

A BIBLICAL STUDY ON JEREMIAH

LESSON TWENTY-FOUR: JEREMIAH'S SECOND DISCOURSE, PART FOUR

by Sandy Harber

**"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 Beth-haccerem: for evil appeareth out of the north, and great destruction."
Jeremiah 6:1**

Jeremiah closed his second discourse with a description of the judgment that was to fall upon his people. "Get out of Jerusalem," he warned, "when the invading army from the north appears." In his day there were three ways to warn the population that the enemy forces were on the way. One was the sound of trumpets signaling danger: "Blow the trumpet in Tekoa." Tekoa was about eleven miles southeast of Jerusalem. Another way was the lighting of signal fires in high places: "Set up a sign of fire in Beth-Haccerem. "Beth-Haccerem was half-way between Bethlehem and Jerusalem. The third way was to station men on the city walls to keep watch. God Himself said, "I set watchmen over you" (v. 17). God's watchmen were the prophets, like Jeremiah, who warned the people when their attitudes and actions were displeasing to God, rendering them susceptible to His anger and just punishment. If the people had heeded the warnings they could have averted judgment. But, God's people acted like the heathen, who had no relationship with Him and, therefore, could not hear His warnings. The people of Judah simply refused to listen to His spokesman (v. 10).

God Himself directed the actions of the Babylonian army: "Let us go up at noon," He said (v. 4); and, "Let us go by night" (v. 5). A surprise attack at noon and the battle continuing into the dark hours of the night were unusual and unexpected. God told the soldiers to build a siege ramp to breach the walls of Jerusalem (v. 6). Three times the Babylonian army attacked Jerusalem: 1) in 605 B.C., when 3,023 captives were transported to Babylon, including Daniel (Dan. 1:1-3; Jer. 52:28); 2) in 597 B.C., after a three-month siege, about 11,000 captives were taken (II Ki.24:14; Jer. 52:29), including Ezekiel (Ez. 1:1, 3); and, 3) 586 B.C., after a three-year siege, Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple burned, and 745 captives were taken (Jer. 52:30; II Ki. 25:8-11). Jeremiah said, "I am full of the fury of the Lord" (v. 11). He felt the frustration of the Lord Who tried repeatedly to turn the people back to the right path. "I will stretch out my hand upon the inhabitants of the land," God said (v. 12). "At the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the Lord" (v. 15b). "Visit" can be translated "punish." God's judgment had fallen on these people. Babylon was the instrument He used to carry out His judgment. They willfully rejected God's leading (v. 16). God pointed out that He had given the people the recipe for their salvation: return to the old ways and follow His Word (v. 16). He even sent His prophets to warn that judgment was coming if they continued on their present path (v. 17). But it was all in vain. The people stubbornly refused to obey (v. 17). So, God declared war on His Own people. He announced to the nations (v.18), and to the whole earth (v. 19) that He would bring evil upon the Kingdom of Judah (v. 18). His chosen people had brought God's wrath upon themselves (v. 19).

Therefore, God brought down upon them a great nation from the north (v. 22). These warriors descended upon them with bow and spear (v. 23). They were a cruel, merciless, fierce, and unstoppable army (v. 23). Their exploits were famous, causing fear and anguish in the hearts of their victims (vv. 24-25). What could the people do in this circumstance but mourn their fate (v. 26)? Jeremiah concluded his discourse by declaring the people were like rejected silver (v. 30). The purpose of the smelting process was to refine the silver and separate the dross. But, these people were all dross! They were not being purified; they were being punished. They were not being refined; they were being rejected.

Nevertheless, God always preserves for Himself a remnant (v. 9). He promised that even in this time of punishment "I will not make a full end with you" (Jer. 5:18). These descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were still His chosen people. They had broken their covenant with Him, but God had not broken His covenant with them. Individuals, like Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel, were caught up in punishment that fell upon their people, but God had not forsaken them. Jehovah had executed judgment on the rebellious kingdom of Judah. But, He continued to protect and care for those individuals who remained faithful to Him (Dan. 1:9; Jer. 1:8).

"Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." I Thessalonians 5:24