

Exposition of Jeremiah - Lesson 46

“A Prophecy of Judgment Upon Egypt”

By:

Dr. Troy S. Welch, Pastor - Teacher
Spheres of Grace Ministries, Inc.
6809 E Hudlow Road
Hayden, ID 83835
(805) 701-6643

Applicational Text: I Peter 4:17 *For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?*

Expositional Text: Jeremiah 46:1 *The word of the LORD which came to Jeremiah the prophet against the Gentiles;*

Introduction:

The intent of our study of the Book of Jeremiah has been for us to see the righteousness of God in His dealings with His people. His premise is grace but frequently His instrument is discipline. We have seen God's grace abused, His commandments violated, and His principles compromised. We have seen His discipline of the Children of Israel ignored through four increasing degrees of pain, loss, and suffering. Finally, we have seen Him invoke the fifth cycle of discipline by forcing His people out of the land. Although the title to the land is perpetual, the occupation of it is conditional. So, God enlisted the assistance of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon as His agent to remove the Children of Israel from the land and take them to Babylon for a seventy-year period of exile.

Yes! There were other nations that were more immoral and more anti-God than Israel, Babylon one of the worst, but God was dealing with His own people first, then He would deal with the others. Our Applicational Text is **I Peter 4:17** which says, *For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?* Both discipline and judgment begin at the House of God.

Our Expositional Text, **Jeremiah 46:1** *The word of the LORD which came to Jeremiah the prophet against the Gentiles;* introduces this section of the Book of Jeremiah which records the Prophets pronouncement of judgment against the Gentile nations. Chapter forty-six records the judgments against Egypt. Chapter forty-seven records judgments against the Philistines and the Phoenicians. Chapter forty-eight records judgments against Moab. Chapter forty-nine verses one through six records judgments against Ammon. Chapter forty-nine verses seven through twenty-seven records judgment against Edom. Chapter forty-nine verses twenty-eight through thirty-three records judgments against Kedar and Hazor. Chapter forty-nine verses thirty-four through thirty-nine record judgments against Elam. Chapters fifty and fifty-one record judgments against Babylon. Then, Chapter fifty-two is an addendum to the Book.

Like much of Bible Prophecy there is both a near and a far fulfillment of these prophecies, that is, these prophecies had a partial fulfillment in Jeremiah's day, but we see their final judgment coming at the second advent of Christ, when He comes to establish His millennial kingdom. Christ will judge the nations and eliminate all unbelievers as He sets up His temporary kingdom of a thousand years, as introduced in

Matthew 25:31-33 ³¹*When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:* ³²*And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:* ³³*And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.*

At the end of the thousand-year Millennial Age, He will end time, destroy this present earth, and bring the new heaven and new earth into existence

Up to this point in our study of the Book of Jeremiah we have seen God's judgment of the Children of Israel because of their long years of disobedience and idolatry. He offered grace, grace, and more grace, but they rejected all opportunities to repent and had been taken into captivity, now God deals with the Gentile nations. The word "*gentiles*" refers to anyone other than the descendants of Abraham through Issac, and Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel.

Let's look at it...

I. Prophetic Judgment Against Egypt:

Having gotten His own house under discipline, God here addresses those who have victimized His People and He begins with the Egyptians.

He begins by reminding Egypt of past judgments and then presents His prophesy as to what is ahead for them.

The Egyptians were a tribe of people that descended from Mizraim, a son of Ham who was one of the three sons of Noah. The name Mizraim was the original name given to Egypt in the Bible. As we noted in our earlier study of this book of Jeremiah, although God had raised up Moses to deliver the Children of Israel out of Egypt after some four hundred years of bondage to them, they seemed to have a repeated desire to go back to Egypt. Abraham had his weakness for Egypt, and through biblical history the Children of Israel had that propensity to return to Egypt. That propensity is a graphic illustration of the believer's desire to return to the old life of sin even though we have been freed from the bondage of sin and death.

The foundation for God's dealings with Egypt is described in verse 2 where He reminds them of the past before informing them of the future.

Jeremiah 46:2 *Against Egypt, against the army of Pharaoh necho king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates in Carchemish, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon smote in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah.*

Egypt is mocked by God for their dependency upon themselves. The setting for their judgment is the famous battle of Carchemish in 605 BC. It was a battle between Egypt who had aligned with what was left of the Assyrian forces and Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian/Chaldean forces. It was one of the most notable battles in world history and took place in Carchemish which was on the west bank of the Euphrates River, on the border between Syria and Turkey about 35 miles southeast of Gaziantep Turkey. Seven years prior to that battle the Babylonians had overthrown Ninevah the capital of Assyria and the Assyrians had moved their Capital to Harran (Turkey) but the Babylonians captured Harran in 608 BC so what was left of the Assyrian forces had established Carchemish as their capital city and it was now under threat by the Babylonians so Pharaoh-Necho of Egypt went to the defense of the Assyrians.

However, (Yes, another pesky “however”) The Egyptians had to cross through Judah and king Josiah went out to do battle with him. The Egyptian Pharaoh tried to dissuade King Josiah and simply allow them to pass through, but Josiah was determined, and in the battle, good king Josiah was struck by an arrow inflicting a mortal wound and he died.

In addition to being delayed by Josiah, Pharaoh Necho was further delayed at Riblah and arrived at Carchemish too late to defend the Assyrian capital; the Babylonians had surprised the Assyrians with an early attack and captured the city. Upon the late arrival of the Egyptians, the Babylonians turned on them and thoroughly defeated the Egyptian forces. At the end of the battle the mighty Egyptian forces had been reduced to a second-rate power and that was also the end of the Assyrian empire.

Listen to the mockery of God of the Egyptians as they set out for the battle at Carchemish...

Jeremiah 46:3-4 ³ *Order ye the buckler and shield, and draw near to battle.* ⁴ *Harness the horses; and get up, ye horsemen, and stand forth with your helmets; furbish the spears, and put on the brigandines.*

The Egyptian Army was a sight to behold with their lavishly harnessed horses, their flashy calvary uniforms and weapons. They are mockingly commanded to ***“order ye the buckler and shield.”*** That is, the Lord mockingly taunts them to properly organize and arrange their ***“buckler,”*** a reference to the small shield that was worn on their arm for defense, while the word ***“shield”*** refers to the much larger shield they could fight from behind. This often required a “shield bearer” and as we shall see in the text the Egyptians had enlisted mercenaries from Ethiopia and Libya as shield bearers, and they had also enlisted Lydians as mercenary archers. (***brigandines*** are coats of mail)

The Lord is mocking them for their lavish display as He then views them in battle...

Jeremiah 46:5-6 ⁵ *Wherefore have I seen them dismayed and turned away back? and their mighty ones are beaten down, and are fled apace, and look not back: for fear was round about, saith the LORD.* ⁶ *Let not the swift flee away, nor the mighty man escape; they shall stumble, and fall toward the north by the river Euphrates.*

He describes their retreat but instructs the Babylonians, *Let not the swift flee away, nor the mighty man escape; they shall stumble, and fall toward the north by the river Euphrates.* They will stumble and fall toward the north – that’s where the Babylonians are positioned, they will stumble and fall into the hands of the enemy.

Then the Lord mocks them even more...

Jeremiah 46:7-9 ⁷ *Who is this that cometh up as a flood, whose waters are moved as the rivers?* ⁸ *Egypt riseth up like a flood, and his waters are moved like the rivers; and he saith, I will go up, and will cover the earth; I will destroy the city and the inhabitants thereof.* ⁹ *Come up, ye horses; and rage, ye chariots; and let the mighty men come forth; the Ethiopians and the Libyans, that handle the shield; and the Lydians, that handle and bend the bow.*

Ah, the Lord chides them for not being content with their own land but they now appear in their march like a river that overflows its banks. Egypt had great aspirations to be the military might of the east, but they are about to meet up with the judgment of God.

II. A Day of Vengeance With The Lord of Hosts:

Jeremiah 46:10: *For this is the day of the Lord GOD of hosts, a day of vengeance, that he may avenge him of his adversaries: and the sword shall devour, and it shall be satiate and made drunk with their blood: for the Lord GOD of hosts hath a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates.*

The Egyptians had been allowed by God to have their way with the God’s people. God allowed them to afflict the Children of Israel as a part of His discipline. But, they are told here their day of judgment is coming and the Lord advises them to prepare in vain for the judgment that is coming.

Jeremiah 46:11-12 ¹¹ *Go up into Gilead, and take balm, O virgin, the daughter of Egypt: in vain shalt thou use many medicines; for thou shalt not be cured.* ¹² *The nations have heard of thy shame, and thy cry hath filled the land: for the mighty man hath stumbled against the mighty, and they are fallen both together.*

The battle of Carchemish had not taken place in the land of Egypt but in the capital of Assyria, but now the Lord reveals that Nebuchadnezzar will bring his forces to Egypt and smite the land of Egypt...

You may recall that in our study of Jeremiah chapter forty-four, after the remnant of the Jews had fled to Egypt and took Jeremiah with them, Jeremiah set up some building stones

in the brickkiln near the Pharaoh's home at Tahpanhes, and he prophesied that they had not escaped the Babylonians, that Nebuchadnezzar was going to invade Egypt and set up his headquarters on those building stones. This passage documents that future event.

Jeremiah 46:13-14 ¹³ *The word that the LORD spake to Jeremiah the prophet, how Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon should come and smite the land of Egypt.* ¹⁴ *Declare ye in Egypt, and publish in Migdol, and publish in Noph and in Tahpanhes: say ye, Stand fast, and prepare thee; for the sword shall devour round about thee.*

When men choose to disobey God and attempt to elevate themselves contrary to His direction, it can be devastating. We are to be reminded that God has a plan for mankind. He has given us free will but has established the bounds and consequences of our choices. His Righteousness demands a penalty for bad choices, but His Love has provided a grace remedy through which He pays the expense and provides the opportunity for us to accept or reject His plan. It is the arrogance of man that motivates him to reject that plan and do his own thing. Pharaoh discovered he was but a hollow noise when he rejected God's plan.

The Egyptians ran from their defeat back to Egypt, but they did not repent.

Jeremiah 46:15-17 ¹⁵ *Why are thy valiant men swept away? they stood not, because the LORD did drive them.* ¹⁶ *He made many to fall, yea, one fell upon another: and they said, Arise, and let us go again to our own people, and to the land of our nativity, from the oppressing sword.* ¹⁷ *They did cry there, Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise; he hath passed the time appointed.*

The remnant of the Children of Israel who rejected God's instruction to stay in the land and instead fled to Egypt are going to be caught up in this judgment. The Lord affirms by His own creation that judgment is coming.

Jeremiah 46:18-19 ¹⁸ *As I live, saith the King, whose name is the LORD of hosts, Surely as Tabor is among the mountains, and as Carmel by the sea, so shall he come.* ¹⁹ *O thou daughter dwelling in Egypt, furnish thyself to go into captivity: for Noph shall be waste and desolate without an inhabitant.*

Today there is a denial of God, a denial of a creator, a denial of His Word. We would do well to listen to Him and know what He has planned He will perform. It is not where we are, or who we are with, but whether we are obedient in being where we are that is the issue. Bad choices are seldom related to geography or activity; bad choices always relate to obedience or disobedience. Israel had been told to surrender to the Babylonians; this remnant had refused. Then, God in His Grace had re-instructed them, *"Stay in the Land as a remnant"* But again they refused. But for the grace of God they would have died in Judah for not surrendering to Nebuchadnezzar. But, by the Grace of God they were offered another opportunity. Now, their opportunities had run out and they would die with the Pharaoh and the Egyptians in Egypt. They, like the Pharaoh, *"...hath passed the time appointed..."* The Children of Israel had run out of time; Grace has its boundaries. They had placed their hope in Egypt and Judgment was coming.

Jeremiah 46:20-21 ²⁰ *Egypt is like a very fair heifer, but destruction cometh; it cometh out of the north.* ²¹ *Also her hired men* (the mercenaries from Ethiopia, Libya, and Lyddia) *are in the midst of her like fatted bullocks; for they also are turned back, and are fled away together: they did not stand, because the day of their calamity was come upon them, and the time of their visitation.*

Hierlings have no allegiance. The mercenaries that Egypt had hired pledged no allegiance to a cause or to a principal. They hired on for one thing, money. If that money is unavailable, then neither are they. There were too many hierlings on Israel's clergy rolls. Their clergy (the priests) were born into their position instead of having a calling and the only thing that redeemed them from time to time were the prophets that God raised up. Jeremiah warns them Judgment is coming and the mercenaries like serpents will slither away "...*The voice thereof shall go like a serpent;* because Nebuchadnezzar is coming with an army that will leave devastation and death in its path.

Jeremiah 46:22-24 ²² *... for they shall march with an army, and come against her with axes, as hewers of wood.* ²³ *They shall cut down her forest, saith the LORD, though it cannot be searched; because they are more than the grasshoppers, and are innumerable.* ²⁴ *The daughter of Egypt shall be confounded; she shall be delivered into the hand of the people of the north.*

III. Let There Be No Doubt of the Source of Judgment:

Circumstances get a lot of credit for things that go well, and circumstances get a lot of blame for things that go bad. But forget not that God is the author of circumstances. Oh, Yes! A lot of our circumstances are the result of cause and effect, but God has established the law of cause and effect and oversees all the circumstances we encounter, He has the power to veto and the power to allow. Nothing happens by chance, it is all monitored by our Creator.

Therefore we need to pay attention to our circumstances every day. God has a purpose and a plan in all that He initiates as well as in all that He allows. Israel is warned to pay attention that it is God that has worked these circumstances in accordance with man's choices. Nebuchadnezzar can take not credit for his military success; he was a pawn in God's hand. Yes, He made the decisions and exercised his freewill, but God controlled the outcome. It is God's judgment that both Egypt and Israel were experiencing.

Jeremiah 46: 25-26 ²⁵ *The LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saith; Behold, I will punish the multitude of No, and Pharaoh, and Egypt, with their gods, and their kings; even Pharaoh, and all them that trust in him:* ²⁶ *And I will deliver them into the hand of those that seek their lives, and into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of his servants: and afterward it shall be inhabited, as in the days of old, saith the LORD.*

God had rendered judgment, and it did happen, but in the midst of Judgment is Grace. Look at that last statement following the colon: *and afterward it shall be inhabited, as in*

the days of old, saith the LORD. Egypt was not annihilated. There is an Egypt today, there will be an Egypt in the Millennial Age – God’s grace is sufficient!

IV. A Promise of Hope During the Unbelief of Israel:

Israel’s name at birth was Jacob. God changed his name to Israel when he became a believer. Israel is going into captivity because of unbelief, God calls them Jacob. There is an interesting play on the name all throughout Scripture and especially here.

Jeremiah 46:27-28: ²⁷ *But fear not thou, O my servant Jacob, and be not dismayed, O Israel: for, behold, I will save thee from afar off, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and be in rest and at ease, and none shall make him afraid.* ²⁸ *Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the LORD: for I am with thee; for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee: but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure; yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished.*

It would take some time to exegete this passage completely but allow me to touch on a few things. First, remember that there is significance in the use of names in the Bible, especially between Jacob and Israel. Note that in this passage the Lord uses both, “...*But fear not thou, O my servant Jacob, and be not dismayed, O Israel:* The reference to Jacob is a reference to their lineage to Abraham and the physical and material blessing and promises to the seed of Abraham. God made a covenant to Abram which related to the land and to material blessings – Jacob is the link to those provisions. But God also included in that covenant provisions related to spiritual things – Israel is the link to those provisions. This promise addresses both the material provisions of the covenant and the spiritual provisions of the covenant.

At the Second Advent Christ (who is in that lineage of Jacob) will sit on the throne of David, part of the material promises to Abraham through Jacob. And, although that age will begin with only believers, those believers who survive the tribulation will remain in their natural bodies and replenish the earth. And, although Satan is bound in the bottomless pit the replenishing of the earth will result in unbelievers, So there will still be believers and unbelievers, so the Lord said, “...*Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the LORD: for I am with thee; for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee: but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure;*

Israel is in the land today, but they are there in unbelief, they have not received Jesus as the Messiah. They should be called Jacob, they are the physical descendants of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob...

There is coming a time when their Messiah will come, He will gather them from all the nations to which they have been dispersed, He will establish His kingdom and will rule over them, and the Abraham covenant, and this prophecy, will be fulfilled. So, He says to them, *fear not thou, O my servant Jacob, and be not dismayed, O Israel: for, behold, I will save thee from afar off, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall*

return, and be in rest and at ease, and none shall make him afraid. Yes! Jesus is coming again!

Conclusion:

I Peter 4:17 says, “...*For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?*”

Just as with Israel, God is preparing the Church for the coming of the Lord. We can see, in the church, a similar pattern with Israel. We in the Church Age have a different relationship with God than did Israel. God sent His Son, they called Him Jesus, He came to seek and save the lost, but Jacob rejected Him. As a result of their rejection of the Messiah, the church was established, while it functions on the earth it is identified as the Body of Christ. However, it is destined to be taken to Heaven where the church becomes the Bride of Christ. Following the rapture of the Church to heaven, 144,000 Jews, from the various tribes of Israel will recognize Christ as the Messiah and their acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah will initiate the final seven years of the Jewish administration. (Their administration was interrupted seven years before it was completed by their rejection of the Messiah according to the Book of Daniel.) During the seven-year period following the rapture of the Church the events that are recorded in Revelation 6-20 occur and then Christ will bring us (the Church) back with Him and established His Millennial Kingdom.

Today it is Jacob that occupies the land of Israel, at the Second Advent it will be Israel with Christ Himself on the throne.

A brief panoramic view of the Church Age is presented in chapters two and three of the Book of Revelation. We are in the last period of the seven periods that are revealed. The Church like Israel professes a belief in God and His Word but has moved farther and farther away from its structure and purpose. The salvation message can still be found in the evangelical church, but the promises, principles and doctrines have become foreign because the mechanics that God established have been ignored. The primary focus of the church today is love and compassion. I wonder how the Judgment and discipline of God exhibited to Israel, as in our study of Jeremiah sits with that. We avoid judgment through salvation, but we open ourselves up to discipline through faulty choices.

Makes one wonder when he reads, *For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?*

But it begins at Salvation:

- *For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God...*
- *The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life...*
- *With the heart man believes unto righteousness...*
- *But with the mouth confession is made unto salvation...*
- *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved!*