

# Practice Justice

Jeremiah 21:8-14

SS Lesson for 05/17/2020

**Devotional Scripture:** Zech 7:9-11

## OUTLINE

### LESSON BACKGROUND AND KEY VERSE

*Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary*

*Key Verse: Jer 21:12*

*Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary*

### MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

#### SURRENDER AND SURVIVE (JER 21:8-10)

##### *Choose life or death (8)*

Choose life or death for blessings or wrath (Deut 30:15-19)

Choose to be a slave of sin or righteousness (Rom 6:16-18)

Choose to be obedient or disobedience (Josh 1:7)

Choose life or death based on whom you will serve (Josh 24:15)

Choose to be focused on God not our desires (Prov 4:25-27)

Choose to resist or yield to Satan (1 Peter 5:8-9)

##### *Life through submission (9)*

Submit so that there can be life and peace (Rom 8:5-7)

Submit so that Satan will flee (James 4:7)

Submit because someday all will confess and know Jesus is Lord (Rom 14:11-12)

Submit out of reverence (Eph 5:21)

Submit with all our soul and spirit (Heb 12:9)

Submit so that He will lift us up (James 4:10)

##### *Death through God's wrath (10)*

Death through wrath because it is the punishment for wickedness (Rom 1:18)

Death through wrath because of stubbornness and unrepentant hearts (Rom 2:5)

Death through wrath because of disobedience (Eph 5:6)

Death through wrath because of a sinful and earthly nature (Col 3:5-6)

Death through wrath because of God's judgment (2 Peter 2:4, 9)

Death through wrath because of falling into God's hands (Heb 10:31)

Death through wrath because it is consuming (Heb 10:26-27)

#### JUSTICE OR JUDGMENT (JER 21:11-14)

##### *God demand justice (11-12)*

Justice that comes from righteous wisdom (Ps 37:30)

Justice that comes from doing right (Prov 21:3)

Justice because God loves it (Ps 99:4)

Justice by living a clean life and not doing wrong (Isa 1:16-17)

Justice because God will not forsake those who are just (Ps 37:28)

Justice because God guards the path of those who are just (Prov 2:7-8)

Justice because of being the type of fasting that God desires (Isa 58:6-11)

##### *Judgment comes to all (13-14)*

A judgment that will bring everything to light (1 Cor 4:5)

A judgment that judges men's secrets (Rom 2:16)

A judgment of the nations (Matt 25:31-33)

A judgment entrusted to Jesus by God (John 5:21-22)

A judgment that all will stand before (Rom 14:10)

A judgment that judges what was done in the body (2 Cor 5:10)

A judgment that is destined for man (Heb 9:27)

### CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

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## Lesson Background and Key Verse

### Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Some of the most disheartening, even frightening, times in life are those when we come face-to-face with the negative consequences of our poor decisions. Perhaps you can remember an instance in school when you didn't turn in an assignment on time and ended up severely damaging your grade in that class. Perhaps you even acted surprised when you received the penalty or tried to tell your teacher that it wasn't fair. In situations like this, the lessons we learn often turn out to be very valuable to us later on. And so it was—or should have been—with God's covenant people of the Old Testament era.

The prophet Jeremiah ministered from about 626 to 575 BC. That ministry was to a people—the Judeans—who had disobeyed the Lord on a level far beyond the mundaneness of a late term paper. As a result, serious consequences loomed. God had sent prophet after prophet to warn both kings and commoners of pending destruction. But they didn't listen. They acted as though they had God's favor no matter what; they viewed Jerusalem's temple as a good-luck charm (Jeremiah 7:4). The northern kingdom, Israel, had been taken into captivity by the Assyrians in 722 BC (2 Kings 17:6). A century later, the survival of the southern kingdom of Judah was by no means assured. The Assyrians were still the dominant military and political power in the ancient Near East. King Asnapper (Ashurbanipal) of Assyria died in 627 BC. Although he had been a strong ruler, his death laid bare serious internal weaknesses in Assyria. Disorder and revolt erupted in every part of that empire. Nineveh, the capital city, was destroyed in 612 BC (see the book of Nahum); the last vestiges of Assyrian might were wiped out at the Battle of Carchemish in 605 BC (Jeremiah 46:2). The consequences of Assyria's decline were felt in Judah. After a reign of about 30 years, King Josiah was killed in battle in 609 BC. That happened as he attempted to halt the Egyptian army from aiding the remnants of the Assyrian army (2 Kings 23:29). The Chaldeans (Babylonians) stepped into the power vacuum left by the collapse of Assyria under the Babylonian king Nabopolassar and his son Nebuchadnezzar (reigned 626-605 and 605-562 BC, respectively). The son is also known as Nebuchadnezzar (see 25:1). Chaldea (Babylon) came to dominate much of Assyria's old territory. The last kings of Judah reigned in subservience to the Chaldeans before the final exile of 586 BC (chap. 24, 25). Jeremiah 1:2 places the beginning of Jeremiah's ministry at around 626 BC. The book of Jeremiah preserves a prophetic ministry that took place over the course of the next several decades—through the reigns of five Judean kings and a governor. Jeremiah 21 is a coherent unit. The opening verses set the scene. Pashur and Zephaniah were sent by Judah's final king, Zedekiah, to Jeremiah. Pashur (not the same Pashur as in Jeremiah 20) was a dogged opponent of Jeremiah, even trying to have him executed (see Jeremiah 38:1-4). Zephaniah, a priest (and not to be confused with the prophet of the same name), was not actively hostile to Jeremiah (see 21:1; 29:25-29). The two emissaries intended to enlist Jeremiah's help in order to ensure God's aid against King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (Jeremiah 21:1, 2). King Zedekiah apparently thought that he would be aided by the Egyptians if he rebelled against the Chaldeans (compare 2 Kings 18:21). The situation quickly became desperate when Jerusalem was besieged (25:1, 2).

### Key Verse: Jer 21:12

*O house of David! Thus says the Lord: "Execute judgment in the morning; and deliver him who is plundered Out of the hand of the oppressor, lest My fury go forth like fire And burn so that no one can quench it, Because of the evil of your doings."*

### Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

The opposition of Pashhur (20:1-6) serves as a pivot or bridge in the Book of Jeremiah. Through a series of nine undated prophecies Jeremiah had denounced Judah's sin, threatened judgment, and offered hope if the people would repent. Though opposition had surfaced (11:18-23; 12:6; 15:10; 17:18; 18:19-23), he had not suffered any physical persecution. With the recording of Pashhur's response, however, Jeremiah's book took on a more personal note. His prophecies were now directed against specific individuals and groups, and Judah's hope of repentance was replaced with the certainty of God's judgment. The first group singled out by Jeremiah was the kings—those appointed by God to be shepherds of the flock of Judah (cf. 2:8; 10:21; 23:1-8; Ezek. 34:1-10). Jeremiah first rebuked the wicked kings who had ruled Judah (Jer. 21-22). Then he offered hope in the righteous King who would come to restore Judah (23:1-8). Jeremiah's messages to the wicked kings were arranged in an unusual order. The first king listed was Zedekiah who was the last king chronologically (Jer. 21:1-22:9). The other kings were then arranged chronologically beginning with Shallum (Jehoahaz, 22:10-12), continuing with Jehoiakim (22:13-23), and ending with Coniah (Jehoiachin/Jeconiah, 22:24-30). Why did Jeremiah place Zedekiah out of chronological order,

putting him first and Coniah last? Perhaps for two reasons. First, by discussing Zedekiah at the beginning he was able to put the story of “Pashhur son of Malkijah” (21:1) next to the story of “Pashhur son of Immer” (20:1). The fact that these two individuals had the same name provides continuity. The vindication Jeremiah sought because of Pashhur son of Immer’s ridicule was realized when Pashhur son of Malkijah was sent to Jeremiah to inquire of the Lord. Second, the accounts were arranged so that the prophecy against Coniah would climax God’s judgments against the kings. The line of the wicked kings would be cut off (22:30) because God would raise a righteous Branch to rule the nation (23:1-8). So the arrangement of these prophecies provided both continuity and climax.

**21:1-2.** This message was given some time between 588 B.C. and 586 B.C. **King Zedekiah sent... Pashhur son of Malkijah and... Zephaniah son of Maaseiah** to Jeremiah with a request. Pashhur, one of the king’s officials, later petitioned the king to execute Jeremiah for treason (cf. 38:1-4). Zephaniah succeeded Jehoiada (29:25-26) as a **priest** second in rank to the high priest, Seraiah (52:24). So Zephaniah was the second highest religious leader in Judah. Later, after the fall of Jerusalem (52:24-27), Zephaniah was executed by Nebuchadnezzar. These officials asked Jeremiah to **inquire... of the LORD** regarding Nebuchadnezzar’s attack on Jerusalem. Though Jeremiah was to ask God what the outcome would be, they hoped that God would **perform wonders** as He had done **in times past so that Nebuchadnezzar would withdraw**. Probably Zedekiah and his advisers were thinking of King Hezekiah’s day when the Assyrians had threatened Jerusalem (2 Kings 18:17-19:37; Isa. 36-37). Hezekiah responded to the crisis by sending his chief political and religious advisers to the Prophet Isaiah to ask for his intervention (Isa. 37:2-4). No doubt Zedekiah hoped that God’s answer would be similar to that given by Isaiah (Isa. 37:5-7).

**21:3-7.** Unfortunately for **Zedekiah**, Jeremiah’s message was one he did *not* wish to hear. Instead of rescuing Jerusalem, **God** would **turn against her the very weapons of war** she had **in her hands**. The armies **outside the wall** who were **besieging** the city would be gathered by God **inside the city**. Their siege would be successful. Rather than being Jerusalem’s Deliverer, God would **fight against her with His own outstretched hand**. Those who were huddled for protection in the **city** would **die of a terrible plague**—one of the worst fears of a city under siege (cf. 14:12). Those who managed to **survive** the siege would not rejoice because God would **hand them over to Nebuchadnezzar**. They could expect **no mercy or pity or compassion** for he would kill them. This was fulfilled in 586 B.C. after the city fell. King Zedekiah was blinded and taken in chains to Babylon (39:5-7). The other leaders of the city were captured and sent to Riblah where they were executed (52:24-27).

**21:8-10.** The people had two clear choices: **the way of life and the way of death**. The “way of death” was selected by those who chose to remain **in the city**. They would die. The “way of life” was selected by those who deserted (surrendered) to the enemy besieging Jerusalem. This was the only hope for those still in the **city** because God had **determined** to harm Jerusalem by letting it fall to **Babylon**. The response to this message from Jeremiah is in 38:1-4.

**21:11-14.** Jeremiah again singled out **the royal house of Judah** and focused on their sin. The king was supposed to **administer justice** and to uphold the rights of those who were oppressed. Since he refused to heed God’s warning, God’s **wrath** would **burn like** an unquenchable **fire** (cf. 4:4; 17:4). Evidently the king saw no need to obey God’s injunction. He felt so secure in his well-protected city that he boasted, **Who can enter our refuge?** Because of this proud self-reliance, coupled with sinful disobedience, God would **punish** the king and his people. God’s **fire** (cf. 21:12) of judgment would **consume everything around** them.

## Major Theme Analysis

*(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)*

### **Surrender and Survive (Jer 21:8-10)**

8 "Now you shall say to this people, "Thus says the Lord: "Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death.

9 He who remains in this city shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence; but he who goes out and defects to the Chaldeans who besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be as a prize to him.

10 For I have set My face against this city for adversity and not for good," says the Lord. "It shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire."

## **Choose life or death (8)**

*Choose life or death for blessings or wrath (Deut 30:15-19)*

15 See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. 16 For I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in his ways, 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. 17 But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, 18 I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. 19 This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live

*Choose to be a slave of sin or righteousness (Rom 6:16-18)*

16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey — whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. 18 You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

*Choose to be obedient or disobedience (Josh 1:7)*

7 Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go.

*Choose life or death based on whom you will serve (Josh 24:15)*

15 But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."

*Choose to be focused on God not our desires (Prov 4:25-27)*

25 Let your eyes look straight ahead, fix your gaze directly before you. 26 Make level paths for your feet and take only ways that are firm. 27 Do not swerve to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.

*Choose to resist or yield to Satan (1 Peter 5:8-9)*

8 Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

## **Life through submission (9)**

*Submit so that there can be life and peace (Rom 8:5-7)*

5 Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. 6 The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; 7 the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

*Submit so that Satan will flee (James 4:7)*

7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

*Submit because someday all will confess and know Jesus is Lord (Rom 14:11-12)*

11 It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.'" 12 So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

*Submit out of reverence (Eph 5:21)*

21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

*Submit with all our soul and spirit (Heb 12:9)*

9 Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live!

*Submit so that He will lift us up (James 4:10)*

10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

### **Death through God's wrath (10)**

*Death through wrath because it is the punishment for wickedness (Rom 1:18)*

18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness,

*Death through wrath because of stubbornness and unrepentant hearts (Rom 2:5)*

5 But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.

*Death through wrath because of disobedience (Eph 5:6)*

6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient.

*Death through wrath because of a sinful and earthly nature (Col 3:5-6)*

5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.

*Death through wrath because of God's judgment (2 Peter 2:4, 9)*

4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment; 9 if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.

*Death through wrath because of falling into God's hands (Heb 10:31)*

31 It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

*Death through wrath because it is consuming (Heb 10:26-27)*

26 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, 27 but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.

### **Justice or Judgment (Jer 21:11-14)**

11 "And concerning the house of the king of Judah, say, 'Hear the word of the Lord,

12 O house of David! Thus says the Lord: "Execute judgment in the morning; And deliver him who is plundered Out of the hand of the oppressor, Lest My fury go forth like fire And burn so that no one can quench it, Because of the evil of your doings.

13 "Behold, I am against you, O inhabitant of the valley, And rock of the plain," says the Lord, "Who say, 'Who shall come down against us? Or who shall enter our dwellings?'

14 But I will punish you according to the fruit of your doings," says the Lord; "I will kindle a fire in its forest, And it shall devour all things around it.'"

### **God demand justice (11-12)**

*Justice that comes from righteous wisdom (Ps 37:30)*

30 The mouth of the righteous man utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks what is just.

*Justice that comes from doing right (Prov 21:3)*

3 To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.

*Justice because God loves it (Ps 99:4)*

4 The King is mighty, he loves justice — you have established equity; in Jacob you have done what is just and right.

*Justice by living a clean life and not doing wrong (Isa 1:16-17)*

16 wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, 17 learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.

*Justice because God will not forsake those who are just (Ps 37:28)*

28 For the Lord loves the just and will not forsake his faithful ones. They will be protected forever, but the offspring of the wicked will be cut off;

*Justice because God guards the path of those who are just (Prov 2:7-8)*

7 He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, 8 for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones.

*Justice because of being the type of fasting that God desires (Isa 58:6-11)*

6 "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? 7 Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter — when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? 8 Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. 9 Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. "If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, 10 and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. 11 The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.

## **Judgment comes to all (13-14)**

*A judgment that will bring everything to light (1 Cor 4:5)*

5 Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.

*A judgment that judges men's secrets (Rom 2:16)*

16 This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.

*A judgment of the nations (Matt 25:31-33)*

31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

*A judgment entrusted to Jesus by God (John 5:21-22)*

21 For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. 22 Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son,

*A judgment that all will stand before (Rom 14:10)*

10 You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat.

*A judgment that judges what was done in the body (2 Cor 5:10)*

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

*A judgment that is destined for man (Heb 9:27)*

27 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,

## Conclusion and Other Thoughts

### Commentary Thoughts from Thomas Constable

#### Verse 1

This is a message that Yahweh gave Jeremiah after King Zedekiah sent messengers to him with a question. The messengers were Pashhur (cf. Jeremiah 38:1-13; 1 Chronicles 9:21; not the man in charge of preserving order in the temple courtyard mentioned in Jeremiah 20:1-6) and Zephaniah, a leading priest (cf. Jeremiah 29:25-26; Jeremiah 29:29; Jeremiah 37:3; Jeremiah 52:24; 2 Kings 25:18-21).

#### Zedekiah's request and Jeremiah's response (21:1-10)

This passage probably dates from the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem in 588-586 B.C. (Jeremiah 21:2; Jeremiah 21:4; cf. 2 Kings 25). King Zedekiah sought advice from Jeremiah more than once (cf. Jeremiah 37:3-10; Jeremiah 37:17-21; Jeremiah 38:14-28). This passage consists of two oracles (Jeremiah 21:1-10).

#### Verse 2

Zedekiah asked Jeremiah to inquire of the Lord whether He would give Judah deliverance from Nebuchadnezzar as He had delivered His people in the past. King Hezekiah had sent a similar group to Isaiah inquiring about the approaching Assyrian army (2 Kings 19:2; Isaiah 37:2). Nebuchadnezzar, sometimes referred to as Nebuchadrezzar (the spelling nearer to the Babylonian form of his name), ruled Babylon from 605 to 562 B.C. He succeeded his father, Nabopolassar, the first king of the Neo-Babylonian empire, who ruled from 626 to 605 B.C. This is the first reference to Nebuchadnezzar in Jeremiah.

Zedekiah may have been hoping for a miraculous deliverance such as Jehoshaphat experienced from the Moabites, Ammonites, and Meunites (2 Chronicles 20). Hezekiah had also experienced supernatural deliverance when Sennacherib besieged Jerusalem (2 Kings 19; Isaiah 37).

#### Verse 3-4

Jeremiah sent a message from the Lord back to the king through his messengers. The weapons of the defenders of Jerusalem would be ineffective. The Chaldean soldiers who were then besieging the city's walls would penetrate it and enter the center of Jerusalem.

"The Babylonians (Chaldeans) were originally a seminomadic tribe living between northern Arabia and the Persian Gulf. In the tenth century B.C., the Assyrians gave the name *Kaldu* to the area formerly known as the "Sea-Land" [i.e., Mesopotamia]... Later, "Chaldea" was used to include Babylonia as a whole (cf. Ezekiel 23:23; Daniel 3:8)." [Note: Feinberg, p507. See also The New Bible Dictionary, 1962ed, s.v. "Chaldaeae, Chaldeans," by D. J. Wiseman.]

#### Verse 5-6

The Lord promised that not only the Babylonians but Hebrews, too, would fight against the city. He would bring His strong arm against Jerusalem in anger and would strike down its inhabitants (cf. Deuteronomy 4:34; et al.). Normally the Divine Warrior fought *for* His people, but now He would fight *against* them. Humans and animals would die from the sword and from diseases, a curse for breaking covenant (cf. Jeremiah 14:12; Jeremiah 32:24; Exodus 5:3; Exodus 9:15; Numbers 14:12).

### **Verse 7**

Nebuchadnezzar would also slay King Zedekiah, his servants, and the people who survived the war and its accompanying horrors. The Babylonian king would show no mercy or compassion. Zedekiah did indeed die in Babylon, some time after the Babylonians killed his sons as he watched, and then blinded him ( Jeremiah 34:4; Jeremiah 52:11; 2 Kings 25:6-7; Ezekiel 12:13).

Jeremiah directed this second oracle against the people of Jerusalem.

### **Verse 8**

The prophet also received another message from the Lord. Yahweh was going to give the people the choice of living or dying (cf. Deuteronomy 30:15; Deuteronomy 30:19; Matthew 7:13-14).

### **Verse 9**

If the residents of Jerusalem stayed in the city and resisted the enemy, they would die. But if they surrendered to the Babylonians, they would live.

### **Verse 10**

The Lord's purpose for the city was firm: He would turn it over to the Babylonian army to destroy it by fire. This was something the people could not change by their actions or their prayers.

### **Verse 11**

#### **Messages about the duties of the kings of Judah (21:11-22:9)**

This group of prophecies begins and ends with oracles concerning the kings' duties (Jeremiah 21:11-12; Jeremiah 22:1-9). In the middle is an oracle against Jerusalem (Jeremiah 21:13-14).

#### **Verse 11-12**

Jeremiah was to tell the king of Judah and his administrators to be careful to dispense justice every day, particularly with the poor and powerless. If they did not, the Lord's wrath would burn against them as an inextinguishable fire (cf. Jeremiah 4:4; Jeremiah 17:4; Jeremiah 17:27; Jeremiah 21:12; Jeremiah 21:14; Jeremiah 43:12; Jeremiah 49:27). Normally court convened in the morning to avoid the heat of the day (cf. 2 Samuel 4:5).

"The administration of justice was one of the main duties of kings all over the Near East. The king was the guardian of justice [cf. 2 Samuel 15:4; 1 Kings 3:9; 1 Kings 3:16-28; 1 Kings 8:32]." [Note: Thompson, pp470-71.]

The Lord also sent a message to the residents of Jerusalem.

### **Verse 13**

Yahweh was against the people who lived in Jerusalem. Jerusalem stood enthroned on a hilltop, with valleys on three of its sides (cf. Psalm 125:2; Isaiah 22:1). It stood on a rocky plateau of sorts. Jerusalem's physical location had led its inhabitants to feel secure.

### **Verse 14**

Nevertheless, the Lord promised to punish the residents for their evil deeds (cf. Jeremiah 21:5). He would kindle a fire in its forest, perhaps a reference to the House of the Forest of Lebanon, one of the palace complex buildings (1 Kings 7:2). The fire would spread to other buildings in Jerusalem.

"Not only will the Divine Warrior fight against them, but also their Dwelling Place will destroy their dwelling places!" [Note: Drinkard, p294.]

"All her surroundings, how much more than the city itself!" [Note: Keil, 1:332.]

The subject of the next oracle Isaiah, again, a Davidic king of Judah, but which one is unknown.

*(Adapted from URL: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/dcc/jeremiah-21.html>)*

### ***Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary***

Today's lesson brings us to one of the most somber moments in the history of God's dealings with His covenant people. Jerusalem was beyond the point of repentance. The people's trust in their own wisdom meant death. Whether or not we are immunized against such a mind-set depends on whether we are willing to learn from history. And we realize that the grace of God may come to us in the mere fact that we avoided the worst possible outcome of a bad decision or a bad pattern of living. "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God" (Romans 11:22). May we, unlike the people of Jeremiah's day, repent while there is time.

### ***Concluding Thoughts from the Echoes Commentary***

The Message - Jeremiah declared God's Word to Judah for about 40 years. The Lord called this prophet as a young man and told him that the message he would give from God would be rejected. And that's what happened. When Jeremiah spoke, the people closed their ears and stubbornly refused to listen. One entire book in the Bible (Lamentations) expresses Jeremiah's heartbreak over the destruction that God's people received because they defiantly rebelled against Him. Jeremiah warned what would happen to Jerusalem if the people did not repent and practice justice. King Zedekiah and the other leaders refused to believe God's message, but the prophet continued to warn them. He begged them to surrender to the Babylonian enemy and live—that was God's desire—but they labeled him a traitor. He warned them that their ungodly, idolatrous behavior would bring God's judgment upon the nation. God firmly stood against those arrogant people who said, "We are safe because we live in God's holy city. Nothing can happen to us here."

The Outcome - God's judgment is seen throughout Scripture coming to those who disobey Him and refuse to repent. Many today want to talk exclusively about God's love and forgiveness saving everyone, the believer in Christ and the unbeliever alike. This is not what God's Word teaches. Those who ignore God or believe they will be fine at the end because they are "good people" will experience God's judgment. People want a god who comes in times of trouble to help them, but they are not interested in following Him throughout their lives. God wants to have a relationship with us; He is not our genie for erasing challenging times.