

PROPHECY AGAINST EGYPT

TEXT: JEREMIAH 46:1-28

INTRODUCTION:

1. This new section, from Jeremiah chapters 46 through 51 deal with God's judgments upon the Gentile nations (46:1). Way back in chapter 1, verse 5, the LORD said to Jeremiah, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations."
2. Then again, in chapter 1, verse 10 -- "See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant."
3. Chapters 46 through 51 have been described as a collection of Jeremiah's "prophetic indictments of the Gentiles, delivered at various periods" (Unger).
4. Egypt comes first (46:2), then the Philistines (47:1), then Moab (48:1), then the Ammonites (49:1), then Edom (49:7), then Damascus (49:23), then Kedar (49:28), then Elam (49:34), then Babylon (50:1; 51:1).
5. Jeremiah 52 is retrospective, reviewing again the overthrow of Jerusalem by King Nebuchadnezzar and his army (cf. Jer. 39).
6. With the exception of verses 27 and 28, which predicts the restoration of Israel in the last days, chapter 46 deals with God's judgment upon Egypt.

I. KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR WAS GOD'S INSTRUMENT OF JUDGMENT

1. Three times in the book of Jeremiah, King Nebuchadnezzar is referred to as God's "servant" (25:9; 27:6; 43:10).
2. Here in Jeremiah 46:2, the LORD says that He is "against Egypt," and "against the army of Pharaoh-necho king of Egypt."
3. This Pharaoh-necho king of Egypt is the Egyptian king that killed King Josiah on the battlefield of Megiddo. This is recorded in II Chronicles 35:20-27.
4. But then four years later, Nebuchadnezzar defeated Pharaoh-necho at the Battle of Carchemish. This defeat broke the power of Egypt, and made Babylon the great power in that part of the world.
5. Jeremiah prophesied the defeat of Pharaoh-necho before it happened (46:1 ff).

6. Merrill Unger said this about Jeremiah's prophecy, "This prophecy was given, it appears, as the army of Pharaoh Necho of Egypt was poised for battle against the Babylonian forces under Nebuchadnezzar. One of the great decisive military encounters of all time, it decided the whole course of history when Egypt's ambition was checked and Pharaoh Necho's dream of control of Western Asia crashed in ruin (II Kings 24:7)" (*Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*).
7. "And the king of Egypt came not again any more out of his land: for the king of Babylon had taken from the river of Egypt unto the river Euphrates all that pertained to the king of Egypt" (II Kings 24:7).
8. Jeremiah 46:3 and 4 describe the preparations for battle, and verses 5 and 6 describe Egypt's defeat.
9. The battle took place at Carchemish (46:2), a Hittite city northeast of Israel on the Euphrates river, first captured by Pharaoh Necho and then taken from him by King Nebuchadnezzar.
10. In poetic language, Jeremiah makes it clear that this was the judgment of God upon the proud Egyptians (46:7-12). They rose up "like a flood" (46:7, 8), but they were quickly put down.
11. The Ethiopians and the Libyans, and the Lydians (46:9) were mercenaries working for Egypt (cf. verse 16, and verse 21 -- "her hired men").
12. The term, "the day of the LORD" (46:10) is usually used in reference to the coming tribulation and events surrounding the second coming of Christ, but here it is a prophecy of Egypt's defeat at Carchemish.
13. Unger says it "prophetically illustrates the final decimation of the LORD'S enemies at the second advent of Christ" (*Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*).
14. After defeating Egypt at the Battle of Carchemish, Nebuchadnezzar would "come and smite the land of Egypt" (46:13; cf. 43:8-13).
15. Nebuchadnezzar's sword (called "the oppressing sword" in verse 16) would "devour" the Egyptians (46:14). Their valiant men would be "swept away...because the LORD did drive them" (46:15).
16. It was Nebuchadnezzar's sword, but "the LORD did drive them" (46:15). "He (the LORD) made many to fall..." (46:16).
17. Nebuchadnezzar was God's "servant" (25:9; 27:6; 43:10). He was God's instrument of judgment.
18. "Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise; he hath passed the time appointed" (46:17). In other words, Pharaoh moved too slowly. He

- could have averted this disaster but he failed to show up on the battlefield at the right time and he passed up his opportunities.
19. In contrast, the King of heaven and earth, the LORD of hosts, is always on schedule, and His servant Nebuchadnezzar would come at God's appointed time (46:18).
 20. Egypt is referred to three times in this chapter as "the daughter of Egypt" (46:11, 19, 24). She was "like a very fair heifer" (46:20), about to be slaughtered by the Babylonian army (46:20-24).
 21. The fleeing Egyptians were like serpents, escaping the invading Babylonian soldiers who came against them like woodcutters with axes (46:22, 23).
 22. The great Babylonian army was like a swarm of "grasshoppers, and are innumerable" (46:23b).
 23. Egypt was like a helpless young woman, overpowered and unable to escape her attacker (46:24).
 24. The LORD punished Egypt because they worshipped false gods and idols (46:25, 26).
 25. The Babylonians also worshipped false gods and idols, and after the LORD was finished using them to punish Judah and Egypt, He judged them too (cf. 50:1, 2).
 26. Though God judged Egypt, and they are no longer a world power, God in His grace and mercy promised Egypt that her country would be rebuilt, and it was -- "and afterward it shall be inhabited, as in the days of old, saith the LORD" (46:26b).

II. THE FUTURE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL (46:27, 28)

1. This promise was originally given in Jeremiah 30:10 and 11.
2. Unger said God's love for Israel "shines all the more resplendently against the visitation of His judgment upon the wicked" (*Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*).
3. Jeremiah chapter 46 ends with words of encouragement and hope: "But fear not thou, O my servant Jacob, and be not dismayed, O Israel: for, behold, I will save thee from afar off, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and be in rest and at ease, and none shall make him afraid. Fear thou not..."

CONCLUSION:

1. In Jeremiah 25:15, the LORD said to the prophet Jeremiah, "Take the wine cup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it."

2. All the nations were made to drink the cup of judgment, starting with "Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah" (25:16-18, cf. verses 27, 28).
3. First Peter 4:17 says, "that judgment must begin at the house of God."
4. Next: "Pharaoh king of Egypt, and his servants, and his princes, and all his people" (25:19).
5. Jeremiah 25:15 and following looks beyond God's judgment of Judah, and Egypt, and ancient Babylon, and includes God's judgment upon all the nations at the second coming of Christ.
6. The *Scofield Study Bible* says, "The prophecy leaps to the very end of this age."