

Jeremiah 49:1-6 The Rise and Fall of Greed Falls Ch. AM 6/4/2023

Jeremiah chapters 46-51 are called OAN, which stands for Oracles Against the Nations. Messages of God's warning of judgment against various countries.

Two things to notice. 1) Poise. What is interesting is how unhurried and confident God is about it. These are not hasty press releases. God showed poise. It was written with high-level beauty in very accomplished literature. God distributed haunting and terrifying announcements of destruction, with superb and exquisite words of presentation!

2) Accurate knowledge. The second thing to notice is that God accurately knew the details of each country. God organized the list of countries in geographic order, from a south to a north direction. It is as if God were knowingly pointing His finger at a map of the world, sliding His finger northward on the map from the bottom to the top. God was showing the areas He would destroy. God's tone in this chapter reminds us that no one can stop God's finger, or stay God's hand!

The previous lesson from chapter 48 was that after God issued orders of destruction for the Moabites, then God said that God would restore them.

Today the same lesson from chapter 49 is that after God issued orders of destruction for the Ammonites, then God said that God would restore them.

This repeated lesson echoed the big theme of the book of Jeremiah. After God issued orders of destruction for Israel, then God said that God would restore them! That brings us to our main point...**The Lord's covenant blessings are true treasure, and so our greed/desire for other treasures is a destructive threat that must be punished and removed!**

1. Greed makes us sin in the forms of desiring, taking, and having what does not belong to us; God judges greed, discontentment and theft. (v.1-2)

Verse 1 – after telling us that this section will be God's accusations concerning the Ammonites, then the message begins with two obvious questions,

such as: Is water wet? Is the sky blue? God asked 2 obvious questions in a row...“*Has Israel no sons? Has he no heir?*” The answer is obvious and known by everyone that Israel DOES have sons and heirs. Okay, then why had the enemy Ammonites settled in the land that God gave to the people of Israel, specifically the land of the tribe of Gad?

God gave the land to His people. Because God did that, the ownership of the land must be respected by the Ammonites. The problem was that the Ammonites were greedy in desiring, taking and owning land that belonged to someone else.

Verse 2 – God’s verdict was guilty for the Ammonites, verse 2, “*Therefore, behold, the days are coming, declares The LORD...then Israel will dispossess those who dispossessed him, says The LORD.*” God indicted the Ammonites. God declared war on them. God caused a savage cry of attack against the Ammonites! Why would God do that? What is the good purpose in the end? Verse 2 tells us that answer – God would make it right again. Israel would again possess what others had stolen from them. But there is more here. Notice that not only would the Ammonites be kicked out of Israel’s land, but also even the homeland of the Ammonites would be burned.

2. Greed makes us boast and trust in the wrong treasures. (v.3-5)

Starting in verse 3, the way of writing changed. It became a summons to a public ceremony of grief! We hear this in the verbs God wrote in verse 3, “*Wail, cry out, put on sackcloth, lament, run to and fro.*” Why are the Ammonites being called to wail and grieve? Because their greed offended God and God must judge greed. They believed if they sacrificed their children, that their false god would make them wealthy. The true God would cause their false god Milcom (or Molech), and their human leaders, the priests and officials will experience severe defeat, humiliation, and be driven away into exile.

Verse 3 – Heshbon was a city on the border. Much like the modern American city Texarkana is on the border and so actually in both the state of Texas and in the state of Arkansas, so also the ancient city of Heshbon was in both the country of Moab and the country of Ammon. God personified the city of Heshbon by speaking to the city, and calling on the citizens to cry and even to wail publicly.

Next God called on another city to mourn, this time it was the city named Rabbah. Much like today's sports team rivalries have an object for the winner, such as the axe that Minnesota or Wisconsin win and take home, so in the ancient world, the common practice was that a winning army would take the statues of the false gods of the defeated army, and bring those statues into the temple of the god of the winning army.

This time, the one true and living God would send the statue of Milcom or Molech into exile. This was the false religion that would burn children in the fire. The true God says that not only will the false god Molech be taken into exile, but also his false priests, and his false officials will be taken into exile with their false god. The false god Milcom or Molech was so weak that he could not protect his people, he could not protect his priest and officials, and he could not even protect himself from being sent into exile himself. God is making the point that sinners trust in the wrong treasures.

Next in verse 4, the Ammonites were confronted about adding the sins of boasting in their possessions and trusting in their treasures. The Ammonites were questioned by God about their pattern of boasting about their land and wealth. They were excessively complacent, while trusting in their own financial resources. Verse 4 says they boasted of their stolen valleys. They had overtaken fruitful valleys rich with fruits and vegetables. Because of their trust in these treasures, their outlook was described by their own question, "*Who will come against me?*" They falsely concluded that no other country could overtake them....no other god

could overtake them! The Ammonites falsely believed that not even the true God, could come against them and overtake them!

The LORD God of hosts countered their false belief with a strong contrasting statement of reality in verse 5. There is one thing that the Ammonites had failed to sufficiently consider...God. Or, as God Himself put it in the first two words of verse 5, "*Behold, I...*" Notice next the title that God used to refer to Himself was the title "*LORD God of hosts*" which highlighted His role as supreme military commander over all the armies of heaven. It was with this statement that God broke through the false beliefs, delusions, and prideful boasting of the Ammonites.

God answered the complacency and boasting of the Ammonites by saying this in verse 5, "*Behold, I will bring terror upon you...*" Their previous question *who will come against me* was answered by God who said, *I will* – [I will come against you!] The Ammonites would be driven out of their own land, ripped away from those rich valleys of produce and abundance, forced out into exile like fugitives. God would cause exile! All this, because the Ammonites had fallen into greed, and had infringed on the land of God's people.

Paul explained the clear lesson in 1 Timothy 6:9-10, "*... those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.*"

3. After God disciplines our greed, He graciously restores us to trusting Him and desiring His covenant fortunes! (v.6)

Verse 6 showed a complete change of tone from warning to good news! This last verse looked beyond the present warnings. This verse anticipated the future reversal of the status of the Ammonites. The same God who would cause the

exile for the Ammonites, would in the future do a good deed of rescue for the Ammonites. This is designed to shock us, because it sounds so familiar. Surprisingly, God said He would do for Ammonites as God said He would do for Israelites – first judgment, then restoration, first exile, then homecoming!

Listen for the similarity in what God previously said about restoring the fortunes of His own people, back in Jeremiah 31:10, “... *‘He who scattered Israel will gather him, and will keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock.’*”

We see a pattern emerging. Take a look back at the last verse of the previous chapter, Chapter 48, verse 47, where we studied last time regarding the Moabites, “*Yet I will restore the fortunes of Moab in the latter days, declares the LORD.*” Now look at chapter 49, verse 6, God’s final word regarding Ammonites, “*But afterwards I will restore the fortunes of the Ammonites, declares The LORD.*” The pattern that is emerging is God’s identical words to Moab are repeated to Ammon – God’s gift of each country would be to receive their lands back. Listen to Deuteronomy 2:19, “...*when you approach the territory of the people of Ammon, do not harass them or contend with them, for I will not give you any of the land of the people of Ammon as a possession....*” It is amazing that God instructed His own people to respect the land of the Ammonites, even as God instructed all the nations to respect the land of Israel. God will make all things right.

Conclusion: three lessons from this Bible passage.

Lesson 1: the certainty of final judgment. remember that the Holy God will judge all the earth, all nations, and all persons. No one will be spared that judgment. All persons must seek reconciliation with God through Christ while there is yet time. 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.”

Lesson 2: the darkness, danger, and damage of greed. Greed is a sin that will be judged by God. What makes greed so bad? We put ourselves in the place of God by determining ourselves the things that we should have. We put ourselves in the place of God to establish the method by which we will get those things. When we are greedy for dishonest gain, we destroy ourselves, as Proverbs 1:19 says, “*Such are the ways of everyone who is greedy for unjust gain; it takes away the life of its possessors.*” When we are greedy, we damage others around us, as Proverbs 15:27 says, “*Whoever is greedy for unjust gain troubles his own household...*” Our greed causes a lot of problems for everyone around us!

Lesson 3: Christ graciously restores us, after our sins of greed and discontentment. The good news of Christ’s triumph over our sin of discontentment greed, and His rescue of us from God’s wrath and judgment by taking our sins upon Himself on the cross and dying in our place. He rose again to give us victory over greed and discontentment. Christ provides His Word and Spirit for our sanctification, forming hearts of contentment and even generosity.

Christ rescued us from judgment and from greed, by His mercy. And our Lord Jesus taught in Matthew 6:19-24, that we must not lay up treasures for ourselves on earth, that where our treasure is, there our heart will be also, and that no one can serve two masters, we cannot serve both God and money.

In this passage God was communicating to His people Judah in exile, and reading this book, to be encouraged that God would make things right. The exiles would be going home again after their 70 years in exile. God is encouraging all of us by being a God who makes things right. Those who steal, be warned, because God will make things right. Those who have had your possessions stolen, be encouraged, for God will make it right and He will provide for you. Those who are walking with Christ, remember God has judged our sins at the cross of Jesus, and washed away our sins of greed, discontentment and theft, and Christ causes

sanctifying growth in us. We become people more and more like Christ, that is, people of fairness, hard work, and even generosity. Colossians 3:23-25, *“Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.”* God judged our greed at the cross, but in the risen Lord Jesus Christ He restores us in His grace to be generous.

I Timothy 6:6-7, *“godliness with contentment is great gain, 7 for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. 8 But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.”*