

Jer. 47, The Prophecy Against the Philistines

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Overview

1. A few weeks ago, a tremendous cyclone claimed nearly 100K lives in Bangladesh. Thousands of Kurds have died on the mountains of Iraq. Everywhere we look, we are surrounded by suffering, and some people point to that suffering as an argument that there cannot be a loving God.
 2. Suffering is an integral part of our world, not because there is no God, but because of rebellion against the God who is there. Sometimes, people suffer because the effect of Adam's sin has left the world a poor fit: thirst, fatigue, sunburn. In other cases, suffering is God's just judgment on our own individual sin--and at the same time, his merciful warning to people not to ignore his demands. Isa. 26:8-10.
 3. This chapter records an instance of the latter case. It describes God's judgment against the Philistines, a seafaring people from Crete who inhabited the coastal areas of Israel and were perpetually at war with God's people. In spite of their contact with the knowledge of the truth, they never accepted it as a nation, and so come under God's judgment.
 4. This record suggests three errors that unbelievers make when God's judgment falls on them.
 - a) They fear the wrong things. Their attention is consumed by relatively small disasters, and they miss sight of the big one just around the corner. E.g., people are more worried about environmental pollution than about spiritual pollution.
 - b) They fear the right things, but for the wrong reasons. They think their pain results from physical circumstances alone, and ignore God's agency.
 - c) They respond in the wrong way, rebelling against God even as they suffer.
 5. Background:
 - a) Geographical location of the Philistines
 - b) Their five cities: Gaza, Ashdod, Ekron, Ashkelon, Gath
- A. 1-2, They Fear the Wrong Things**
- These verses appear to describe two conquests of Gaza: one by Pharaoh, from Egypt, and thus from the south, and another from the north, probably by the Babylonians.
1. Gaza is very close to Egypt, and would have fought frequently with it. Between the time Jer uttered this prophecy and the time it was collected into the final edition, Pharaoh invaded the

city, perhaps Necho on his way north to Carchemish. (He would not have wanted to leave strong enemies at his rear.)

The people would have been accustomed to fear Egypt. If you were to ask the average Philistine what his greatest fear was, he would probably point south.

2. Yet the disaster here threatened is to come from the north, not the south. What the Philistines fear most is only a minor irritation, compared with the complete devastation that awaits them from another direction.
3. *Application:* Modern civilization fears things like ecological collapse, or terrorism, or violation of human rights. When there are wars, we sometimes fear them. Yet we are oblivious to the great judgment that lies ahead for all who reject the Lord Jesus. May the Lord give us grace to keep the correct perspective.

B. 2-4, They Fear the Right Things for the Wrong Reasons

Three sections in these verses. First we see the approaching destruction, then twice we hear of men's reactions, but for different reasons (2b, 3b; in each case the reason follows immediately, contrary to the AV punctuation).

1. 2a, The approaching destruction.
The northern army is pictured as an overflowing flood. Cf. the image of the Assyrian in Isa. 8:5-8; the Egyptians attacking Babylon in 46:7,8. Ever since God destroyed the world with a flood, floods have been terrifying images of destruction.
2. 2b,3a, The first reason for fear. The inhabitants howl because of the sounds of war around them. When the true judgment does fall, they are properly afraid, and realize that it is far worse than an Egyptian raid. But their fear is focused on the symptoms of the invasion, not the cause.
3. 3b,4, The second reason for fear. Ultimately, the reason that people are so terrified is that "the Lord will spoil the Philistines." As with Egypt, so here, the real enemy is not Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar is just the rod of the Lord's anger. Unless sinners see that it is their Creator with whom they have to do, they will never see the true significance of the judgments that fall upon them.

C. 5-7, They Respond in the Wrong Way

This paragraph seems to be a little conversation between the prophet and someone else (who appears to be a Philistine sympathizer).

1. The basic course of the conversation:
 - a) 5, Jer remarks on the suffering and destruction of the Philistines.
 - b) 6, someone replies that the sword should really stop making such a mess.
 - c) 7, Jer responds that this is impossible, since the disaster is

not arbitrary, but the deliberate will of God.

2. Two errors in the people's response are evident in this interchange.

a) *A false view of the magnitude of sin.* The speaker in v.6 presumes to know when enough judgment has fallen.

People think they are accurately calibrated on the appropriate tradeoff between sin and judgment: "He's suffered enough." But when we truly understand the seriousness of our sin, we know that nothing less than the death of the eternal Son of God can suffice to balance it.

b) *A false view of repentance.*

The actions reported in v.5 are deeds of mourning; cf. 41:5, shaven and cut. A preliminary view might be that the Philistines, like the pilgrims in ch. 41, really have come to grips with their sin.

But recall from ch. 41 that the pilgrims were misguided. Shaving and cutting of the flesh in mourning are pagan practices, forbidden in the law, Lev. 19:27; 21:5; *Deut. 14:1. Even under the chastening hand of God, the Philistines do not submit to his rule.

So today, even when people do recognize that God is behind suffering and disaster, too often they curse him and continue in their rebellion rather than worship him for turning their attention to their need for him.

Summary

Suffering is unavoidable. As ambassadors for Christ, we need to be able to explain to those around its true meaning. We need to warn them of the real danger of hell, when they are distracted by lesser evils; we need to help them see God's just hand behind it, and we need to point them to repentance and faith in place of their natural rebellion.

Psalm: Ps. 72, "O God, Thy Judgments Give the King"

Analysis

ch. 47, Philistines: Ampl p.

A. text: temporal p

1. text: 47:1) :AŞER HFYFH D:BAR-Y:HWFH)EL-YIR:M:YFHW. HA/N.FBIY)
)EL-P.:LIŞ:T.IYM

2. time: B.:/+EREM YAK.EH PAR:(OH)ET-(AZ.FH S

B. ampl: quote p

1. quote f: 47:2 K.OH)FMAR Y:HWFH

2. quote:

a) seq p

1) setting:
HIN."H-MAYIM (OLIYM MI/C.FPOWN
W:/HFYW. L:/NAXAL \$OW+"P

2) bu-1:
W:/YI\$:+:PW.)EREC W./M:LOW)/FH.
(IYR W:/YO\$:B"Y B/FH.

3) bu-n: coordinate reason p

a> reason p: people cry out because of the war
1> text:
W:/ZF(:AQW. HF/)FDFM
W:/H"YLIL K.OL YOW\$"B HF/)FREC
2> reason:
47:3 MI/Q.OWL \$A(:A+AT P.AR:SOWT)AB.IYRFY/W
M"/RA(A\$ L:/RIK:B./OW
H:AMOWN G.AL:G.IL.FY/W

b> reason p: men faint because of the Lord
1> text: LO)-HIP:NW.)FBOWT)EL-B.FNIYM M"/RIP:YOWN
YFDFYIM
2> reason: reason p
a: text: purpose p
1: text: 47:4 (AL-HA/Y.OWM HA/B.F)
2: purpose: coordinate p
A. LI/\$:DOWD)ET-K.FL-P.:LI\$:T.IYM
B. L:/HAK:RIYT L:/COR W./L:/CIYDOWN K.OL &FRIYD
(OZ"R
b: reason:
K.IY-\$OD"D Y:HWFH)ET-P.:LI\$:T.IYM
\$:)"RIYT)IY KAP:T.OWR

b) interchange p: Mourning scene

1) iu, prophet:
47:5 B.F)FH QFR:XFH)EL-(AZ.FH
NID:M:TFH)A\$:Q:LOWN \$:)"RIYT (IM:QFM
(AD-MFTAY T.IT:G.OWDFDIY S

2) cu, Philistines:
47:6 HOWY XEREB LA/YHWFH
(AD-)FNFH LO) TI\$:QO+IY
H")FS:PIY)AL-T.A(:R/"K:
H"RFG:(IY
WF/DOM.IY

3) ru, prophet:
47:7)"YK: T.I\$:QO+IY
WA/YHWFH CIW.FH-L/FH.)EL-)A\$:Q:LOWN W:/)EL-XOWP HA/Y.FM
\$FM Y:(FD/FH. S