

Jeremiah 6

Rebellion is never a pretty picture, and most certainly not when the rebellion is against God. In the first section of this chapter, vs. 1-5, the destruction is pictured as imminent. The next four sections begin with the same phrase, "Thus saith the LORD." The destruction that is coming is from the LORD. Although there are offers of mercy through repentance, vs. 8, 16, 17, 26, the nation is set in her rebellious ways.

- 1 O ye children of Benjamin, gather yourselves to flee out of the midst of Jerusalem, and blow the trumpet in Tekoa, and set up a sign of fire in Bethhaccerem: for evil appeareth out of the north, and great destruction.**
- 2 I have likened the daughter of Zion to a comely and delicate woman.**
- 3 The shepherds with their flocks shall come unto her; they shall pitch their tents against her round about; they shall feed every one in his place.**
- 4 Prepare ye war against her; arise, and let us go up at noon. Woe unto us! for the day goeth away, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out.**
- 5 Arise, and let us go by night, and let us destroy her palaces.**

Vs. 1 The area of Benjamin, the tribe of Jeremiah, is adjacent to Jerusalem to the south and Tekoa and Bethhaccerem are cities to the south of Jerusalem. They are told to flee from Jerusalem because of the imminent destruction of Jerusalem.

Vs. 2 The people of Israel are like a delicate woman. They are in no way able to fight against the coming armies.

Vs. 3 The picture of "shepherds with their flocks" sounds benevolent, but speaks of the invading army. "They shall feed every one in his place," speaks of the inability of Israel to prevent the attack.

Vs. 4-5 The army is told to attack at noon, late in the day for a battle, so, instead, they are told to attack at night. The interesting part of these verses is that God is telling Babylon to attack Judah.

- 6 For thus hath the LORD of hosts said, Hew ye down trees, and cast a mount against Jerusalem: this is the city to be visited; she is wholly oppression in the midst of her.**
- 7 As a fountain casteth out her waters, so she casteth out her wickedness: violence and spoil is heard in her; before me continually is grief and wounds.**
- 8 Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee; lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited.**

Vs. 6-7 The judgment of God is, once again, brought about because of the sin of the nation -

1. Oppression
2. Wickedness comes out like a fountain of water
3. Violence and spoil permeates the nation
4. Grief and wounds is continually present

Vs. 8 God implores them to repent or His soul shall depart from them and the land would be uninhabited.

In 586 B.C. this became a reality when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and the vast majority of Jewish people were taken into captivity.

Years ago, flying to Israel I engaged in a conversation with an ultra-orthodox Jewish man. I asked him why were we sent into Babylonian captivity for 70 years. He answered correctly saying that we didn't let the land rest for 70 Sabbath years (every 7th year for 490 years) according to 2 Chronicles 36:20-21:

- 20 And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia:
- 21 To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.

and, as a result, God took us out of the land for 70 years. I affirmed the correctness of his understanding of the cause of the Babylonian captivity. This is what Jeremiah is alluding to.

I then asked him, "we (the Jewish people) were destroyed as a nation and dispersed from our land for 1,878 years from 70 A.D. - 1948 A.D. What was our sin that cause an almost 19 century dispersion? He told me he didn't know.

My response was the following. "The call of Abraham, and the establishment of the Abrahamic Covenant which set apart the people and nation of Israel, through which the Messiah would come, was about 19 centuries to the coming of Jesus. In this period of time there are scores of prophecies about Messiah. The prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus. Could it be that because we (the Jewish people) rejected 19 centuries of revelation about the Messiah and His coming, that God took us out of the land for 19 centuries?"

Creation Ministries International, <https://creation.com/the-times-of-abraham>, in an article by Dr. A.J.M. Osgood, titled *The Times of Abraham*, states:

"In summary, Abraham entered the land of Canaan at approximately 1875 B.C.."

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Our Vision: To see the Lord Jesus Christ honoured as Creator and Saviour of the world

Our Mission: To support the effective proclamation of the Gospel by providing credible answers that affirm the reliability of the Bible, in particular its Genesis history

God would "depart" (temporarily) from them and turn to another people to work through. Jesus made the same warning in Matthew 21:33-43 using the parable found originally in Isaiah 5.

- 33 Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country:
- 34 And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.
- 35 And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.
- 36 Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.
- 37 But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.
- 38 But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.
- 39 And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.
- 40 When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?
- 41 They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.
- 42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?
- 43 Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

THE RESPONSE OF THE OWNER

Jesus pulls a Nathan and they take the hook. He asks them what the owner will do and they get it right, because it is obvious. They should have known better. I think we often just assume the Jews didn't know who Jesus was, but this and other passages show that they did know and rejected him. Therefore, they really do deserve judgment.

Jesus gives them a little stab. He asks the teachers of the scriptures, "Have you ever read your Bible?" and quotes Ps 118:22f and Isa 8:14-15. He uses building imagery of builders (religious leaders) rejecting a stone (Christ). God would take what they rejected and build a whole new structure around it.

Therefore (vs. 43) the kingdom would be given to another nation. Who is the nation? It is not Israel because this word is never used of Israel. It is not Gentiles because it is singular. Cf. 1Pe 2:4-9 We are neither Jew nor Gentile. We are a new creation with a citizenship in heaven.

The Point

Those who reject Christ will be replaced by others. "Because of the rejection of Christ, Israel is doomed to judgment and is replaced in the Kingdom program of God (for the present) by those who will demonstrate the fruits of faith." (Bailey)

The Relation of the Parable to the Kingdom of God

The Jewish leadership and Israel who followed them, who rejected the Messiah, would be replaced, and the kingdom would be given to the Jewish outcasts and/or Gentiles who believed that Jesus was the Messiah.

Hampton Keathley IV, *The Rejected Son Matthew 21:33-44*, <https://bible.org/seriespage/rejected-son>

Notice the qualifier in the quote of Bailey, "for the present." Israel's being set aside by God is temporary. Romans 11 expounds on this **temporary** rejection of Israel.

- 9 **Thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall throughly glean the remnant of Israel as a vine: turn back thine hand as a grapegatherer into the baskets.**
- 10 **To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it.**
- 11 **Therefore I am full of the fury of the LORD; I am weary with holding in: I will pour it out upon the children abroad, and upon the assembly of young men together: for even the husband with the wife shall be taken, the aged with him that is full of days.**
- 12 **And their houses shall be turned unto others, with their fields and wives together: for I will stretch out my hand upon the inhabitants of the land, saith the LORD.**
- 13 **For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely.**
- 14 **They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.**
- 15 **Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the LORD.**

Vs. 9 The warning of the attack continues.

Vs. 10 Jeremiah is exasperated because there is none in the nation who will heed the warning. Their ear is uncircumcised and the word of God is a reproach and they have no delight in it

Vs. 11 Jeremiah is "full of the fury of the LORD" at the people and will express it, asking God to "pour it [fury] out" on the young (children and young men); middle age (husband and wife); and the old (the age with him that is full of days).

Vs. 12 The destruction of God will cover male and female throughout the land.

Vs. 13 The sin of the people is throughout the nation - covetousness and lies - are the lot of the citizens and the leaders.

Vs. 14 The false hope of peace promised by the leaders has given some relief but it is a lie. The sins of the political and religious leaders have brought the nation to the point of destruction.

Vs. 15 There was no shame among the leaders as they lied to the citizens. "They [the leaders] shall fall among them [the citizens] that fall."

* when the head, "the prophet even unto the priest," is rotten the body becomes rotten.

- 16 **Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.**
- 17 **Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Harken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken.**
- 18 **Therefore hear, ye nations, and know, O congregation, what is among them.**
- 19 **Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it.**
- 20 **To what purpose cometh there to me incense from Sheba, and the sweet cane from a far country? your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto me.**
- 21 **Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will lay stumblingblocks before this people, and the fathers and the sons together shall fall upon them; the neighbour and his friend shall perish.**

Vs. 16-17 God implores the people to repent: **ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein,**

God "ordained thee a prophet unto the nations," Jeremiah 1:5. The charges against Judah can, in some instances, be applied to nations. In verse 18, the nations are commanded to hear.

The nation had left the old ways, tried a new way, and the result was unrest and threat of destruction. Why would a nation turn from the "old paths" that led to blessing and prosperity?

1. The rejection of objective truth, the word of God, is the primary reason, vs. 10 (**the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it**), 19 (**they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it**).
2. The religious leaders, prophet and the priest, lie to the people telling them there will be peace when there is none, 12-13.
3. What should Israel (Judah) have done?
4. In what ways can the admonition "**ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls**" apply to the United States? How does it differ from the challenge to Israel?

Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet.

* God has set up people to warn the nation.

The people refused to listen.

Vs. 18-19 The nations and the entire earth need to listen. The rebelliousness of the people brings judgment - they rejected the Word of God.

Vs. 20 Their offerings to God, religious hypocrisy, are useless - they are unacceptable and odorless.

Vs. 21 Because of their sin, God will lay stumbling blocks in front of them.

- 22 Thus saith the LORD, Behold, a people cometh from the north country, and a great nation shall be raised from the sides of the earth.**
- 23 They shall lay hold on bow and spear; they are cruel, and have no mercy; their voice roareth like the sea; and they ride upon horses, set in array as men for war against thee, O daughter of Zion.**
- 24 We have heard the fame thereof: our hands wax feeble: anguish hath taken hold of us, and pain, as of a woman in travail.**
- 25 Go not forth into the field, nor walk by the way; for the sword of the enemy and fear is on every side.**
- 26 O daughter of my people, gird thee with sackcloth, and wallow thyself in ashes: make thee mourning, as for an only son, most bitter lamentation: for the spoiler shall suddenly come upon us.**
- 27 I have set thee for a tower and a fortress among my people, that thou mayest know and try their way.**
- 28 They are all grievous revolters, walking with slanders: they are brass and iron; they are all corrupters.**
- 29 The bellows are burned, the lead is consumed of the fire; the founder melteth in vain: for the wicked are not plucked away.**
- 30 Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the LORD hath rejected them.**

Vs. 22-23 The attacker is powerful while the people of the land are like delicate woman. The attacker is cruel, having no mercy, they roar as an unstoppable army with overwhelming military power.

Vs. 24-25 The people respond in fear and anguish recognizing their feebleness before the enemy who surrounds them.

Vs. 26-27 The people are encouraged to repent with Jeremiah being sent as a warning to them.

Vs. 28-30 The chapter ends as it started - the nation is rebellious and under the judgment of God.

The late British diplomat Sir John Glubb wrote a book in 1977 called *"The Fate of Empires and Search For Survival."* Glubb noted the average age of empires since the time of ancient Assyria (859-612 B.C.) is 250 years. Only the Mameluke Empire in Egypt and the Levant (1250-1517) made it as far as 267 years. America is 244 years old and is exhibiting signs of decline.

"All empires begin," writes Glubb, "with the age of pioneers, followed by ages of conquest, commerce, affluence, intellect and decadence." America appears to have reached the age of decadence, which Glubb defines as marked by "defensiveness, age of intellect (endless talking but no action), the intensification of internal political hatreds, influx of foreigners, pessimism, materialism, frivolity, national pride, the welfare state, and a weakening of religion."

"It is of interest to note that decadence is the disintegration of a system, not of its individual members... Neither is decadence physical...Decadence is a moral and spiritual disease, resulting from too long a period of wealth and power, producing cynicism, decline of religion, pessimism and frivolity."

"Perhaps, in fact, we may reach the conclusion that the successive rise and fall of great nations is inevitable and, indeed, a system divinely ordained."