

CHAPTER 47

This chapter reads the Philistines their doom, as the former read the Egyptians theirs and by the same hand, that of Nebuchadnezzar. It is short, but terrible; and Tyre and Zidon, though they lay at some distance from them, come in sharers with them in the destruction here threatened.

I. It is foretold that the forces of the northern crowns should come upon them, to their great terror (v. 1-5).

II. That the war should continue long, and their endeavours to put an end to it should be in vain (v. 6-7).

◀47▶ JEREMIAH 47:1-7

THE JUDGMENT OF THE PHILISTINES

As the Egyptians had often proved false friends, so the Philistines had always been sworn enemies, to the Israel of God, and the more dangerous and vexatious for their being such near neighbours to them. They were considerably humbled in David's time, but, it seems they had got head again and were a considerable people till Nebuchadnezzar cut them off with their neighbours, which is the event here foretold. The date of this prophecy is observable; it was *before Pharaoh* smote Gaza. When this blow was given to Gaza by the king of Egypt is not certain, whether in his expedition against Carchemish or in his return thence, after he had slain Josiah, or when he afterwards came with design to relieve Jerusalem; but this is mentioned here to show that this word of the Lord came to Jeremiah against the Philistines when they were in their full strength and lustre, themselves and their cities in good condition, in no peril from any adversary or evil occurrent. When no disturbance of their repose was foreseen by any human probabilities, yet then Jeremiah foretold their ruin, which Pharaoh's smiting Gaza soon after would be but an earnest of, and, as it were, the beginning of sorrows to that country. It is here foretold,

1. That a foreign enemy and a very formidable one shall be brought upon them: *Waters rise up out of the north*, v. 2. Waters sometimes signify multitudes of people and nations (◀6175▶ Revelation 17:15), sometimes great

and threatening calamities (¹⁸⁶¹Psalm 69:1); here they signify both. They *rise out of the north*, whence fair weather and the wind that drives away rain are said to come; but now a terrible storm comes out of that cold climate. The Chaldean army shall overflow the land like a deluge. Probably this happened before the destruction of Jerusalem, for it should seem that in Gedaliah's time, which was just after, the army of the Chaldeans was quite withdrawn out of those parts. The country of the Philistines was but of small extent, so that it would soon be overwhelmed by so vast an army.

2. That they shall all be in a consternation upon it. The men shall have no heart to fight, but shall sit down and cry like children: *All the inhabitants of the land shall howl*, so that nothing but lamentation shall be heard in all places. The occasion of the fright is elegantly described, v. 3. Before it comes to killing and slaying, the very *stamping of the horses* and *rattling of the chariots*, when the enemy makes his approach, shall strike a terror upon the people, to such a degree that parents in their fright shall seem void of natural affection, *for they shall not look back to their children*, to provide for their safety, or so much as to see what becomes of them. Their *hands shall be so feeble* that they shall despair of carrying them off with them, and therefore they shall not care for seeing them, but leave them to take their lot; or they shall be in such a consternation that they shall quite forget even those pieces of themselves. Let none be over-fond of their children, nor dote upon them, since such distress may come that they may either wish they had none or forget that they have, and have no heart to look upon them.

3. That the country of the Philistines shall be spoiled and laid waste, and the other countries adjoining to them and in alliance with them. It is a day *to spoil the Philistines, for the Lord will spoil them*, v. 4. Note, Those whom God will spoil must needs be spoiled; for, *if God be against them, who can be for them?* Tyre and Zidon were strong and wealthy cities, and they used to help the Philistines in a strait, but now they shall themselves be involved in the common ruin, and God will cut off from them every *helper that remains*. Note, Those that trust to help from creatures will find it cut off when they most need it and will thereby be put into the utmost confusion. Who the *remnant of the country of Caphtor* were is uncertain, but we find that the Caphtorim were near akin to the Philistines (¹⁸⁶⁴Genesis 10:14), and probably when their own country was destroyed such as remained came and settled with their kinsmen the Philistines, and

were now spoiled with them. Some particular places are here named, *Gaza, and Ashkelon*, v. 5. *Baldness has come upon them*; the invaders have stripped them of all their ornaments, or they have made themselves bald in token of extreme grief, and they are *cut off*, with the other cities that were in the plain or valley about them. The products of their fruitful valley shall be *spoiled*, and made a prey of, by the conquerors.

4. That these calamities should continue long. The prophet, in the foresight of this, with his usual tenderness, asks them first (v. 5), *How long will you cut yourselves*, as men in extreme sorrow and anguish do? O how tedious will the calamity be! not only cutting, but long cutting. But he turns from the effect to the cause: *They cut themselves*, for the sword of the Lord cuts them. And therefore,

(1.) He bespeaks that to be still (v. 6): *O thou sword of the Lord! how long will it be ere thou be quiet?* He begs it would *put up itself into the scabbard*, would devour no more flesh, drink no more blood. This expresses the prophet's earnest desire to see an end of the war, looking with compassion, as became a man, even upon the Philistines themselves, when their country was made desolate by the sword. Note, War is the *sword of the Lord*; with it he punishes the crimes of his enemies and pleads the cause of his own people. When war is once begun it often lasts long; the sword, once drawn, does not quickly find the way into the scabbard again; nay, some when they draw the sword throw away the scabbard, for they *delight in war*. So deplorable are the desolations of war that the blessings of peace cannot but be very desirable. O that *swords might be beaten into ploughshares!*

(2.) Yet he gives a satisfactory account of the continuance of the war and stops the mouth of his own complaint (v. 7): *How can it be quiet, seeing the Lord hath given it a charge* against such and such places, particularly specified in its commission? *There hath he appointed it*. Note,

[1.] The sword of war hath its charge from the Lord of hosts. Every bullet has its charge; you call them blind bullets, but they are directed by an all-seeing God. The war itself has its charge; he saith to it, *Go, and it goes — Come, and it comes — Do this, and it does it*; for he is commander-in-chief.

[2.] When the sword is drawn we cannot expect it should be sheathed till it has fulfilled its charge. As the word of God, so his rod and his sword, shall accomplish that for which he sends them.