” (NIV).

**Fruit** (verse 14)—Hebrew: *peri* (per-ee’): actions (fruit used metaphorically); “deeds” (NIV).

\*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)

### Life Happens

Carrie and Duke opted for a destination wedding instead of getting married in Carrie’s hometown. They both were concerned about the costs of staying local, so Costa Rica was a promising location. Carrie and Duke maxed out all their credit cards so that they could consume the reward points for future airline travel and hotel stays.



## Overview

Jeremiah is counted among the Major Prophets because of the size of his book; he also wrote the book of Lamentations. He prophesied to Judah for more than forty years until the Babylonians took them into exile. He started his ministry during the reign of a godly king by the name of Josiah. In this lesson, King Zedekiah is now faced with a decision to make for his people. He inquired of the Lord through Jeremiah, and the response from the Lord is not what King Zedekiah wanted to hear. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon was on his way to Jerusalem to capture the Jews. Jeremiah further explained that God would not defend or protect them. As a matter of fact, God was so disappointed with Judah that He was going to side with the enemy. God was going to completely destroy the city He once called His dwelling place. The Israelites were going to get what they deserved for breaking the covenant of God over and over again.

Friends and family who could afford to attend celebrated the happy couple at an all-inclusive resort. The ceremony was on the beach at dusk. The bridesmaids wore long gowns, and the groomsmen wore tuxedos. The day was picturesque.

After all the hoopla and the journey back home, Carrie and Duke decided to pay off all of their wedding expenses on their credit cards. It truly was about the rewards and a blissful wedding celebration.

## Questions

1. How do you feel about your rewards for purchases and travel? Do you use them?
2. What is the best deal that you have received with your reward points?

## COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLICAL TEXT

### A Choice to Make (Jeremiah 21:8-10)

#### KJV

8 And unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death.

9 He that abideth in this city shall die by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth out, and *falleth* to the *Chaldeans* that besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be unto him for a prey.

10 For I have set my face against this city for evil, and not for good, saith the LORD: it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire.

#### NIV


8 “Furthermore, tell the people, ‘This is what the LORD says: See, I am setting before you the way of life and the way of death.

9 “‘Whoever stays in this city will die by the sword, famine or plague. But whoever goes out and *surrenders* to the *Babylonians* who are besieging you will live; they will escape with their lives.

10 “‘I have determined to do this city harm and not good, declares the LORD. It will be given into the hands of the king of Babylon, and he will destroy it with fire.’”

In the beginning of Jeremiah 21, the prophet spoke to the kingship of Judah in verses 1-7. The Babylonians were on their way to drive them into captivity. As a matter of fact, Jeremiah preached and prophesied for forty years before they started to believe that what he was preaching was true. Judah thought that surely God was going to save them from the hands of their oppressors (the Babylonians). But they were in for a big surprise by what was going to happen. In **verse 8a**, Jeremiah delivered a word from the Lord directly to the people of Judah. God was tired of His people's disobedience; therefore, He spoke through Jeremiah, warning them to change their wicked ways. Now in **verse 8b**, Jeremiah told the people that they had to make a choice: either surrender and live in bondage, or fight for their freedom and perish (**verse 9**). It is the same as Moses declared in Deuteronomy 30:15-16 (NIV): "See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess." God was telling His people in Jeremiah's day that they would live in exile or they would die by the sword of the Babylonians if they stayed in the city. And those who did not perish by the sword of the Babylonians would die by the famine and plague that would overtake them. God meant business. They that surrendered would have only their lives to show for it. Everything else would be gone, destroyed by the enemy with the help of God (**verse 10**).

Sometimes in our lives when we do not make the right choices, God may permit us to be corrected by punishment because we are His children and He loves us. Always choose right over wrong. Your *just reward* is on the way.

 **What Do You Think?** Evil is present all around us; we must make a personal commitment to do the right thing on a daily basis. As human beings, how can we maintain a just attitude in bad situations?

## Do Good or Else! (Jeremiah 21:11-12)

### KJV

11 And touching the house of the king of Judah, say, Hear ye the word of the LORD;  
12 O house of David, thus saith the LORD; Execute judgment in the morning, and deliver him that is spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor, lest my fury go out like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.

### NIV


11 "Moreover, say to the royal house of Judah, 'Hear the word of the LORD.  
12 "'This is what the LORD says to you, house of David: Administer justice every morning; rescue from the hand of the oppressor the one who has been robbed, or my wrath will break out and burn like fire because of the evil you have done—burn with no one to quench it.'"

The people of Judah kept reminding God of His promise to them. They believed that because of who they were, God was not going to punish them. But God sent word to the leaders of Judah (**verse 11**). The Israelites had broken their covenant with God over and over without any shame. Jeremiah



reminded them that God is a just God. In addition, Jeremiah reminded the leaders that God required them to do good every morning—meaning they must make doing good throughout the whole day their priority (**verse 12a**). If they did not, His “wrath will break out” against them (**verse 12b**). God requires His people to be good to the poor and down-and-out, help the needy, and feed the hungry. God is ethical, and He requires us to be ethical as His children. God reminded them that His preference was obedience versus sacrifices’ or things’ being offered at the Temple. God did not want the overflowing of gifts; He wanted His people to carry out justice throughout the land. He wanted love, kindness, and righteousness to prevail; however, if they did not choose to do good, then destruction was sure to come.

Jeremiah prophesied that Jerusalem’s doomsday was on the way because of so much injustice in the land. This was God’s method of punishing them for their wickedness. They were to surrender to Babylon. Throughout this Christian journey, there will be times when we think God is not watching us. However, God is watching, and He wants us to set a good example for the lost. We must read and obey His holy Word. His wrath is sure to come to the disobedient and there will also be a just reward (judgment) to the evil just as there will be reward for the righteous.

 **What Do You Think?** Oftentimes, we are faced with making the right decisions at work and/or in public places; however, behind closed doors, are we still making good, honest decisions?

## No More Chances (*Jeremiah 21:13-14*)

### KJV

13 Behold, I am against thee, O inhabitant of the valley, and rock of the plain, saith the LORD; which say, Who shall come down against us? or who shall enter into our habitations?

14 But I will punish you according to the *fruit* of your doings, saith the LORD: and I will kindle a fire in the forest thereof, and it shall devour all things round about it.


### NIV

13 “I am against you, Jerusalem, you who live above this valley on the rocky plateau, declares the LORD—you who say, “Who can come against us? Who can enter our refuge?”

14 “I will punish you as your *deeds* deserve, declares the LORD. I will kindle a fire in your forests that will consume everything around you.”

The Jews were in a terrible situation concerning their future. God had spoken and informed them that He was no longer with them but against them (**verse 13a**). They did not realize that they had made themselves enemies of God. God goes into detail—describing them and their location: “you who live above this valley on the rocky plateau” (**verse 13ba**, NIV)—so that they would come to the realization that God was referring to them and that they were in big trouble. The people of God thought they were untouchable because of who they were and whose name they bore; however, their God Yahweh had come against them (**verse 13**). Their heavenly Father had had enough, and He was going to remind them who He was, which was God Almighty. They thought the city was their refuge, and not their God (**verse 13d**). They were out of chances. It was time for them to be punished for their behavior. Their lives were at stake because of their actions (**verse 14a**). The Babylonians were coming with their forces to destroy them; fire would burn up everything in its path; everything will be devoured around them.

Satan has used deception against us to make us think that sinning without any remorse is okay. We must be careful not to allow Satan into our hearts and minds to deceive us. The devil will trick us into sin and have us thinking that our sins are okay because of who we are or what we have here on earth. We must remember that God gave it to us, and He can take it away.


 **What Do You Think?** Think of a time when your parents or guardians advised you to do right, but you did things your way. What was the outcome?

## Your Life

In our lives today, we must make sound decisions in every situation. We must not let Satan deter us from following God's Word. Judgment will follow for all of us. A just reward is on the way.

## Your World!

In this world as Christians, we must remember to stay focused and remain faithful to our God. It is our responsibility to proclaim His Word, warn of judgment, and offer renewal through hope and redemption to an unjust and dying world.

 **Closing Prayer** Heavenly Father, help us to remain faithful to Your Word until the end of our journey—for we know that the obedient and disobedient will both receive a just reward. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## Home Daily Bible Readings

<b>MONDAY</b> , May 18	"Justice for Aliens, Orphans, and Widows"	(Deuteronomy 24:17-22)
<b>TUESDAY</b> , May 19	"God Requires Godly Rule by Kings"	(Deuteronomy 17:18-20)
<b>WEDNESDAY</b> , May 20	"Who May Enter God's Holy Presence?"	(Psalm 15)
<b>THURSDAY</b> , May 21	"God's Justice for the Unjust King"	(Jeremiah 22:11-19)
<b>FRIDAY</b> , May 22	"The City Suffers for Its Disobedience"	(Jeremiah 22:20-23)
<b>SATURDAY</b> , May 23	"Injustice Ends the Line of David"	(Jeremiah 22:24-30)
<b>SUNDAY</b> , May 24	"Repent of Misdeeds and Unjust Actions"	(Jeremiah 22:1-10)