

Jeremiah 47:1-7 The Lesson of The Sword Falls Ch. AM 4/23/2023

Last week we studied God's judgment on the ancient nation of Egypt.

Today we study God's judgment on the next nearest neighboring nation of The Philistines. This prophecy against the Philistines was shorter, but just as severe.

Again, what do we do with chapters 46-51? These ending chapters of the book of Jeremiah combine judgment and hope. Judgment on the nations, but hope for God's people. How can those two be linked together? God's moral foundation applies to other nations as much as it applies to Israel. What may surprise us is that God's salvation activity in the world is offered to other nations as it is offered to Israel! In other words, there is salvation hope offered to all people in all nations! That brings us to our main point as found printed in our Sunday bulletin... **No one will be spared the coming final judgment of all the earth, yet God holds out hope to all through Christ!**

1. The word of The LORD. (v.1-2)

In verse 1, God gives a word of judgment "*concerning the Philistines.*" All through the book of 1 Samuel and the time of King David, we remember the Philistines as enemies.

In verse 2, the metaphor of a rising river is used not of Egypt in the south, surprisingly, but instead is borrowed to now refer to Babylon in the North! The scene of Babylon attacking the Philistines is presented to our imaginations with phrases like waters are rising, overflowing torrent, overflow and fill the land and city and dwellers, men cry out, all inhabitants wail. We get the idea.

Remember how after judgment to Egypt, God gave words of hope to Egypt? That aspect seems to be missing in chapter 47. However, it is simply stated somewhere else. For the Philistines, God gave it through a different prophet Zechariah. Over in the Book of Zechariah, chapter 9, verses 6-7, God gave to the Philistines judgment followed by hope of restoration, "*... I will cut off the pride of Philistia. I will take away its blood from its mouth, and its abominations from between its teeth; it too shall be a remnant for our God; it shall be like a clan in Judah,...*"

Not only did God provide judgment-followed-by-hope for the Philistines, but God even went so far as to use vocabulary that was usually preserved for His people. The Philistines, "*too, shall be a remnant for our God,*" and the Philistines, too, shall *be like a clan in Judah!* It is remarkable to consider some remaining people of the long-standing enemy the Philistines becoming cleansed by God and incorporated into the people of God! Actually, Psalm 87, goes even further. Listen to selected verses out of Psalm 87, "(verse 1) *On the holy mount stands the city [that God] founded; the LORD loves the gates of Zion. (v.3) Glorious things of you are spoken, O city of God. (v.4) Among those who know Me I mention...behold,*

Philistia... 'This one was born there,' they say. (v.5) and of Zion it shall be said, 'This one and that one were born in her' for the Most High Himself will establish her. The LORD records as He registers the peoples, 'This one was born there.'"

What does Psalm 87 mean? Three times it says they will be considered by God as if they were born in Zion! Considered among the native-born citizens of Zion. Some Philistines will be converted to faith in God, and be in heaven with us!

To confirm this truth, we read the word of the Lord in Revelation 5:9-10, which is a future new song we will sing in heaven to Jesus, *"a new song, saying, 'Worthy are You to take the scroll and to open its seals, for You were slain, and by Your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and You have made them a kingdom of priests to our God..."*

How's that for hope despite judgment?

What is clear from the word of the LORD here in Jeremiah chapter 47 is that the final judgment of all the earth is coming. No one will be spared the judgment. Acts 17:31, *"...[God] has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom He has appointed; and of this He has given assurance to all by raising Him from the dead."* What is equally clear in the word of the LORD is that hope is offered in Christ for everyone who turns to Jesus for reconciliation with the LORD God. Romans 10:13, *"everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."* That brings us to our second sermon point.

2. The day of The LORD. (v.3-5)

Verse 3, the language about the day of the Lord against the Philistines is a series of short commands giving us the feel of an army quickly scrambling in response to an air raid siren, similar to what we saw back in chapter 46 against Egypt. The impression is given here for us to imagine the fearful impact of that moment when the enemy army was advancing for the attack. The enemy was so close that the sound was deafening. The horses hooves were pounding toward them, and that chariot wheels were rumbling in their direction.

Listen to the actual terrifying words about the judgment of God through Babylon in verse 3-4, *"At the noise of the stamping of the hoofs of his stallions, at the rushing of his chariots, at the rumbling of their wheels, the fathers look not back to their children, so feeble are their hands, because of the day that is coming to destroy all the Philistines, to cut off from Tyre and Sidon every helper that remains. For the LORD is destroying the Philistines..."*

The cities of Tyre and Sidon were mentioned because they were seaports of the Phoenicians, further north. Throughout ancient history, whenever attacking armies came from the North, they would work their way down the coast – first they would attack Tyre, then Sidon, then Ashkelon, then Gaza. It was predictable. For the Philistines, their nightmare was that they knew that it was inevitable and unstoppable. These last two ports, Ashkelon and Gaza were the last fragments of

strength of the Philistines. But according to verse 5, Ashkelon had just fallen. The Philistine port city of Ashkelon was no more. Ashkelon had perished. What is next? Gaza.

How deeply did terror strike the Philistines in Gaza? So deep that men run away and do not even look back to help their own children, because they know that there is nothing that can be done to save any of them. True powerlessness. True terror.

Three common signs of ancient pagan mourning and grieving were: 1) shaving their heads 2) silence, and 3) inflicting themselves with gashes. Turns out that the Philistines in Gaza would do all three signs of mourning and grieving!

The effect of the terror is stated in verse 5, "*Baldness has come upon Gaza; Ashkelon has perished. O remnant of their valley, how long will you gash yourselves?*" The former giant enemies are now helpless. God has worked a massive reversal. The Philistine centers of power have become centers of fear and grief. The point is that the day of the LORD brings terror for unbelievers.

3. The sword of The LORD. (v.6-7)

Jeremiah presents his conversation with the sword. While we are reading about a devastating military invasion, Jeremiah wants to make something very clear. The Sword is the Lord's Sword. It is not Babylon, but rather our God who has appointed and authorized the proverbial sword to do its work. The sword must obey God. The destruction we read about is not just aggression from one ancient army against another. It is an act commanded by the Lord our God. since Jeremiah has made it so inescapable in these verses, it forces us to ask - what do we do with that?

Listen to verse 6, where Jeremiah asked the *sword of the LORD, how long till you are quiet?* The answer was given in a question in verse 7, "*How can [the sword] be quiet when the LORD has given it a [command or a] charge? Against Ashkelon and against the seashore [God] has appointed [His sword].*"

That is the end of our chapter. What do we do with these last two verses? Everything that is happening in this invasion was credited to God. What we must do with that is to learn The lesson of the Sword. We must absorb what God is teaching us. The unqualified role of the Lord is unstoppable judgment, but also hope. The lesson of the sword of the Lord is the ground of our hope. The sword is the basis of our hope. What do we do with the sword? We increase our hope, and we are greatly encouraged! What? Yes. How?

This God that we read about in Jeremiah chapter 46 and 47 is a God who seems undomesticated to our modern minds, as we look closely at this. This God with His sword may even violate our sensibilities, but remember, we are not studying God's Word in order to reveal to God what we would like Him to be, but rather to learn the lesson God is revealing to us - what God is truly like.

Even while Jeremiah is pleading for the sword wielded by God to cease its destruction, Jeremiah himself remains aware that the sword constitutes God's judgment upon a pagan nation, which equals God's salvation for God's people.

Jeremiah recognizes that it is futile to attempt to restrain the sword of The LORD. Jeremiah did not get to call a halt to the bloodshed.

Our understanding of the lesson of the sword of the Lord cannot be understood until we go all the way to the bloodshed of the cross of Christ. When we keep asking deeper and deeper questions about God's sword of judgment, it takes us ahead to the ultimate event of His Sword. The Sword of the Lord against sin cannot be quieted and sheathed until the Sword has completed its assignment to destroy Jesus Christ, because of our sins. God has given the sword an assignment.

The apostles tutor us with this important lesson, since the apostles had the lesson of God's sword of judgment figured out. Listen to the prayer of the apostles in Acts 4:26, "*...the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against His [Christ] – for truly in [Jerusalem] there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.*" This was a gathering of government officials, military officials, pagan people, and God's people Israel. Representatives of the whole world! Against Jesus. And they put Jesus to death. But that action was God's plan. The sword of God fell on Jesus from the enemies. Why? In order that God would take final, once-for-all action against our enemies of sin, death, and the devil, and then in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God would win the victory for us all, once for all.

The apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 6, that our necessary understanding of the Sword of the Lord comes from first understanding that the Lord's true warfare takes place in the spiritual realm. So, what is the Sword of the Lord in the spiritual realm? Ephesians 6:17, "*take ...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*" The Sword of the Lord has become the Spirit and the Word going throughout the world to slay people in the Spirit, and to cause them to die unto themselves, and live in righteousness by faith in Jesus. The Sword of the Lord is the Word preached, the gospel preached, which now converts pagans through faith and salvation, instead of destroying pagans through unbelief, disobedience, and judgment! Consider Romans 16:25-26, "*the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith...*"

The Judge of all is Jesus Christ! Jesus holds the Sword! Christ gives the command of judgment and the command of salvation! It is not just that Jesus will

bring individual persons to justice, but also it is Jesus who will bring countries to justice. Listen to Matthew 25:31-32, “*When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. Before Him will be gathered all the nations, and He will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.*”

Regarding our chapter, Jeremiah 47, it is Jesus who will judge the Philistines! Actually, when we grasp the lesson of the sword, we finally understand that this is good news! The same Jesus who comes in salvation is the same Jesus who comes in judgment. We praise Jesus for His salvation, and we can also praise Jesus for His righteous judgment!

Is it right and just for God to judge the nations? Yes, it is right and just. So, praise be to God. Is it right and just for God to give us salvation while God destroys others? It is right and just. How? Because of Christ. God the Father placed upon Jesus all the sins and wrongdoings of His people.

God’s victory is something for us to celebrate! God is perfectly holy. God has not done something wrong in destroying the Philistines who tried to kill David. God has not done something wrong in destroying Egypt, after the Egyptians held God’s people enslaved for hundreds of years.

Conclusion:

1. Remember that you are exonerated because of Christ’s cross. Being afraid is not the right response to this chapter. No. When we face God in the final judgment, we will be cleared of all wrongdoing and warmly welcomed into heaven, because Christ has already taken our punishment. To borrow the phrase that is in Psalm 87, “*This one and that one were born*” in the heavenly city. We are considered as people who belong in heaven! We will not be visitors in heaven. We will not be foreigners. We belong there. *Our citizenship is in heaven.* Philippians 3:20. Remember that we belong to God, because of Christ’s cross and resurrection.

2. Celebrate God’s victory! God’s victory is something for us to celebrate. We already know right now that God will win. God will secure His victory over every nation and every person. In that we rejoice. We celebrate God’s victory over all!

3. Do not judge others. They have a judge. Romans 14:10-12, “*Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written, ‘As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.’ So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.*” One takeaway from our study of this chapter is that the sword of judgment is not in your hand. Do not judge others.

4. Parenting is different with Christ. First of all, normative values exist. God's standards are the international standard for parenting. Love and care as much as you love and care for yourself, and even better, love and care for children as God cares for His people. Parenting is in verse 3 of Jeremiah 47, where we are told of the failure of Philistine parents - the Philistine fathers would not turn back to help their children. Where do we see judgment today? We see judgment when God turns people over to their sins, based on Romans 1, where three times we read that God gave them over to their depraved mind. What does that mean for parenting? It means that parents who refuse to follow God will not protect their children before they are born, or after they are born. At their core, parents are selfish, unless Christ is in those parents. Idolatry leads to bad parenting, and Christ leads us to redeem parenting. Christian parents do not give in to fear, but rather through a robust faith in the sovereign God, point their children to Christ crucified and risen again victorious. Christian parents recognize that the children do not belong to us, but rather they belong to the Lord. We will be held responsible to God for how we raise His precious ones. Even for those who committed abortion or in other ways hurt their own children or grandchildren, there is hope of forgiveness, healing and restoration. Christian parents are repentant of the sins of the culture, and we hold fast to the ethic of God. So far are Christian parents from abandoning their children, that we rather make sacrifices for our children in Christ-like love and wisdom. Parenting is different with Christ

5. Be consoled personally that the Lord keeps us safe. God's judgment is good news for God and God's judgment is good news for God's people. Think of it, it is wonderful to know for certain that in the end God will defeat all His enemies. There will not be one king or one kingdom left that will keep on defying and opposing God, and threatening us. How is that good news for us? Because God's people will remain safe. Romans 8:35, "*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?*" No! Nothing "...in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 8:39) We need not fear military threats, legal threats, well-financed threats, sneaky threats, medical threats, or demonic threats. We are safe. Be consoled.

6. Be excited about worldwide missions. We go and we send. We are willing to go. We are willing to send our best. We send our children, our siblings, our parents. God's destruction and God's salvation are a package deal. To say that God will judge is to say that God will save, and to say that God will save is to say that God will judge. God will save His people and God will be with His people. The judge of all nations is also the Savior of the world! The hope of salvation is not just for

Israel and Judah, not even just for Egypt, but also for the Philistines and is genuinely offered to all peoples in all nations. Philistines is close to the word Palestine. Rather than hating Jewish people, we love them, share the gospel with them, send missionaries to them, and pray for their salvation. Rather than keeping our religion to ourselves, we share the good news about the Savior of the world over the garden fence with our neighbors! Even with bad neighbors! We do not keep the gospel from those who are irritating neighbors, and we do not wish judgment upon them! May it never be! We are people of mercy and love, because we are the people of God, and He is a God of mercy and love. James 2:13, “*Mercy triumphs over judgment!*” What are we as Christians living in the New Testament age supposed to do with Jeremiah chapter 47? How are we supposed to respond to this chapter about judgment? Jeremiah chapter 47 is not meant to frighten us as believers, so what is meant to be the outcome? 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, “*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*” Which is it for Jeremiah 47? It is all. This chapter teaches us that God is God over all nations and He will come in judgment. This chapter reproves us if we think otherwise. This chapter corrects us by convincing us that God is sovereign over all, and know that the world is not spinning out of control. And this chapter trains us in righteousness to have a holy and righteous comfort and encouragement that our God has the whole world in His hands. Jeremiah chapter 47 is not meant to frighten us as believers, so what is meant to be the outcome? To be built up in our hope. To be encouraged! The lesson of the sword is very encouraging indeed! And what is the good work that we are equipped to do? The work of spreading the good news and the work of advancing the kingdom, building the church, and fulfilling the mission to evangelize the nations. There is a place in the plan of God not just for judgment for the Philistines, but for salvation for some Philistines. There are some Philistines whose names are written by God into the Book of Life! Prior to the judgment coming on all nations, Christ has ordered that salvation be proclaimed to all nations! Matthew 24:14, “*this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.*”