

A BIBLICAL STUDY ON JEREMIAH

LESSON FOURTEEN: JEREMIAH'S SECOND VISION

by Sandy Harber

"And the word of the LORD came unto me the second time, saying, What seest thou? And I said, I see a seething pot; and the face thereof is toward the north." Jeremiah 1:13

Jeremiah received a second vision which provided more details regarding the judgment that was to fall upon Judah soon. He saw a seething pot, or cauldron, presumably sitting on a fire, whose contents were about to boil over and spill out. The pot was facing toward the north, which was the direction from which "an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land" (v.14). That evil was the Babylonian Empire.

For more than 300 years the Assyrian Empire had dominated the world, defeating nation after nation with its cruel, fierce army. Judah's sister kingdom, Israel, had fallen to the invading Assyrians in 722 B.C. But by 627 B.C., when Jeremiah saw the vision of the seething pot, the power of the Assyrian Empire was waning. It had served its purpose in God's sovereign will and He was ready to replace it with a new tool. The following year, in 626 B.C., Nabopolassar would rise to power in Babylon. By forming an alliance with the Medes and Scythians, Nabopolassar's forces would destroy the Assyrian capital city of Nineveh in 612 B.C. The fall of Assyria would pave the way for the Babylonian Empire to rise up as the dominate force upon the world stage. Nabopolassar's son, Nebuchadnezzar, would lead the Babylonian army against Judah for the first time in 605 B.C. God had chosen Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon to be His rod of chastisement on the kingdom of Judah.

At the time of his calling, Jeremiah only knew that judgment was coming soon because the people of Judah had forsaken God and worshipped idols (v. 16). And the "families of the kingdoms of the north" would be the instrument that God used to punish them (v. 15). God called those families into service just as He had Jeremiah. The difference was that these Babylonian families did not know that their actions were fulfilling the will of Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel. They were completely unaware of their cooperation with the plan and purpose of God for themselves and for the kingdom of Judah. God can, and does, use believers and unbelievers to accomplish His will.

Representatives from the families of the north would come and "set everyone his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem" (v. 15). The Hebrew word translated "throne" here simply means a "seat; stool; throne." The Babylonian nobles and officials would one day sit down in the gate, the entrance to Jerusalem, denoting their power and influence over the people of the city. It was in the gate of that city that business was conducted. This prophecy of Jeremiah's would be fulfilled in 586 B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar and his army conquered Jerusalem after a three year long siege (Jeremiah 39:1-2). Some of the officials that sat down in the gate are named in Jeremiah 39:3.

The act of sitting down has another significance. It indicates that the invading Babylonians were there to stay. Nebuchadnezzar's army had attacked Jerusalem successfully twice before. But, each time, they had departed after taking some plunder and removing certain individuals to Babylon (like Daniel and Ezekiel). The third time, however, Babylon determined to maintain a physical presence in the area. The monarchy of Judah was dismantled and replaced by a governor who reported to the Babylonian authorities.

Jeremiah understood that his nation would fall to their enemies if they did not repent and turn back to God. It was his sad duty to warn his people of this. And, he did. Over and over. But his people ignored his warnings, mocked him, branded him a traitor, and physically abused him. Jeremiah saw clearly that his people were rushing headlong down the path to destruction. But he was helpless to stop them. Nevertheless, he persisted in transmitting God's messages to the people, princes, and king of Judah. Jeremiah faithfully fulfilled his duties as a prophet and left the results to God.

"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. They shall lay hold on bow and spear; they are cruel, and have no mercy . . . against thee, O daughter of Zion." Jeremiah 6:22-23