

# **Exposition of Jeremiah - Lesson 47**

## ***“A Prophecy of Judgment Upon The Philistines”***

By:

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**Applicational Text: John 3:16** *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.”*

**Expositional Text: Jeremiah 47:6** *O thou sword of the Lord, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest, and be still.*

### **Introduction:**

Our **Expositional Text** from our study passage is **Jeremiah 47:6** and inquires of the sword of the Lord *O thou sword of the Lord, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest, and be still.* This question is a natural response to the devastating destruction and the awesome, almost indescribable pain and suffering that is recorded concerning the judgments of God upon the nations. This consideration becomes even more pressing when we consider spending eternity in “the Lake of Fire and Brimstone.” We declare it must not be literal and attempt to interpret it symbolically or attempt to avoid thinking of it altogether. The awfulness of it is supported in the records of God’s judgment of the gentile nations, in chapter forty-six we saw the prophesy of judgment upon Egypt and here in chapter forty-seven we see the judgment of the Philistines, also identified as the Phoenicians. They probably originated on the Island of Crete and were a “sea going” people, heavily involved in commerce and trading.

As we examine these judgments, let us remember the words of the Psalmist, *“The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.”* (Psalm 19:9). It is only as we understand the amazing grace of God as expressed in our **Applicational Text** found in **John 3:16** *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life,”* that we can reconcile the terror of Judgment with the righteousness of God. God never initiates judgment without first providing for repentance, But, *except ye repent you shall all likewise perish* (Luke 13:3)

Let us bear that in mind as we look at the prophesied judgments of the gentile nations...

## I. The Prophecy of Judgment Against the Philistines:

**Jeremiah 47:1:** *The word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah the prophet against the Philistines, before that Pharaoh smote Gaza.*

Probably the most familiar story relative to the Philistines is the story of David and Goliath. The Philistines had long been an enemy of the Children of Israel. They were descended from one of the three sons of Noah.

The Philistines were an aggressive, war-mongering people that lived in the territory southwest of Israel, on coast of the Mediterranean Sea, along the Gaza Strip. The name “Philistine” comes from the Hebrew word *Philistia*, which in the Greek is the word “*palaistinei*,” our English word “Palestine.”

The first mention of the Philistines in the Bible is in Genesis 10:14, in the genealogy of the patriarchal founders of nations that descended from the three sons of Noah. The Philistines are descendants of Ham. It appears that the Philistines originated in Caphtor which is the Hebrew name for the island of Crete, and the Aegean region and they later migrated to the Mediterranean coast near Gaza because they were a maritime people and were commonly referred to as “The Sea People.”

When God delivered the Children of Israel out of Egypt, He did not take them directly to the “Promised Land,” the direct route would have taken them through the territory of the Philistines, they were not ready for that kind of conflict, so God led Moses to Mount Horeb where they spent a year receiving instruction and training before approaching the promised land from a different direction avoiding any direct conflict with the Philistines at that time.

Genesis 21:32-34, 26:1, 8 indicate that both Abraham and Isaac had contact with them in the early years of God’s covenant with Abraham. The biblical record indicates that during the days of Samuel and Samson, around the 13th century BC, that the Philistines built their civilization primarily in five cities: Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gath, and Ekron (Joshua 13:3). Each of those cities was ruled by a king but they formed a coalition of equals and supported each other when there was a threat. The Philistines were infamous for their production and consumption of alcoholic beverages, especially beer. Ancient Philistine ruins contain numerous breweries and wineries, as well as countless beer mugs and other drinking artifacts. They were known for their innovative use of iron, which was superior to the bronze used by the Israelites for weapons and implements. Even as late as the time of Saul (1050 - 1010 B.C), the Israelites relied on the Philistines to sharpen or repair their iron tools (1 Samuel 13:19-21). With their more advanced armaments and aggressive military policy, the Philistines continually thwarted Israel’s development as a nation. For nearly 200 years, the Philistines harassed and oppressed the Israelites, frequently invading Israel’s territory. They were no match for the Philistines’ overwhelming military might. Reprieve only came when Samuel and then David, by the grace of God, were able to defeat the Philistines. Judges chapter sixteen records the “love-hate” relationship Samson had with them. But it is the story of David and Goliath that reveals the extreme conflict the Children of Israel had with them, and Israel’s ultimate victory over them. Their fascination

with the “Ark of the Covenant” motivated them to capture it, but that didn’t work out to well for them and they soon packed it up and sent it home (I Samuel chapter four). Jeremiah chapter forty-seven contains one of the few prophetic references to the Philistines. In the end, the Philistines were assimilated into Canaanite culture. They eventually disappeared from the biblical record and from history altogether, leaving behind the name “Palestine” as a testimony of their existence and as a thorn in the side of Israel. The present inhabitants in Palestine have no direct line to the Philistines but are a conglomerate of peoples who want the land and the name.

The time of this prophecy is given in the phrase *“before that Pharaoh smote Gaza.”* The pharaoh mentioned here is Pharaoh Necho. Just when he *“smote Gaza”* is uncertain. It is thought to have occurred when he was on his way to Carchemish to assist Assyria in their defense against the Babylonians. In our study of chapter forty-six we saw that he was detained by King Josiah as he passed through Judah and King Josiah was killed in that battle. We also saw that he was farther detained and did not arrive at Carchemish in time to help defend the Assyrians. It is thought that it was on his way to Carchemish or perhaps on his way back to Egypt. The Philistines would be on his travel route either way. Some suggest that the Egyptians were not in any position to smite Gaza after being so defeated by the Babylonians, however others place the defeat of Gaza on that return trip, holding the image of a man having taken a beating and heading back to the house kicks the family dog out of defeat and frustration.

We do know that the judgment pronounced here by the prophet Jeremiah was after Pharaoh Necho *smote Gaza*. The prophecy is the important thing here...

## II. Judgement is Coming, The Babylonians are on their way:

**Jeremiah 47: 2-3:** <sup>2</sup> *Thus saith the Lord; Behold, waters rise up out of the north, and shall be an overflowing flood, and shall overflow the land, and all that is therein; the city, and them that dwell therein: then the men shall cry, and all the inhabitants of the land shall howl.* <sup>3</sup> *At the noise of the stamping of the hoofs of his strong horses, at the rushing of his chariots, and at the rumbling of his wheels, the fathers shall not look back to their children for feebleness of hands;*

These are not the words of the prophet but, *Thus saith the Lord...* When God called Jeremiah to this prophetic ministry, he protested, *“...I, Ah Lord God I cannot speak: for I am a child...”* But the Lord touched his mouth and said, *“Don’t say I am a child, Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.”* So, this passage begins, *“...Thus saith the Lord...”* It is God who judges and after centuries of persecution of the Children of Israel, they are now being dealt with – The Babylonians are not only being used of God to discipline the Children of Israel, but Nebuchadnezzar has also been appointed by the Lord to bring judgment upon the Philistines. Writers have frequently used the imagery of rivers and waters to describe an invasion, and the Lord uses that imagery here in reference to the Babylonians, *“...an overflowing flood, and shall overflow the land, and all that is therein...”*

Although the Philistines were well known for their fearlessness and brutality, at this prophecy, they are about to be reduced to **crying** and **howling** just hearing the noise of the approaching horses and chariots. Stripped of their renowned masculinity by fear, the fleeing fathers will not even turn around to see about their children and having previously been described as being “masters with the weapons of war,” they are here described as having “...*feebleness of hands.*”

Hebrews 10:31 says, “*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*” Even the bravest of men cower before the judgment of the creator of the Heavens and the Earth because even death is no escape from judgment. For the Bible warns “...*it is appointed to men once to die and after this the judgment.*” (Hebrews 9:27)

### III. When Judgment Comes There Will Be No Help Available:

Jeremiah 47:4 *Because of the day that cometh to spoil all the Philistines, and to cut off from Tyrus and Zidon every helper that remaineth: for the Lord will spoil the Philistines, the remnant of the country of Caphtor.*

Although God offers grace, when judgment does come, there will be no help available. The Philistines had been exposed to the power of Israel's God for centuries and had opportunity to repent but had refused. Now, even their coalition agreement between the five cities and their kings would not protect Gaza, *all the Philistines* were to experience God's judgment at the hands of the Babylonians. *for the Lord will spoil the Philistines, the remnant of the country of Caphtor.* We see here the Philistines are described as the remnant of those who had migrated from Crete.

*Tyrus*, an ally which was situated up the coast from Gaza would not be any help, having already fallen to the Babylonians as well as *Zidon*, also known as *Sidon*, which was also up the coast from Gaza. So much for their dependency upon allies. The Scripture warns against putting our trust in man, (Jeremiah 17:5; Psalms 118:8; and Psalms 146:3). The prophet Jeremiah told us in Jeremiah 17:5 “*Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD.*” The Psalmist said in Psalms 145:3, “*Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.*” Psalms 118:8 tells us, “*It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man.*” The Philistines certainly learned that through the judgment. We would benefit by learning from their error.

### IV. They Went Into Mourning Instead of Repentance:

When Judgment comes people tend to go into mourning when repentance is what God seeks from us.

Jeremiah 47:5 *Baldness is come upon Gaza; Ashkelon is cut off with the remnant of their valley: how long wilt thou cut thyself?*

*“Baldness”* refers to the pagan practice of shaving one’s head as a sign of being in a state of mourning. When trouble comes the natural response of man is to go into a state of self pity. Repentance should have been their priority, but instead they shaved their heads and cut themselves, a common ritual to express a state of mourning in that day. When Judgment does come the divine approach to it should be repentance. Under the Mosaic Law, before the Messiah had come, that would mean to offer trespass and sin offerings. For those of us in the Church Age the remedy is detailed in **I John 1:9** *“If we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

*“Ashkelon”*, another one of the four Philistines cities aligned with Gaza had already been cut off along with the remnant of their valley. Without repentance the next question can only be, how long will this judgment continue?

## V. How Long Will This Judgment Continue:

**Jeremiah 47:6** *O thou sword of the Lord, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest, and be still.*

The first question one should ask is *“Why am I experiencing this affliction?”* But the natural response is *“How long will these things continue?”* You might even react as is recorded here, where the focus is upon the sword instead of on the Lord. Yes! They do recognize that it is the Lord’s sword but instead of addressing the Lord and His purpose, the question is to the affliction itself, *“O thou sword of the Lord, how long will it be ere thou be quiet?”* When discipline comes, our concern should not be how long, but why. Then, knowing why, repentance should immediately follow. But where there is no repentance, the affliction becomes a judgment. Remember, discipline is designed to modify one’s behavior, but Judgment is designed to penalize one for his behavior.

God’s righteousness requires a penalty for sin. Through salvation the believer’s sin debt has been paid in full, and *“...there is therefore no judgment to them which are in Christ Jesus.”* (**Romans 8:1**) But to the unbeliever *“...it is appointed once to die and after this judgment.”* (**Hebrews 9:27**) This affliction of the Philistines was designed to modify their behavior, but without repentance, it becomes judgment. They have an appointment as is expressed in **Jeremiah 47:7**

## VI. How Can the Sword Be Stopped When God Has Appointed It:

**Jeremiah 47:7** *How can it be quiet, seeing the Lord hath given it a charge against Ashkelon, and against the sea shore? there hath he appointed it.*

The purpose now is judgment. Because God is patient and longsuffering this judgment has been withheld for a long time. Having created man with free-will, God often allows people to abuse His grace and do their own thing. For centuries these people had persecuted the Children of Israel. In His permissive will the Lord’s tolerance with the Philistine had frequently used their behavior as a means of discipline for His own people, but now the

sword is turned toward them and the obvious question is, “...*How can it be quiet, seeing the Lord hath given it a charge against Ashkelon, and against the sea shore?*”

The question is rhetorical, not expecting an answer but making a statement: the answer is God has “...*appointed it.*” We all have an appointment “...*it is appointed once to die and after this judgment.*” (Hebrews 9:27) but through God’s amazing plan of grace that appointment can be cancelled and we can live eternally, “*For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.*” (John 3:16)

## Concluding Application:

In our introduction we stated, “As we examine these judgments, let us remember the words of the Psalmist, “*The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.*” (Psalm 19:9). The Hebrew word translated “*fear*” means **reverential awe**. The word “*clean*” is from the Hebrew word that means “*pure.*” Thus, reverential awe for the Lord results in purity that endures forever.

The second phrase of Psalms 19:9, “*the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether*” means that God’s laws, decisions, and pronouncements are entirely truthful and morally perfect. They are not just factually accurate, but also embody perfect justice and moral integrity, leaving no room for error or bias. Let’s look at a more detailed breakdown:

### “*the judgments of the Lord*”

This refers to God’s laws, His ordinances, His decrees, and the consequences He has established for our actions. In other words “*judgments*” are the standards by which God governs the world and by which He judges individuals.

### “*are true*”

This statement indicates that God’s judgments are not just factually correct, but they are also reliable, trustworthy, and faithful to His character of righteousness. The grammar here identifies that His judgments are based on truth and are eternally valid.

### “*and righteous altogether*”

This emphasizes the perfect moral righteousness of God’s judgments. They are completely just, without any hint of partiality or unfairness. They reflect God’s own character, which is perfect truth, perfectly just and immutable (that is the same, yesterday, today and forever).

In summary, this phrase in Psalm 19:9 assures the believer that God’s judgments are based on His righteousness which is established by perfect truth, perfect justice, and immutability, resulting in the provision of a solid foundation for trust and obedience. It highlights the reliable nature of God’s ways. It is the lack of reverential awe, the kind that draws one to God, that prevents one, or an entire nation, from relying upon His promises and following the principles, doctrines, and mechanics God has established for humanity and thereby exposing him to God’s judgments.



We noted, it is only as we understand the amazing grace of God as expressed in our **Applicational Text** found in **John 3:16** *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in, him should not perish but have everlasting life,”* that we can reconcile the terror of Judgment with the righteousness of God. We further stated, God never initiates judgment without first providing for repentance, *But, except ye repent you shall all likewise perish* (Luke 13:3).”

Couple the validity of God’s righteousness with the self-sacrificial love of God, which initiates His amazing grace, and you have the justification for these judgments. The judgments found here in the Book of Jeremiah are the result of people refusing to honor Him as God. Remember what we saw in **Romans 8:1**: *“There is therefore now no judgment to them which are in Christ Jesus.”* We avoid judgment by accepting God’s grace.

**But it all 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..*

*Let Us Learn From The Failure of Others and Avoid  
The Pain, Loss, Or Suffering of Personal  
Discipline!*