

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

JEREMIAH 42-46

God is sovereign. He has dominion over all His creation! He rules the universe, but within the universe God has always had a kingdom - *His own realm of influence where His ways and wisdom are on display.*

From the time of Moses until the establishment of the Church, God's kingdom was the nation Israel.

He brought the Hebrews out of Egypt. Gave them the land, the Law, and the promise of blessings and curses.

It was to be a physical kingdom. The **land** was literal, with borders and natural resources. God's **law** employed earthly government, and a king, and a throne. And God's **blessings and curses** were material. The health and wealth God promised wasn't just spiritual, but physical.

Yet Israel failed to be God's earthly kingdom, so God sent His Son, the King, to birth a spiritual kingdom.

Jesus established a new covenant with us. In essence, God's kingdom went underground - in hearts.

Today, through His Spirit God reigns in our spirit and in our love for one another. The blessings of God's Kingdom are now spiritual - they're all found *"in Christ."*

This is why OT laws don't apply to Christians today. We're part of *a different kingdom - a spiritual kingdom.*

But one day, our prayer will be answered, God's kingdom will come *"on earth (even) as it is in heaven."*

For the moment God has no earthly kingdom... *not the Church, not the United States, not the Tea Party.* Yet Jesus will return to re-establish a political throne, an earthly kingdom, and material blessings for His people.

And it's the Prophet Jeremiah who documented the Hebrew's final failure, and our hope of a new covenant.

For 860 years God had been patient, but Judah's persistent idolatry became her downfall. God raised up Chaldeans from the east - a Babylonian army to judge.

In three invasions Babylon *defeated* the nation, *deported* the Jews, and *destroyed* the city of Jerusalem.

In **605 BC** the Babylonian general, Nebuchadnezzar, subjugated Judah and made King Jehoiakim his vassal.

In **597 BC**, the Babylonians returned to deal with the rebellion of Jehoiakim's son, King Jeconiah. He and other Jewish nobles were taken as exiles to Babylon.

And in **586 BC**, tired of the rebellion, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem, burned the temple, and took many of the Jews as captives to Babylon, including the final Jewish king, Zedekiah. Nebuchadnezzar poked out the king's eyes and took him as a prisoner to Babylon.

Throughout this last twenty years of their history, a lone voice courageously warn the nation of God's judgment - *that voice was of the Prophet Jeremiah.*

After the fall of Jerusalem the Babylonians dealt graciously with Jeremiah. He stayed with his people.

Three groups of Jews were left in the land. The poor, a few former military folk, and some returning refugees.

And tragically, almost immediately, the Babylonian-appointed governor, Gedaliah, was assassinated.

The remaining Jews rightly feared a reprisal from the Babylonians, and decided to relocate to Egypt.

It was the irony of ironies. The triumphant people who left Egypt were now returning - disgraced and defeated.

That's where we pick up the story in Chapter 42, **“Now all the captains of the forces, Johanan the son of Kareah, Jezaniah the son of Hoshaiiah, and all the people, from the least to the greatest, came near and said to Jeremiah the prophet, “Please, let our petition be acceptable to you, and pray for us to the Lord your God, for all this remnant (since we are left but a few of many, as you can see), that the Lord your God may show us the way in which we should walk and the thing we should do.”**

Remember Jeremiah had been offered a lavish post in Babylon that he turned down to remain in the land. And it was a good thing, for now the Jews need God's help. *The remnant is reeling*, they're frightened...

The embers of the fallen city are still smoking, when the governor chosen by Nebuchadnezzar is murdered.

Should the Jews flee to Egypt? Stay in the land? What should they do? They come to Jeremiah seeking God's help, which was a good thing... *But here's what's sad...*

Note, they ask him, **“pray for us to the Lord your God...”** The Jews say He's not **our God**, but **“your God.”** They felt the separation with God their sin had caused.

“Then Jeremiah the prophet said to them, “I have heard. Indeed, I will pray to the Lord your God according to your words, and it shall be, that whatever the Lord answers you, I will declare it to you. I will keep nothing back from you.” What a loving, merciful thing for Jeremiah to say in response... Not *“I will pray to the Lord my God...”* but, *“I will pray to the Lord your God...”*”

They felt the guilt of their sin. They realized they didn't deserve to call God *“my Lord.”* But God doesn't treat us according to how we feel. He handles us with grace.

Despite their sin and failures, because of God's grace, He was still their God. This was the basis of the New Covenant, God had made with Jeremiah in Chapter 31.

And this is how God treats those who are in Christ.

His grace is stronger than our sin and guilt. This is why Paul writes in Romans 8:39, *“Nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

“So they said to Jeremiah, “Let the Lord be a true and faithful witness between us, if we do not do according to everything which the Lord your God sends us by you.

Whether it is pleasing or displeasing, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God to whom we send you, that it may be well with us when we obey the voice of the Lord our God.” Here's a noble confession we should emulate.

Are we willing to obey the Lord, whether what He asks of us is *“pleasing or displeasing?”* It's easy to obey when what God asks is something we would enjoy doing...

“Sandy, take the people on a cruise and a tour of Greece.”
Yes, *Lord!*... But what if He says, “Sandy, fast three days and help a homeless family pay the deposit on an apartment.”
Whoa nelly, that’s a different demand.

The truth is, “Selected obedience is not obedience at all; it is merely convenience.” Real obedience follows God’s instructions whether it’s *“pleasing or displeasing.”*

Verse 7, “*And it happened after ten days that the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah.*” I love this verse because it shatters a lot of our misconceptions about prayer. So often we pray, and because we expect an immediate answer, we can misinterpret God’s will for our lives.

Whenever you pray be prepare to wait for God to answer. Sometimes it takes 10 days... even 10 months.

Jesus says in Luke 11, “*Everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.*” Literally the Greek reads, “*Everyone who keeps on asking receives, and he who keeps on seeking finds, and to him who keeps on knocking it will be opened.*” God is a rewarder of our persistent prayer.

And it’s not because His arm has to be twisted, but we need to become humble. Persistent prayer doesn’t overcome God’s reluctance, it proves our dependence.

Once God had spoken to Jeremiah, “*Then he called Johanan the son of Kareah (After the governor’s assassination, Johanan became the defacto leader), all the captains of the forces which were with him, and all the people from the least even to the greatest, and said to them, “Thus says the Lord, the God of*

Israel, to whom you sent me to present your petition before Him: 'If you will still remain in this land, then I will build you and not pull you down, and I will plant you and not pluck you up.'

Here was their answer, *"If you remain in this land..."* God's blessings were contingent on them staying put.

"For I relent concerning the disaster that I have brought upon you. Do not be afraid of the king of Babylon, of whom you are afraid; do not be afraid of him,' says the Lord, 'for I am with you, to save you and deliver you from his hand. And I will show you mercy, that he may have mercy on you and cause you to return to your own land.' If they obey God, and stay in the land, rather than tear them down, God will build them up.

"But if you say, 'We will not dwell in this land,' disobeying the voice of the Lord your God, saying, 'No, but we will go to the land of Egypt where we shall see no war, nor hear the sound of the trumpet, nor be hungry for bread, and there we will dwell' - Then hear now the word of the Lord, O remnant of Judah! Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: 'If you wholly set your faces to enter Egypt, and go to dwell there, then it shall be that the sword which you feared shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt; the famine of which you were afraid shall follow close after you there in Egypt; and there you shall die. So shall it be with all the men who set their faces to go to Egypt to dwell there. They shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence. And none of them shall remain or escape from the disaster that I will bring upon them.' To obey God was to stay put - *stay home*.

Once a police officer noticed a little boy circling the block. We walked the sidewalk six or seven times.

The officer asked him what he was doing. The little guy said, "I'm running away from home." The policeman said, "*Well, you're not getting very far.*" The boy replied, "You're right, but my mom says I can't cross the street."

Obedience kept him close to home - as it will with us.

The key to the Christian life is to abide in Christ - stay put - remain home. Jude 21, "*keep yourselves in the love of God.*" Know you belong to Christ, and walk in that assurance. Never turn your back on that relationship.

And just as we are called to live in Christ, God called the Jews to live in the land He had promised them.

If they trust God by remaining in the land He'll bless them. But if they don't, all the hardship they've feared from the Babylonians, will come upon them Egypt.

Verse 18, "*For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: 'As My anger and My fury have been poured out on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so will My fury be poured out on you when you enter Egypt. And you shall be an oath, an astonishment, a curse, and a reproach; and you shall see this place no more.'*" "The Lord has said concerning you, O remnant of Judah, 'Do not go to Egypt!' Know certainly that I have admonished you this day." Somehow Jeremiah sensed their noble confession in verse 6 had been a pretense, a hypocrisy. They had no intention of obeying if it's "*pleasing or displeasing.*"

Jeremiah says, "*For you were hypocrites in your hearts when you sent me to the Lord your God, saying, 'Pray for us to the Lord our God, and according to all that the Lord your God says, so declare to us and we will do it.'*" And I have this day declared

it to you, but you have not obeyed the voice of the Lord your God, or anything which He has sent you by me. Now therefore, know certainly that you shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence in the place where you desire to go to dwell.” The Jews had feigned sincerity. What they really wanted was for God to rubber stamp their wishes. Come to God with your own agenda, and you might miss His.

Chapter 43, “Now it happened, when Jeremiah had stopped speaking to all the people all the words of the Lord their God, for which the Lord their God had sent him to them, all these words, that Azariah the son of Hoshaiah, Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the proud men spoke, saying to Jeremiah, “You speak falsely! The Lord our God has not sent you to say, ‘Do not go to Egypt to dwell there.’” They could’ve walked away - just chosen not to obey. Instead, they deny Jeremiah speaks for God. *Why did they come to him in the first place?*

What they suggest in verse 3 is ludicrous. “But Baruch the son of Neriah has set you against us, (Baruch was Jeremiah’s attache’) to deliver us into the hand of the Chaldeans, that they may put us to death or carry us away captive to Babylon.” They accuse Jeremiah of being manipulated by Baruch. Jeremiah had stood undaunted before kings - despite threats, torture, prison.

He’s not going to cower to his assistant.

Verse 4, “So Johanan the son of Kareah, all the captains of the forces, and all the people would not obey the voice of the Lord, to remain in the land of Judah.

But Johanan the son of Kareah and all the captains of the forces took all the remnant of Judah who had returned to dwell in the land of Judah, from all nations where they had been driven - men, women, children, the king's daughters, and every person whom Nebuzaradan the captain of the (Babylonian) guard had left with Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, and Jeremiah the prophet and Baruch the son of Neriah. So they went to the land of Egypt, for they did not obey the voice of the Lord. And they went as far as Tahpanhes."

Again, verse 7 is one of the saddest verses in the Bible. Nine centuries after God brought the Hebrews out of Egypt, they're now retreating to where they started!

Tahpanhes was the capitol of Egypt at the time. It was the site of the Pharaoh's palace. Tahpanhes was situated in the northeast corner of Egypt - the land of Goshen - the region where the Hebrews lived as slaves.

Verse 8, "Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah in Tahpanhes, saying, "Take large stones in your hand, and hide them in the sight of the men of Judah, in the clay in the brick courtyard which is at the entrance to Pharaoh's house in Tahpanhes; and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: "Behold, I will send and bring Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant, and will set his throne above these stones that I have hidden. And he will spread his royal pavilion over them. When he comes, he shall strike the land of Egypt and deliver to death those appointed for death, and to captivity those appointed for captivity, and to the sword those appointed for the sword." The Jews were running to Egypt to escape the Chaldean king, Nebuchadnezzar.

They didn't realize Egypt was next on the Babylonian's hit list. Jerusalem fell to Babylon in 586. History tells us that eighteen years later Babylon conquered Egypt. If they stay the Jews will be slaughtered with the Egyptians.

Verse 12, "I will kindle a fire in the houses of the gods of Egypt, and he shall burn them and carry them away captive. And he shall array himself with the land of Egypt, as a shepherd puts on his garment, and he shall go out from there in peace. He shall also break the sacred pillars of Beth Shemesh that are in the land of Egypt; and the houses of the gods of the Egyptians he shall burn with fire." These "*sacred pillars*" were 90' high, and dedicated to Ra, the Egyptian sun god. But these pillars will be broken and Egypt's temples will be burned.

But God has more to say through Jeremiah, Chapter 44, "The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the Jews who dwell in the land of Egypt, who dwell at Migdol, at Tahpanhes, at Noph, and in the country of Pathros, saying..." Originally, the Egyptian-bound Jews settled in Tahpanhes - the Greeks called it "Daphnae."

They eventually moved into the interior. Noph was the ancient city of **Memphis** - the center of Egyptian idolatry.

"Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: 'You have seen all the calamity that I have brought on Jerusalem and on all the cities of Judah; and behold, this day they are a desolation, and no one dwells in them, because of their wickedness which they have committed to provoke Me to anger, in that they went to burn incense and to serve other

gods whom they did not know, they nor you nor your fathers. However I have sent to you all My servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, “Oh, do not do this abominable thing that I hate!”

But they did not listen or incline their ear to turn from their wickedness, to burn no incense to other gods.

So My fury and My anger were poured out and kindled in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem; and they are wasted and desolate, as it is this day.’

“Now therefore, thus says the Lord, the God of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘Why do you commit this great evil against yourselves, to cut off from you man and woman, child and infant, out of Judah, leaving none to remain, in that you provoke Me to wrath with the works of your hands, burning incense to other gods in the land of Egypt where you have gone to dwell, that you may cut yourselves off and be a curse and a reproach among all the nations of the earth?’ The Jews who moved to Egypt, started worshipping the gods of Egypt. *Tragic!*

We’ve all heard a history teacher say, “Those who refuse to learn from history are destined to repeat it.”

This had happened to the Jews. God judged them because of their idolatry, now they’re repeating their sin.

Verse 9, “Have you forgotten the wickedness of your fathers, the wickedness of the kings of Judah, the wickedness of their wives, your own wickedness, and the wickedness of your wives, which they committed in the land of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem?”

They have not been humbled, to this day, nor have they feared; they have not walked in My law or in My statutes that I set before you and your fathers.’ This was amazing, Jerusalem is now in ashes, their friends are in Babylon, and these rebellious Jews have forgotten why.

Don’t waste God’s discipline. *Despite His judgment they still weren’t humble - they still refused to fear God.*

“Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘Behold, I will set My face against you for catastrophe and for cutting off all Judah. And I will take the remnant of Judah who have set their faces to go into the land of Egypt to dwell there, and they shall all be consumed and fall in the land of Egypt. They shall be consumed by the sword and by famine.

They shall die, from the least to the greatest, by the sword and by famine; and they shall be an oath, an astonishment, a curse and a reproach! For I will punish those who dwell in the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem, by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence, so that none of the remnant of Judah who have gone into the land of Egypt to dwell there shall escape or survive, lest they return to the land of Judah, to which they desire to return and dwell. For none shall return except those who escape.” Notice, some of the Jews desired to return to Judah, but not everyone did. Some folks intend to follow Jesus, but they lack faith to do so.

Hell will be full of people with good intentions.

“Then all the men who knew that their wives had burned incense to other gods, with all the women who stood by, a great multitude, and all the people who dwelt in the land of Egypt, in

Pathros, answered Jeremiah, saying: “As for the word that you have spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not listen to you!

But we will certainly do whatever has gone out of our own mouth, to burn incense to the queen of heaven and pour out drink offerings to her, as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. For then we had plenty of food, were well-off, and saw no trouble.” They had forgotten the bloodshed in the streets of Jerusalem.

Now they’re pursuing idols in Egypt, by paying homage to “*the queen of heaven.*” This goddess went by many names: *Astarte* to the Hebrews, *Ishtar* to the Canaanites, *Isis* to the Egyptians, *Diana* to the Greeks, *Artemis* to the Romans, *Semaramis* to the Babylonians.

To the pagans she was the goddess of fertility. She controlled the rain and seasons. And sadly, she’s still around. New Age advocates worship Mother Earth...

And the title “*queen of heaven*” is how Roman Catholics refer to and talk about Mary, mother of Jesus.

Realize, Jesus’ mom is NOT the queen of heaven.

She’s a resident - a worshipper - but she’s nobody’s queen. It’s blasphemous to call her that. It’s a pagan title with idolatrous implications. She’s a servant not a queen.

Verse 18, “But since we stopped burning incense to the queen of heaven and pouring out drink offerings to her, we have lacked everything and have been consumed by the sword

and by famine.” Here’s an example of revisionist history. The opposite was true.

Idolatry was the reason they’d lost everything!

“The women also said, “And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven and poured out drink offerings to her, did we make cakes for her, to worship her, and pour out drink offerings to her without our husbands’ permission?” These wives felt emboldened in their worship of the queen of heaven. God expected them to live under their husbands’ authority. Whereas, paganism encouraged women to be autonomous and independent.

Here these women are bragging about their defiance.

The Bible’s teaching on marriage is referred to as **complementarianism**. Husbands and wives have different but complementary roles. Husbands lead, and wives support their leadership... Whereas, paganism always advocates **equalitarianism**. Family authority is shared equally by both spouses. There isn’t one leader.

Only the Bible upholds marriage as a picture of God and His people. This is why a husband should lead and a wife should follow - **marriage models our relationship with God**. Whereas, idolatry and false religion promote feminism. They distort and abandon the biblical roles.

When God created mankind He did so male and female - *with distinction*. But **paganism is about oneness**.

It abhors distinctions between Creator and creation, man and animal, male and female. Paganism deifies nature. It puts

animal rights on a par with human rights. And it blurs the differences between men and women.

God is in all, all is in God - it's the worship of oneness.

In contrast God created gender, and He has an order for the sexes. In 1 Timothy 2:12 Paul gives instructions to the church, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man..." *In the church and in the home* the man should lead and the wife should let him.

And this is why a person's beliefs about gender roles is a great litmus test... *for nothing is a quicker indication of whether a person's thinking is biblical or pagan...* The Bible supports these roles. Idolatry confuses them.

Verse 20, "Then Jeremiah spoke to all the people - the men, the women, and all the people who had given him that answer - saying: "The incense that you burned in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, you and your fathers, your kings and your princes, and the people of the land, did not the Lord remember them, and did it not come into His mind? So the Lord could no longer bear it, because of the evil of your doings and because of the abominations which you committed.

Therefore your land is a desolation, an astonishment, a curse, and without an inhabitant, as it is this day.

Because you have burned incense and because you have sinned against the Lord, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord or walked in His law, in His statutes or in His testimonies, therefore this calamity has happened to you, as at this day." God reminds them of their history.

“Moreover Jeremiah said to all the people and to all the women, “Hear the word of the Lord, all Judah who are in the land of Egypt! Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saying: ‘You and your wives have spoken with your mouths and fulfilled with your hands, saying, “We will surely keep our vows that we have made, to burn incense to the queen of heaven and pour out drink offerings to her.” You will surely keep your vows and perform your vows!’ Therefore hear the word of the Lord, all Judah who dwell in the land of Egypt: ‘Behold, I have sworn by My great name,’ says the Lord, ‘that My name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, “The Lord God lives.” Behold, I will watch over them for adversity and not for good. And all the men of Judah who are in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by famine, until there is an end to them. Yet a small number who escape the sword shall return from the land of Egypt to the land of Judah; and all the remnant of Judah, who have gone to the land of Egypt to dwell there, shall know whose words will stand, Mine or theirs.

And this shall be a sign to you,’ says the Lord, ‘that I will punish you in this place, that you may know that My words will surely stand against you for adversity.’

“Thus says the Lord: ‘Behold, I will give Pharaoh Hophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies and into the hand of those who seek his life, as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, his enemy who sought his life.’” Hophra’s Greek name was Apries. He died in an Egyptian Civil War, that led the way for Babel and Nebuchadnezzar to invade Egypt in 568 BC.

Chronologically, this is the last of Jeremiah's prophecies. What happened to this great man of God afterwards, we don't know. There're many theories...

Some historians say he was stoned in Tahpanhes for speaking out against idolatry... Other people say he joined the Jews in Babel... The Scripture is silent.

It's a tribute to Jeremiah that the last glimpse we get of him, he's doing what he's done his whole life - standing strong for God against the idolatry of His own people.

Chapter 45, "The word that Jeremiah the prophet spoke to Baruch the son of Neriah, when he had written these words in a book at the instruction of Jeremiah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, saying..." This flashes back to the fourth year of Jehoiakim - 605 BC. Baruch was the Prophet's assistant.

All great heroes have sidekicks... Lone Ranger had Tonto - Batman had Robin - Andy had Barney - Yogi had Bobo... Even in Scripture, Moses had Joshua - Paul had Silas... And, for better or worse, Jeremiah had Baruch.

Of course, it's hard being the #2 guy. Once, famous composer, Leonard Bernstein, was asked, "*What's the hardest instrument to play?*" He replied, "*Second Fiddle.*"

In addition to being Jeremiah's assistant we discover in Chapter 51 Baruch had a brother who was a high official in the court of Babylon. This was hard on Baruch.

He'd go to family reunions, and everyone would ask, "*When are you going to get a real job, like your brother?*" "*Are you still*

Jeremiah's errand boy?" If ever there was a candidate for an inferiority complex it was Baruch!

Yet in Chapter 36 Baruch gets his big break. Jeremiah dictates to him a message for the people of Judah.

Baruch writes the scroll. It's God's Word. And when Jeremiah is prohibited from going it into the Temple and reading it himself, he gives the job to Baruch.

I'm sure Baruch assumed he was finally moving out from under the shadow of the old man. At last, the light would be on him. Baruch sons of Neriah will get some recognition. This could catapult him to his own ministry.

Yet Jeremiah has a word for his ambitious assistant...

Verse 2, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, to you, O Baruch: 'You said, "Woe is me now! For the Lord has added grief to my sorrow. I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest." Thus you shall say to him, 'Thus says the Lord: "Behold, what I have built I will break down, and what I have planted I will pluck up, that is, this whole land... And do you seek great things for yourself?"

Do not seek them; for behold, I will bring adversity on all flesh," says the Lord. "But I will give your life to you as a prize in all places, wherever you go." Notice, God's warning, "*Do you seek great things for yourself? Do not seek them...*" Baruch was living in a tumultuous time.

The old order was on its way out. What was built was about to be broken. What was planted would be plucked. *Who wants to be great in a city that'll soon be toppled?*

It was like being promoted to captain of the Titanic the night before the ship sunk. *It's an honor you don't want.*

And this is also a warning for any ambitious folks here tonight. The world we live in is on its way out. It's headed down the tubes. Jesus will judge. Greatness in this world's eyes may be more of a liability than an honor...

Shakespeare puts the following words into the mouth of one of his characters. "Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition - by that sin the angels fell."

We should avoid *wrong ambition*. I say that because not all ambition is wrong ambition. In 1 Timothy 3:1 Paul encourages Timothy, "If a man desires the position of a bishop (or elder), he desires a good work." Wanting to be a leader in the Body of Christ is a proper ambition.

There's nothing wrong with having a godly vision, and a desire to serve God. But notice, the key words in what Jeremiah asks, "Do you seek great things for yourself?"

As long as your ambition is God's glory it's a good ambition. We need more of that kind of ambition. But wrong ambition tries to use God to advance one's self.

We need to be honest about our motives. As God told Jeremiah in 15:19, "take out the precious from the vile." *Eradicate selfishness and accentuate godliness.*

Chapter 46 starts a new section in the book, but I want to break the ice tonight... "The word of the Lord which came to Jeremiah the prophet against the nations."

Jeremiah has judgments against ten nations.

He may've uttered these prophecies at different times and on different occasions, but he compiles them here.

He starts with a judgment **“Against Egypt. Concerning the army of Pharaoh Necho, king of Egypt, which was by the River Euphrates in Carchemish, and which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon defeated in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah...”**

The Battle of Carchemish in 605 BC was one of most pivotal and important in all of human history! It was the Waterloo, or Bull Run, or the Normandy of ancient times.

Egypt had dominated the world for over 1000 years. But eastward the Babylonians were on the rise.

In 609 BC the Egyptian army moved north. As they passed through the Valley of Meggido they defeated the Judean King Josiah. He'd acted foolishly and sided with Babylon. He tried to attack Egypt and was killed in battle.

Pharaoh Necho marched his army all the way to the Euphrates River, and the Syrian city of Carchemish. For four years he harassed and attacked the Babylonians.

In the spring of 605 BC the Babylonians planned a surprise attack against Carchemish and routed Egypt.

The Egyptians withdrew from the region leaving Judah, Edom, and Moab for the Babylonian army to plunder. Eventually, Babylon marched all the way to Egypt, and in 568 BC conquered the land of the Nile.

Verses 1-12 addresses the Battle of Carchemish. Verse 13 onward, the conquest of Egypt in 568 BC.

Verse 3, “Order the buckler and shield, and draw near to battle! Harness the horses, and mount up, you horsemen! Stand forth with your helmets, polish the spears, put on the armor! Why have I seen them dismayed and turned back? Their mighty ones are beaten down; they have speedily fled, and did not look back, for fear was all around,” says the Lord.

“Do not let the swift flee away, nor the mighty man escape; they will stumble and fall toward the north, by the River Euphrates.” Carchemish sat on its banks.

“Who is this coming up like a flood, whose waters move like the rivers? Egypt rises up like a flood, and its waters move like the rivers; and he says, ‘I will go up and cover the earth, I will destroy the city and its inhabitants.’ *“Flood”* and *“rising waters”* is a common Hebrew idiom, used in the Bible, for an invading army.

Verse 9, “Come up, O horses, and rage, O chariots! And let the mighty men come forth: the Ethiopians and the Libyans who handle the shield, and the Lydians who handle and bend the bow.” In other words, Egypt will need all the help she can get from her allies.

“For this is the day of the Lord God of hosts, a day of vengeance, that He may avenge Himself on His adversaries. The sword shall devour; it shall be satiated and made drunk with their blood; for the Lord God of hosts has a sacrifice in the north country by the River Euphrates. “Go up to Gilead and take balm, O virgin, the daughter of Egypt; in vain you will use many medicines; you shall not be cured.” History tells us that Egypt was the birthplace of medicine. Yet here they taunt... There is no medicine that will heal Egypt’s hurt.

“The nations have heard of your shame, and your cry has filled the land; for the mighty man has stumbled against the mighty; they both have fallen together.”

Verse 13, “The word that the Lord spoke to Jeremiah the prophet, how Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon would come and strike the land of Egypt. Declare in Egypt, and proclaim in Migdol; proclaim in Noph (or Memphis - which was the center of Egyptian idolatry) and in Tahpanhes; say, ‘Stand fast and prepare yourselves, for the sword devours all around you.’

Why are your valiant men swept away? They did not stand because the Lord drove them away.” Yahweh, the one true God, the God of Israel, has judged Egypt.

“He made many fall; yes, one fell upon another. And they said, ‘Arise! Let us go back to our own people and to the land of our nativity from the oppressing sword.’

They cried there, ‘Pharaoh, king of Egypt, is but a noise. He has passed by the appointed time!’ As we’ve learned tonight there were Jews in Egypt at the time of Babylon’s conquest. They fled there in fear of Babylon.

Yet irony of ironies, Nebuchadnezzar attacked Egypt.

In disobeying God to flee to Egypt, the Jews jumped out of the frying pan (Judah), and into the fire (Egypt).

Verse 18, “As I live,” says the King, Whose name is the Lord of hosts, “surely as Tabor is among the mountains and as Carmel by the sea, so he shall come.” Look across the Valley of Megiddo and you’ll see a lone mountain, Mt. Tabor, rising from the valley.

Approach Israel from the sea, and the coastline is flat except for a mountain range in the north, Carmel.

In their respective landscapes both mountains are imposing sights, just as Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian army will be as they ride into Egypt.

Verse 19, “O you daughter dwelling in Egypt, prepare yourself to go into captivity! For Noph shall be waste and desolate, without inhabitant. “Egypt is a very pretty heifer, but destruction comes, it comes from the north.”

Babylon was east of Jerusalem, but the Chaldeans always invaded the southern kingdoms from the north.

“Also her mercenaries are in her midst like fat bulls, for they also are turned back, they have fled away together. They did not stand, for the day of their calamity had come upon them, the time of their punishment.” Egypt sacrificed and worshipped cows.

But her idols were *a bunch of bull*. When *the chips were down* they were no help. Here the Egypt’s troops will be sacrificed like bulls... *Holy cow, run for the hills!*

Verse 22. “Her noise shall go like a serpent, for they shall march with an army and come against her with axes, like those who chop wood.” The Pharaoh of Egypt wore a serpent insignia on his forehead. Here’re we’re told the snake will be chopped with a battle-ax.

“They shall cut down her forest,” says the Lord, “though it cannot be searched, because they are innumerable, and more numerous than grasshoppers.

The daughter of Egypt shall be ashamed; she shall be delivered into the hand of the people of the north.”

The Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, says: “Behold, I will bring punishment on Amon of No, and Pharaoh and Egypt, with their gods and their kings - Pharaoh and those who trust in him.” *Amon* was the sun god, the chief idol of Egypt. The wicked king of Judah, Manasseh, named his son “*Amon*” after this idol... The Egyptian city of “*No*” was the ancient city of Thebes.

Verse 26, “And I will deliver them into the hand of those who seek their lives, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and the hand of his servants. Afterward it shall be inhabited as in the days of old,” says the Lord.” Egypt will be defeated by the Babylonians, but the conquest will be short lived.

The Bible actually has a bright forecast for Egypt’s future. Isaiah 19 and Ezekiel 29 seem to indicate that when Jesus returns, Egypt will be restored to glory.

Genesis 12 tells us God blesses those who bless Israel, and ever since the Camp David Accords in 1978, Egypt has been one of Israel’s few Arab allies.

“But do not fear, O My servant Jacob, and do not be dismayed, O Israel! For behold, I will save you from afar, and your offspring from the land of their captivity; Jacob shall return, have rest and be at ease; no one shall make him afraid. Do not fear, O Jacob My servant,” says the Lord, “For I am with you; for I will make a complete end of all the nations

to which I have driven you, but I will not make a complete end of you.

I will rightly correct you, for I will not leave you wholly unpunished.” God will discipline Israel, but not destroy.

This is what the Great Tribulation is about - God will *punish* the nations of the world, but *purify* Israel.