

Jeremiah's Prophecy to Judah—Invasion from the North (c. 629t BC)

Jeremiah 4:5–31

The Alarm—Invasion is Threatened

5 The LORD said,

“Announce this in Judah and proclaim it in Jerusalem:

‘Sound the trumpet throughout the land!’

Shout out loudly,

‘Gather together! Let us flee into the fortified cities!’

6 Raise a signal flag that tells people to go to Zion.

Run for safety! Do not delay!

For I am about to bring disaster out of the north.

It will bring great destruction.

7 Like a lion that has come up from its lair

the one who destroys nations has set out from his home base.

He is coming out to lay your land waste.

Your cities will become ruins and lie uninhabited.

8 So put on sackcloth!

Mourn and wail, saying,

‘The fierce anger of the LORD

has not turned away from us!’”

9 “When this happens,” says the LORD,

“the king and his officials will lose their courage.

The priests will be struck with horror,

and the prophets will be speechless in astonishment.”

10 In response to all this I said, “Ah, Lord God, you have surely allowed the people of Judah and Jerusalem to be deceived by those who say, ‘You will be safe!’ But in fact a sword is already at our throats.”

The Scorching Hot Wind of Judgment

11 “At that time the people of Judah and Jerusalem will be told,

‘A scorching wind will sweep down

from the hilltops in the desert on my dear people.

It will not be a gentle breeze

for winnowing the grain and blowing away the chaff.

12 No, a wind too strong for that will come at my bidding.

Yes, even now I, myself, am calling down judgment on them.’

13 Look! The enemy is approaching like gathering clouds.

The roar of his chariots is like that of a whirlwind.

His horses move more swiftly than eagles.”

I cry out, “We are doomed, for we will be destroyed!”

14 “Oh people of Jerusalem, purify your hearts from evil

so that you may yet be delivered.

How long will you continue to harbor up

wicked schemes within you?

15 For messengers are coming, heralding disaster,

from the city of Dan and from the hills of Ephraim.

16 They are saying,

‘Announce to the surrounding nations,

“The enemy is coming!”

Proclaim this message to Jerusalem:

“Those who besiege cities are coming from a distant land.

They are ready to raise the battle cry against the towns in Judah.”’

17 They will surround Jerusalem

like men guarding a field

because they have rebelled against me,” says the LORD.

18 “The way you have lived and the things you have done

will bring this on you.

This is the punishment you deserve, and it will be painful indeed.
The pain will be so bad it will pierce your heart.”

Jeremiah’s Anguished Cry

19 I said,

“Oh, the feeling in the pit of my stomach!
I writhe in anguish.
Oh, the pain in my heart!
My heart pounds within me.
I cannot keep silent.
For I hear the sound of the trumpet;
the sound of the battle cry pierces my soul!

20 I see one destruction after another taking place,
so that the whole land lies in ruins.
I see our tents suddenly destroyed,
their curtains torn down in a mere instant.

21 “How long must I see the enemy’s battle flags
and hear the military signals of their bugles?”

22 The LORD answered,

“This will happen because my people are foolish.
They do not know me.
They are like children who have no sense.
They have no understanding.
They are skilled at doing evil.
They do not know how to do good.”

A Vision and an Oracle about the Coming Destruction

23 “I looked at the land and saw that it was an empty wasteland.
I looked up at the sky, and its light had vanished.

24 I looked at the mountains and saw that they were shaking.
All the hills were swaying back and forth!

25 I looked and saw that there were no more people,
and that all the birds in the sky had flown away.

26 I looked and saw that the fruitful land had become a desert
and that all of the cities had been laid in ruins.
The LORD had brought this all about
because of his blazing anger.

27 All this will happen because the LORD said,
“The whole land will be desolate;
however, I will not completely destroy it.

28 Because of this the land will mourn
and the sky above will grow black.
For I have made my purpose known
and I will not relent or turn back from carrying it out.”

The Death Agony of Zion

29 At the sound of the approaching horsemen and archers
the people of every town will flee.
Some of them will hide in the thickets.
Others will climb up among the rocks.
All the cities will be deserted.
No one will remain in them.

30 And you, Zion, city doomed to destruction,
you accomplish nothing by wearing a beautiful dress,
decking yourself out in jewels of gold,

and putting on eye shadow!
 You are making yourself beautiful for nothing.
 Your lovers spurn you.
 They want to kill you.

- 31 In fact, I hear a cry like that of a woman in labor,
 a cry of anguish like that of a woman giving birth to her first baby.
 It is the cry of Daughter Zion gasping for breath,
 reaching out for help, saying, "I am done in!
 My life is ebbing away before these murderers!"

Jeremiah's Prophecy to Judah—Total Sinfulness of Judah (c. 629t BC)

Jeremiah 5

Jeremiah's Vain Search for a Righteous Person

1 The LORD said,

"Go up and down through the streets of Jerusalem.
 Look around and see for yourselves.
 Search through its public squares.
 See if any of you can find a single person
 who deals honestly and tries to be truthful.
 If you can, then I will not punish this city.

- 2 These people make promises in the name of the LORD.
 But the fact is, what they swear to is really a lie."

- 3 LORD, I know you look for faithfulness.
 But even when you punish these people, they feel no remorse.
 Even when you nearly destroy them, they refuse to be corrected.
 They have become as hardheaded as a rock.
 They refuse to change their ways.

- 4 I thought, "Surely it is only the ignorant poor who act this way.
 They act like fools because they do not know what the LORD demands.
 They do not know what their God requires of them.

- 5 I will go to the leaders
 and speak with them.
 Surely they know what the LORD demands.
 Surely they know what their God requires of them."
 Yet all of them, too, have rejected his authority
 and refuse to submit to him.

- 6 So like a lion from the thicket their enemies will kill them.
 Like a wolf from the desert they will destroy them.
 Like a leopard they will lie in wait outside their cities
 and totally destroy anyone who ventures out.
 For they have rebelled so much
 and done so many unfaithful things.

God's Justification for Judah's Punishment

7 The LORD asked,

"How can I leave you unpunished, Jerusalem?
 Your people have rejected me
 and have worshiped gods that are not gods at all.
 Even though I supplied all their needs, they were like an unfaithful wife to me.
 They went flocking to the houses of prostitutes.

- 8 They are like lusty, well-fed stallions.
 Each of them lusts after his neighbor's wife.
 9 I will surely punish them for doing such things!" says the LORD.
 "I will surely bring retribution on such a nation as this!"
 10 The LORD commanded the enemy,

“March through the vineyards of Israel and Judah and ruin them.
But do not destroy them completely.
Strip off their branches
for these people do not belong to the LORD.

- 11 For the nations of Israel and Judah
have been very unfaithful to me,”

says the LORD.

- 12 “These people have denied what the LORD says.
They have said, ‘That is not so!
No harm will come to us.
We will not experience war and famine.
13 The prophets will prove to be full of wind.
The LORD has not spoken through them.
So, let what they say happen to them.’”

The Coming of a Distant Nation against Judah

14 Because of that, the LORD, the God who rules over all, said to me,

“Because these people have spoken like this,
I will make the words that I put in your mouth like fire.
And I will make this people like wood
which the fiery judgments you speak will burn up.”

- 15 The LORD says, “Listen, nation of Israel!
I am about to bring a nation from far away to attack you.
It will be a nation that was founded long ago
and has lasted for a long time.
It will be a nation whose language you will not know.
Its people will speak words that you will not be able to understand.
16 All of its soldiers are strong and mighty.
Their arrows will send you to your grave.
17 They will eat up your crops and your food.
They will kill off your sons and your daughters.
They will eat up your sheep and your cattle.
They will destroy your vines and your fig trees.
Their weapons will batter down
the fortified cities you trust in.

18 Yet even then I will not completely destroy you,” says the LORD.

19 “So then, Jeremiah, when your people ask, ‘Why has the LORD our God done all this to us?’ tell them, ‘It is because you rejected me and served foreign gods in your own land. So you must serve foreigners in a land that does not belong to you.’”

Warning to a Foolish and Rebellious People

- 20 “Proclaim this message among the descendants of Jacob.
Make it known throughout Judah.
21 Tell them: ‘Hear this,
you foolish people who have no understanding,
who have eyes but do not discern,
who have ears but do not perceive: [\[Mark 8:18\]](#)
22 “You should fear me!” says the LORD.
“You should tremble in awe before me!
I made the sand to be a boundary for the sea,
a permanent barrier that it can never cross.
Its waves may roll, but they can never prevail.
They may roar, but they can never cross beyond that boundary.”
23 But these people have stubborn and rebellious hearts.
They have turned aside and gone their own way.

- 24 They do not say to themselves,
 “Let us revere the LORD our God.
 It is he who gives us the autumn rains and the spring rains at the proper time.
 It is he who assures us of the regular weeks of harvest.”
- 25 Your misdeeds have stopped these things from coming.
 Your sins have deprived you of my bounty.’
- 26 “Indeed, there are wicked scoundrels among my people.
 They lie in wait like bird catchers hiding in ambush.
 They set deadly traps to catch people.
- 27 Like a cage filled with the birds that have been caught,
 their houses are filled with the gains of their fraud and deceit.
 That is how they have gotten so rich and powerful.
- 28 That is how they have grown fat and sleek.
 There is no limit to the evil things they do.
 They do not plead the cause of the fatherless in such a way as to win it.
 They do not defend the rights of the poor.
- 29 I will certainly punish them for doing such things!” says the LORD.
 “I will certainly bring retribution on such a nation as this!
- 30 “Something horrible and shocking
 is going on in the land of Judah:
- 31 The prophets prophesy lies.
 The priests exercise power by their own authority.
 And my people love to have it this way.
 But they will not be able to help you when the time of judgment comes!

Jeremiah’s Prophecy to Judah—The Coming Siege and Fall of Jerusalem (c. 629t BC)

Jeremiah 6

An Appeal to Flee the Coming Siege

- 1 “Run for safety, people of Benjamin!
 Get out of Jerusalem!
 Sound the trumpet in Tekoa!
 Light the signal fires at Beth Hakkerem!
 For disaster lurks out of the north;
 it will bring great destruction.
- 2 I will destroy Daughter Zion,
 who is as delicate and defenseless as a young maiden.
- 3 Kings will come against it with their armies.
 They will encamp in siege all around it.
 Each of them will devastate the portion assigned to him.
- 4 They will say, ‘Prepare to do battle against it!
 Come on! Let’s attack it at noon!’
 But later they will say, ‘Oh, oh! Too bad!
 The day is almost over
 and the shadows of evening are getting long.
- 5 So come on, let’s go ahead and attack it by night
 and destroy all its fortified buildings.’
- 6 All of this is because the LORD who rules over all has said:
 ‘Cut down the trees around Jerusalem
 and build up a siege ramp against its walls.
 This is the city which is to be punished.
 Nothing but oppression happens in it.
- 7 As a well continually pours out fresh water
 so it continually pours out wicked deeds.
 Sounds of violence and destruction echo throughout it.
 All I see are sick and wounded people.’
- 8 So take warning, Jerusalem,
 or I will abandon you in disgust

and make you desolate,
a place where no one can live.”

Punishment of a Shameless People

9 This is what the LORD who rules over all said to me:

“Those who remain in Israel will be
like the grapes thoroughly gleaned from a vine.
So go over them again, as though you were a grape harvester
passing your hand over the branches one last time.”

10 I answered,

“Who would listen
if I spoke to them and warned them?
Their ears are so closed
that they cannot hear!
Indeed, what the LORD says is offensive to them.
They do not like it at all.

11 I am as full of anger as you are, LORD,
I am tired of trying to hold it in.”

The LORD answered,

“Vent it, then, on the children who play in the street
and on the young men who are gathered together.
Husbands and wives are to be included,
as well as the old and those who are advanced in years.

12 Their houses will be turned over to others
as will their fields and their wives.
For I will unleash my power
against those who live in this land,”

says the LORD.

13 “That is because, from the least important to the most important of them,
all of them are greedy for dishonest gain.
Prophets and priests alike,
all of them practice deceit.

14 They offer only superficial help
for the harm my people have suffered.
They say, ‘Everything will be all right!’
But everything is not all right!

15 Are they ashamed because they have done such shameful things?
No, they are not at all ashamed.
They do not even know how to blush!
So they will die, just like others have died.
They will be brought to ruin when I punish them,”

says the LORD.

Refusal to Heed God’s Warnings

16 The LORD said to his people:

“You are standing at the crossroads. So consider your path.
Ask where the old, reliable paths are.
Ask where the path is that leads to blessing and follow it.
If you do, you will find rest for your souls.”

But they said, “We will not follow it!”

17 The LORD said,

“I appointed prophets as watchmen to warn you, saying:
‘Pay attention to the warning sound of the trumpet!’”
But they said, “We will not pay attention!”

18 So the LORD said,

“Hear, you nations!
Be witnesses and take note of what will happen to these people.

19 Hear this, you peoples of the earth:

‘Take note! I am about to bring disaster on these people.
It will come as punishment for their scheming.
For they have paid no attention to what I have said,
and they have rejected my law.

20 I take no delight when they offer up to me
frankincense that comes from Sheba
or sweet-smelling cane imported from a faraway land.
I cannot accept the burnt offerings they bring me.
I get no pleasure from the sacrifices they offer to me.’

The Terrors of the Approaching Enemy

21 So, this is what the LORD says:

‘I will assuredly make these people stumble to their doom.
Parents and children will stumble and fall to their destruction.
Friends and neighbors will die.’

22 “This is what the LORD says:

‘Beware! An army is coming from a land in the north.
A mighty nation is stirring into action in faraway parts of the earth.

23 Its soldiers are armed with bows and spears.

They are cruel and show no mercy.

They sound like the roaring sea
as they ride forth on their horses.

Lined up in formation like men going into battle
to attack you, Daughter Zion.”

24 The people cry out, “We have heard reports about them!

We have become helpless with fear!

Anguish grips us,
agony like that of a woman giving birth to a baby!

25 Do not go out into the countryside.

Do not travel on the roads.

For the enemy is there with sword in hand.

They are spreading terror everywhere.”

26 So I said, “Oh, my dear people, put on sackcloth
and roll in ashes.

Mourn with painful sobs
as though you had lost your only child.

For any moment now that destructive army
will come against us.”

God Commissions Jeremiah to Test His People

27 The LORD said to me,

“I have made you like a metal assayer
to test my people like ore.

You are to observe them
and evaluate how they behave.”

28 I reported,

“All of them are the most stubborn of rebels!
They are as hard as bronze or iron.
They go about telling lies.
They all deal corruptly.

29 The fiery bellows of judgment burn fiercely.
But there is too much dross to be removed.
The process of refining them has proved useless.
The wicked have not been purged.

30 They are regarded as ‘rejected silver’
because the LORD rejects them.”

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