

August 4

Jeremiah 46 and 47

Looking first at chapter 46 we see that it is divided into two sections. The first part began with a reference to the battle of Carchemish, which would have occurred very soon after Jeremiah's words were recorded. Egypt was defeated by the Babylonians and it marked the end to their claims over that region. The command for Egypt to "prepare" weapons for battle in Verse 3 is actually said in sarcasm because the Lord was not going to give victory to Egypt. Egypt's fate is pretty much sealed and in verse 10 we read "But that day belongs to the Lord, the Lord Almighty – a day of vengeance, for vengeance on his foes." Egypt was going down and had no hope. Ironically, even their reputation for having healing powers wouldn't help. In verse 11 Jeremiah says, "But you multiply remedies in vain; there is no healing for you." The Lord was ready to repay Egypt for their mistreatment on the people of Judah.

The second part in this chapter began with verse 13 and points to something that happened many years later in 568-567 B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar finally attacked Egypt. Did you notice that despite the prediction of Egypt's fall to Babylon, God tells Jeremiah that Egypt will be inhabited -- just as in the days of old? And, as usual, in spite of all the hard and frightening things God has to say to His people, there is a word of encouragement to Israel. "Do not fear, O Jacob my servant; do not be dismayed, O Israel. I will surely save you out of a distant place, your descendants from the land of their exile. Jacob will again have peace and security, and no one will make him afraid. Do not fear, O Jacob my servant, for I am with you, declares the Lord. Though I completely destroy all the nations among which I scatter you, I will not completely destroy you. I will discipline you but only with justice; I will not let you go entirely unpunished." That, my friends, is justice tempered by mercy. That is how God deals with His wayward people.

Moving onto Jeremiah 47. Here we have encountered the prophecies given by Jeremiah regarding the neighbors (and enemies) of Judah and Philistia being among the first. Remember the Philistines? As far back as the Book of Judges we find references to frequent conflicts between Israel and its Philistine neighbors. Even before that, the patriarchs Abraham and Isaac had contact with Abimelech the king of Gerar. He was a Philistine. Samson died in Philistine captivity after foolishly trusting Delilah. David emerged victorious over the Philistine giant Goliath and for a time served the Philistine King Achish. The Philistines occupied a long narrow strip of coastline in the southwest corner of the land of Israel. All of the Philistines towns mentioned in scripture are located there and archaeological digs have turned up unique kinds of pottery and plenty of evidence that fits the biblical picture of these people. We know that these buildings were supported by rows of pillars close enough together for the account of Samson's victory and death to be very credible indeed as he reached out and pulled the pillars down. Professor William Albright, one of the greatest archaeologists of the 20th century dug up in

Philistine territory so many beer mugs that he dubbed these people as "mighty carousers" -- that too fits with what we know.

The Egyptians called the Philistines "the sea peoples" and credit them with among other things, the destruction of the mighty city of Troy, that mighty city about which Homer the Greek poet wrote. The important thing for you to remember is that the Philistines were seafarers on the southwest coast of Israel and that after the Babylonian conquest, they disappeared from history. Philistines like dinosaurs, are extinct, every place but in the language of our culture. If someone calls you a Philistine, they probably are not complimenting you.

As we are moving through these prophets and learning about God's judgments perhaps you have wondered why God allows success to unrighteous nations...like Babylon...at the expense of His people. Or maybe you've wondered why God is permitting all this evil and destruction to continue to happen over and over again. If he is all powerful can't he just stop the madness? If so, you are going to want to tune in tomorrow as we take a break from Jeremiah and learn from one of his contemporaries, Habakkuk, on some of these very questions.