

Life Lesson 104
Jeremiah and Lamentations
Text: Jeremiah and Lamentations

Introduction

Being a prophet wasn't an easy job! Today we will learn about the prophet known as the Weeping Prophet – Jeremiah.

The Story

No wonder Jeremiah was known for being sad. He lived during a terrible, sad time. He was the prophet for King Josiah first. He must have been encouraged during that time as King Josiah rid the nation of idols. Josiah also rebuilt the temple and read God's word to the people. When Josiah was killed in battle, Jeremiah wrote a "lament" or sad poem about him.

The other kings Jeremiah served were bad ones -- bad enough to make the weeping prophet truly feel like crying. They were Jehoahaz, Jehoikim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah.

We learned from our study of the kings that God will always judge sin. God's people followed their wicked kings in evil doings. Jeremiah had the sad job of preaching to them and warning them to turn from their wicked ways. It was especially sad because the people wouldn't listen, but kept on the path of destruction.

Can you imagine how hard it would be to be the only one standing for right? Is it ever hard for you to stand alone? Think of how Jeremiah must have felt as he kept on, year after year, preaching and warning the people – always persecuted or ignored.

Jeremiah kept telling the people that God would give them up to the Babylonians for judgment. The kings didn't want to hear that at all. They called Jeremiah a traitor for saying their enemies would conquer them.

Once Jeremiah was accused of treason and one of the king's officers threw him into prison. After a while the king called him out.

"Is there any word from the Lord?" King Zedekiah asked.

"Yes," Jeremiah replied. "You will be handed over to the king of Babylon."

Even after a long time in prison, he still refused to lie. He said what the Lord told him to say.

"Please don't send me back to that prison," Jeremiah begged the king. "If you do, I'll die there."

The king relented and allowed him to be kept prisoner in a courtyard of the palace. The king even made provision for him to have bread to eat as long as there was bread in the city. There Jeremiah kept on telling the people that judgment was coming, and pleading with them to repent.

"This man is discouraging us," the officials said to the king. "He should be put to death."

\ "Do what you want with him," King Zedekiah said.

So they took Jeremiah and threw him into a cistern, which is a pit for collecting water. There was no water at that time, only lots of mud. They put him in the pit and he sank down deep into the mire.

What a terrible place to be! How would you like to have to live in a wet, muddy hole? Still Jeremiah wouldn't take back his words.

One of the officials heard about Jeremiah's plight and asked the king to get him out. Ebed-Melech pled for Jeremiah's life.

The king agreed to let Ebed-Melech get Jeremiah out of the cistern before he died.

Once more Zedekiah called Jeremiah to him secretly.

"I want you to tell me what is going to happen," the king told him.

"If I tell you, you'll kill me. You won't listen, anyway," Jeremiah replied.

"I promise not to kill you," Zedekiah said.

"If you surrender to the Babylonians, they will not kill you. The city will not be burned down and you family will live. If you don't surrender, the city will fall to the Babylonians. It will be burned down and you and your family will be killed," Jeremiah said.

"But they might torture me if I give myself up to them," Zedekiah said.

"They won't," Jeremiah replied. "Obey the Lord and He will spare your life. If you don't obey him, you will die."

Zedekiah wouldn't obey and it happened just as Jeremiah had foretold. The Babylonians captured the city and burned it down. Zedekiah and all his family were killed.

Jeremiah escaped with his life, but the rest of his life was sad, too. Even the few people who were left wouldn't be true to the Lord.

What a sad life the weeping prophet had!

Besides the book of Jeremiah, he also wrote “Lamentations.” The name of book means “crying” or “sad words.” Even though it is a sad book, though, Jeremiah still had encouraging, hopeful things to say. In chapter 3, he wrote, “It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning. Great is thy faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul. Therefore will I hope in him.”

The Life Lesson

Jeremiah is a wonderful example to us of a true hero. He never backed down, but still kept preaching the truth, even though he endured prison and torture for his stand. Most of all, we see that he trusted in God and his faith didn’t waver.

Review Questions

What was Jeremiah's nickname?

The Weeping Prophet

Why was Jeremiah so sad?

Because the people were wicked and wouldn't listen to his warnings.

What happened to Jeremiah because he refused to lie to the king?

He was thrown in a pit and had to live in the mud.

What did Jeremiah tell King Zedekiah to do when the Babylonians came?

Surrender. Then he and his family would not be killed and the city wouldn't be burned.

Did Zedekiah surrender?

No.

What happened when the Babylonians attacked?

Just as Jeremiah had foretold, they killed the king and his family and destroyed the city.

What other book of the Bible did Jeremiah write?

Lamentations

What does "lamentations" mean?

"Crying" or "sad words."

Why was Jeremiah a true hero?

Because he wouldn't lie or back down, no matter what happened to him.