

## Lesson 7: Jeremiah: A Warning Bell

### AIM:

**General:** 1) To introduce the prophet Jeremiah as- i) a man sent to warn the nation of the approaching storm ii) a man who faced persecution and inner turmoil as a result of his prophesying.

2) To show how God offered a last chance to the people, but was ignored;

3) To briefly describe how 'the storm broke'. Judah fell to the Babylonians, the temple was destroyed and the people were taken into exile.

**Personal:** To help the children realise the serious effect of sin; and that they need to change their lives now and not postpone it.

**Texts:** Jeremiah 25: 32 - 38; 26: 1 - 16; 39: 1 - 10

### STARTER: [10 mins]

(Before the class, secretly ask a few children (rowdy ones) to create a noise in the class. Ask one to look out and shout a warning to the class- "Miss is coming!" Instruct them to ignore the warning, and carry on making a noise.) When you enter the class-

⇒ What a terrible noise! You all deserve to be punished. Don't you think so?... When people misbehave shouldn't they be punished?

⇒ But before I punish you, I want to ask one question- I think one of the students saw me coming and warned you. How is it that you didn't stop your misbehaviour ?

(Bring out:- You may not have believed I was coming... OR you didn't think you would get punished... OR you just didn't bother to listen.

Actually this behaviour was planned by us, because of today's lesson. Today we are going to meet a new prophet- Jeremiah, [Write JEREMIAH on black-board] who was like (name of child who warned the class). He was sent by God to warn the people of disaster... like a fire-alarm bell that is rung... Let's see if the people listened to his message or if they ignored his warning.

### INPUT: [20 mins]

Let's look at Jeremiah first. He was a prophet in the southern kingdom of Judah. He was called by God at a young age to be His spokesman. He was a very sensitive person and suffered a lot from the people. Can anyone tell me of one time that Jeremiah suffered? [He was thrown into a well and sank into the wet mud... later he was rescued by a good man. ]

Lets read what he said to the people- Read Jeremiah 25 : 32 - 38

⇒ Can anyone explain what this storm meant? [Attack and defeat by enemies]

⇒ Why did God warn the people? Why didn't He just prevent the disaster?

[Let the students discuss in pairs for 2 minutes and then share their ideas. Bring out- ]

When we sin, we are taking ourselves out of God's circle of love and protection. We are saying- 'I don't want you!' to God. It is not God who has withdrawn his help, but we who have gone away from Him. God insists on giving us a free will- He will not force us to return. So it is up to us to turn to Him and say- 'Save me, Lord (The next chapter shows clearly that God is not just telling them what is going to happen, but He is asking them to change their evil ways-)

*Read 26: 1 - 16* [This passage could be read in parts- one group narrating: one reading God's words: (verse 2-6) and one reading Jeremiah's speech (verses 12 – 15)]

Let's see what happened finally...did the 'storm' come or did the people listen to Jeremiah and repent?

*Read 39: 1 - 10*

So finally, the day of doom arrived- to this day, Jews mourn that day when Solomon's temple was destroyed along with the city of Jerusalem. The king was dethroned and the people were taken away in chains to Babylon.

**PRAYER:** [10mins]

(Play the song 'By the Rivers of Babylon' (Boney-M) or ask someone to play and sing it for them. Close your eyes and listen to this song sung by the Jewish prisoners in Babylon. It is taken from Psalm 137. Imagine you are one of these captives- your life is so completely changed now... what do you feel? What do you feel like telling God?

Now think of your own life... disaster has not yet come... there is still hope for you... think of all the ways in which you have turned away from God and refuse to be with Him...

Write a prayer letter to God very quietly... this is between you and God and no-one else is going to read it. (Let the music carry on playing while the children write)

**ACTIVITY:** [10mins] (There are 3 suggestions for the activity- Choose one)

1. The students fill up their Prophet frieze writing in their own words what Jeremiah's message was. (This could be done at home)
2. They could learn the song and make up a dance to it as it is sung- dramatisation.
3. Groups could plan and act the story of Jeremiah's warning, the destruction of Jerusalem and the prisoners being taken into exile. One person should narrate the story, while the rest of the members 'mime ' or just form a tableau i.e. scene with no movements. As the story progresses they all change their positions together and form the next scene.