

“PROPHECY TO OTHER NATIONS”

Jeremiah 46:1 - 49:39

NIV MEMORY VERSE: Proverbs 3:11-12

My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.

Question: How many of you are living in exile?

The definition of exile is to be away from one's home (i.e. city, state, or country) while being refused permission to return and/or being threatened with harm if you do.

It may seem as though many of us have never experienced true exile, but in a sense we all are living in exile of some sort or another. One example is my husband, who truly lives here in exile from his homeland of Iran. Recently I had thoughts of my own family of origin living in exile in Southern California from our homeland of Nebraska. It's a strange thought I know, but hear me out.



→ A few weeks ago I was able to visit my aunt and uncle who live on a 12 acre farm outside of Omaha in Blair, NE. My older son from Dallas drove 700 miles to also visit while I was there. He had never been to Nebraska before and wanted to see Uncle Bob and the farm before it is no longer possible. Uncle Bob is not doing so well and the winters there have been harder than they expected.

→ This is my Uncle Bob, Aunt Janet, and my son Kyle. Bob was born in Omaha and is my mother's brother. Janet grew up outside of Tulsa also on a farm. They met and married while living in Orange County and retired about 15 years ago to this farm they purchased in Blair. For them it was returning home to their roots and its lifestyle. They farm 10 acres of corn or alfalfa and raise donkeys, chickens, and ducks. Their property is near the top of a hill off



a dirt country road.

→ Nebraska is where my mother's family is from. Four generations back old Albert Kobs came from Germany to avoid the Prussian war in the mid-1800's. He homesteaded 360 acres of farm land about 25 miles outside of Omaha in Bennington, NE. Over the years the land has been parceled off and sold, but the land with the old farmhouse and original family cemetery has been preserved by several of the current descendants, including my mother and my Uncle Bob.



That weekend my son was able to see the land where his people lived, how they worked, and gain a sense of how they lived. A farmer's life is not an easy one. There are no days off and they are at the mercy of the weather. But they are strong and resilient people. I grew up hearing the stories of these colorful folks that I am descended from.

Old Albert Kobs was an interesting fellow with many flaws. I remember my surprise at realizing that we were descendants of the town drunk of Bennington! (I bet each of you have skeletons in your family too.) Uncle Bob told my son how old Grandpa Kobs would take their crops to town to sell in a buckboard. With money in his pocket he stopped at the town saloon before returning to the farm. Usually he spent all the money on liquor and passed out. Eventually the bar keeper would carry him out, toss him in the back of the empty buckboard, slap the horses in the backside, and they would carry him back to the farm. ... My son said, "Wow, the first cruise control!" ... It was a good thing those horses knew their way home.

Life is still hard in Nebraska. Just this past June, Blair was hit with a record hail storm and 300 homes were severely damaged. My aunt and uncle related the story of that storm. Their home and barn sustained \$70,000 in damage, including half of their windows being blown out! Their home is fairly new and all their windows are double paned. But that hail was the size of baseballs and the wind was blowing very strong.

My aunt described how they stayed in the basement. When it sounded as though the wind had died down, she crept upstairs to see if it was clear. Just then the windows on the north and east side of their house all exploded with hail flying through. Glass was everywhere! My aunt is a retired police officer, and she is a pretty tough gal. But she described how she felt terrified from every direction.

→ This is a video from U-tube of another home that same day. It's pretty close to what my aunt described. <Hail video>

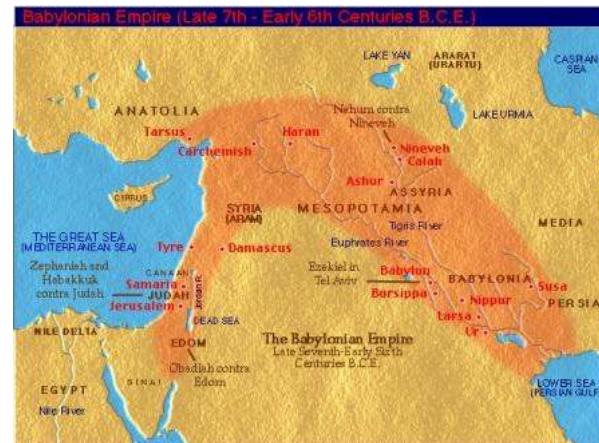
→ This week we studied about 9 nations that Jeremiah warned would be destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar was used as an instrument of God's judgment of the nations of Egypt, Israel, Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Damascus, Kedar & Hazor, and Elam.

We need to keep in mind that these prophecies were written about real men, women, and children, and what Jeremiah wrote actually came true. Whole civilizations were wiped out because of their sins, and eventually Babylon itself was destroyed. A common phrase Jeremiah tells is "there is terror on every side".

→ Through Jeremiah's account of judgments on the nations we gain several insights about God and his plan for this world:

- Although God chose Israel for a special purpose, he loves all people and wants all to come to him.
- God is holy and will not tolerate sin.
- God's judgments are not based on prejudice and a desire for revenge, but on fairness and justice.
- God does not delight in judgment, but in salvation.
- God is impartial because he judges everyone by the same standard.

→ At the battle of Carchemish in 605 BC and the fourth year of King Jehoiakim, Babylon and Egypt, the two major world powers after Assyria's fall, clashed. The Babylonians entered Carchemish by surprise and defeated Egypt and Pharaoh Necho. This battle which passed world leadership to Babylon, was Nebuchadnezzar's first victory, establishing him in his new position as king of the Babylonian empire. With Egypt's power declining, it was both poor strategy and disobedience to God for Judah to form an alliance with Egypt.



In 589 BC when Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, Pharaoh Hophra marched against him at Zedekiah's invitation. When the Babylonians stood up to the Egyptians, Pharaoh Hophra and his troops retreated. Jeremiah had prophesied that Pharaoh Hophra would be killed by his enemies. This was fulfilled nearly 20 years later when his co-regent Ahmose led a revolt.

God punished his people in order to bring them back to himself, and he punishes us to correct and purify us. No one welcomes punishment, but we should all welcome its results of correction and purity.

Let's work through the messages to the nations: [See Chart of Prophecy to Other Nations]

→ Judgment on Egypt (Ch. 46)

Egypt's shameful defeat - When the Egyptian army approached the battlefield, they looked like the Nile in flood season. The military leaders were sure of victory, and their mercenaries were eager to fight, but the Lord had determined that Egypt would lose the battle. Egypt's wounds were incurable and her shame was inevitable.

→ Babylon's triumphant invasion - Once again, the Egyptian army stood fast as the Babylonians swept down on them. Before long, however, the men not only fell over but also fell upon one another in their haste to escape. Their mercenaries cried to return to their native land, and they deserted their posts.

The Babylonian soldiers called Pharaoh Necho a "big noise". While Necho may have been only hot air, Nebuchadnezzar filled the horizon like a huge mountain when he appeared on the scene. The invading army was like a swarm of locusts that couldn't be avoided. Alas, Egypt was like a young woman being violated and unable to escape. The defeat of Egypt was the defeat of Egypt's gods. It meant that Jehovah had proved Himself stronger than the many gods of Egypt and Babylon by being in control of the entire battle. Nebuchadnezzar won and Pharaoh Necho lost because God decreed it. But God also decreed that Egypt would be restored, a promise He also gave to Moab, Ammon, and Elam.

→ Israel's assured future - They shouldn't have been there, but a band of Jews was in Egypt, and this invasion would affect them terribly. The remnant in Judah and the exiles in Babylon would hear of this victory and wonder whether anything on earth could stop Nebuchadnezzar. God had promised that the exiles would be released from Babylon in 70 years, but Babylon looked stronger than ever.

God's Word will stand no matter what. "I will save you," God promised. "I will wipe out the nations, but I won't wipe you out." Twice the Lord said, "Don't be afraid." No matter how dark the day, God always gives His people the bright light of His promises.

(2 Peter 1:19-21) "And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy ever had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

I don't know about you, but I can understand now why God wanted the exiles to surrender and move to Babylon. At least there they were safe from the terror of Nebuchadnezzar's army. In life that happens; our obedient submission to authority leads to our protection and survival.

➔ Judgment on Philistia (Ch. 47)

Jeremiah used the image of the rising river to describe the Babylonian army as it flooded over the land of Philistia. So terrible was the invasion that parents would flee for their lives and leave their children behind. The people would act like mourners at a funeral.

➔ Judgment on Moab (Ch. 48)

In 582 BC, Nebuchadnezzar's army invaded Moab, destroyed the people and the cities, and left desolation behind. The reason for the judgement was Moab's pride and complacency. Moabites were certain that their god Chemosh would protect them and that no army could scale the heights to reach them on their secure plateau.

The image in vs. 11-13 pictures Moab as a self-sacrificing nation, feeling very secure, like wine aging in a jar and becoming tastier. Because the nation had been comfortable and self-sufficient, they were unprepared for what happened. The nation was drunk from the cup that God gave her, and like someone at a drunken party, she was vomiting and wallowing in her own vomit. It isn't a pretty picture. The image then changes to that of a dove hiding in a cave, wondering what will happen next. The Babylonians are pictured as an eagle swooping down on its prey. A dove is no match for an eagle.

The remarkable thing is that Jeremiah wept over the fall of Moab and lamented like a flutist at a funeral. Certainly his grief is evidence of the compassion God has for people who are destroyed because of their sins against the Lord. God has "no pleasure in the death of the wicked" (Ezekiel 18:32) and does all He can to call them to repentance before judgment falls.

There is no escape:

- Flee from the army, and you'll fall into a pit.
- Climb out of the pit, and you'll be caught in a trap.
- Escape from the trap, and you'll be engulfed by a fire.
- Escape from the fire, and you'll be captured and taken away to Babylon.

Sinners need to face the fact that there is no place to hide when God begins to judge. For lost sinners today, their only hope is faith in Jesus Christ, who died for the sins of the world. They need to flee for refuge to Christ (Hebrews 6:18) - the only refuge for

their souls. After writing a long chapter on judgment, Jeremiah ended with a promise: (48:47). This promise of restoration refers to the future Kingdom Age when Jesus Christ will reign.

➔ Judgment on Ammon (Ch. 49:1-6)

Jeremiah's first accusation is that the Ammonites moved into Israel's territory when Assyria took the northern kingdom captive in 722 BC. The Ammonites took Gad and other cities, as though the Jews would never return. The phrase "their king" in 49:1 & 3 can be translated as meaning Molech, which is the name of the chief god of the Ammonites. They boasted that their god was stronger than the God of Israel, but one day Israel will drive the Ammonites out of the land.

The Ammonites boasted that their fruitful valley was secure because mountains protected it on three sides, but that couldn't stop the invasion. God had decreed judgment for proud Ammon, and nothing they trusted could prevent the invasion.

Once again, however, we see the goodness and mercy of the Lord in promising to restore the fortunes of the Ammonites when he restores the fortunes of Israel and Judah in the future kingdom. God restores them, not because of their own merits, but because they share in the glories that Israel will experience when King Jesus sits on David's throne. "Salvation is of the Jews." (John 4:22)

➔ Judgment on Edom (Ch. 49:7-22)

Edom's judgment would be like a harvest where nothing would be left for the gleaners. God would do a thorough job the first time. Like other nations, Edom would have to drink of the cup because of her pride and rebellion against the Lord.

Nebuchadnezzar would come upon Edom like a lion, bounding out of the thick growth around the Jordan River, and he wouldn't spare the flock. He would come like an eagle and so frighten the Edomites that they would agonize like women in labor. The people of Edom were noted for their great wisdom, but they wouldn't be able to devise any plan that would save them from the invasion of the Babylonian army. Edom's pride would bring her low, as pride always does.

➔ Judgment on Damascus/Syria (Ch. 49:23-27)

According to Jeremiah, hearing the news of the approaching Babylonian army, the people of Damascus would become as troubled as the restless sea, as weak and feeble as a sick patient, and as full of pain as a woman in labor. They would abandon their ancient cities and try to escape, but their best young men would be killed in the streets and their fortress would be burned to the ground. This message is brief, but powerful. How much does God have to say to convince people that His wrath is about to fall?

➔ **Judgment on Kedar & Hazor (Ch. 49:28-33)**

These two nomadic Arab nations lived by raising sheep and camels. When Nebuchadnezzar attacked them, however, they lost everything. Once again we meet the phrase "fear or terror on every side". These two Arab nations were guilty of living at ease, isolating themselves from others, and manifesting pride and arrogant self-confidence. They didn't need God, and they didn't need the help of other people. When Nebuchadnezzar arrived on the scene, they learned how foolish they had been.

➔ **Judgment on Elam (Ch. 49:34-39)**

Since the Elamite soldiers were known for their archery, God promised to break their bows. He compared the Babylonian army to a storm that would not only blow from all directions, but also scatter the people in all directions. Whenever a nation was defeated, the victors would set up their king's throne in the city gate, and that's what God promised to do in Elam. He would let them know that He was King.

The Lord ended this description of judgment with a promise of mercy. Why He chose to restore Egypt, Moab, Ammon, and Elam is not explained, but they will share in the kingdom because of God's grace.

➔ God sees what the nations do, and He rewards them justly. What King Hezekiah said about the Lord needs to be emphasized today:

"O Lord Almighty, God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth" (Isaiah 37:16).

Joshua called him "the Lord of all the earth", and both Jesus and Paul called him "Lord of heaven and earth".

God never gave the law of Moses to any of the nations that Jeremiah addressed, but He still held them accountable for the sins they committed against Him and against humanity. Because of the witness of creation around them and conscience within them, they were without excuse and guilty before God. ... And so are we

As you studied these chapters, perhaps you became weary of reading the same message: Judgment is coming and there is no escape.

➔ There are three lessons we learn from Jeremiah's warnings to the nations:

1. In difficult days we need to hear and heed the Word of God.
2. The important thing isn't success; it's faithfulness.
3. God is King, and the nations of the world are under His sovereign control.

The thing is that we all have a Judah and a Babylon in our lives. We all come from a homeland and we are faced with the choice to live in exile for our salvation, or to face

the wave of judgment of God's cup when we choose our own way. For some of us our Judah and Babylon are a place. For some of us it's a circumstance of life. The key is that it always involves a choice of obedience or disobedience. **Where or what is your Judah homeland, and what is your Babylon?**

To circle back to my family in Nebraska and that hail storm last June, my Aunt Janet shared this U-tube video that pretty much says it all. The blessing is that in all that hailstorm damage no lives were lost. Some of the homes you see are still boarded up 6 months later. **We need to remember to praise God in the storms of life, in the face of fear and terror on all sides, as well as in our times of blessings.**

<Storm video>