

# CHAPTER 46

How judgment began at the house of God we have found in the foregoing prophecy and history; but now we shall find that it did not end there. In this and the following chapters we have predictions of the desolations of the neighbouring nations, and those brought upon them too mostly by the king of Babylon, till at length Babylon itself comes to be reckoned with. The prophecy against Egypt is here put first and takes up this whole chapter, in which we have,

- I. A prophecy of the defeat of Pharaoh-necho's army by the Chaldean forces at Carchemish, which was accomplished soon after, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim (v. 1-12)
- II. A prophecy of the descent which Nebuchadnezzar should make upon the land of Egypt, and his success in it, which was accomplished some years after the destruction of Jerusalem (v. 13-26).
- III. A word of comfort to the Israel of God in the midst of those calamities (v. 27, 28).

## ~~246~~ JEREMIAH 46:1-12

### THE JUDGMENT OF EGYPT

The first verse is the title of that part of this book, which relates to the neighbouring nations, and follows here. It is *the word of the Lord which came to Jeremiah against the Gentiles*; for God is King and Judge of nations, knows and will call to an account those who know him not nor take any notice of him. Both Isaiah and Ezekiel prophesied against these nations that Jeremiah here has a separate saying to, and with reference to the same events. In the Old Testament we have *the word of the Lord against the Gentiles*; in the New Testament we have *the word of the Lord for the Gentiles*, that those who were *afar off are made nigh*.

He begins with Egypt, because they were of old Israel's oppressors and of late their deceivers, when they put confidence in them. In these verses he foretells the overthrow of *the army of Pharaoh-necho*, by

Nebuchadnezzar, *in the fourth year of Jehoiakim*, which was so complete a victory to the king of Babylon that thereby he recovered from the river of Egypt to *the river Euphrates, all that pertained to the king of Egypt*, and so weakened him that he *came not again any more out of his land* (as we find, <sup><124E></sup>2 Kings 24:7), and so made him pay dearly for his expedition against the king of Assyria four years before, in which he slew Josiah, <sup><123B></sup>2 Kings 23:29. This is the event that is here foretold in lofty expressions of triumph over Egypt thus foiled, which Jeremiah would speak of with a particular pleasure, because the death of Josiah, which he had lamented, was now avenged on Pharaoh-necho. Now here,

**I.** The Egyptians are upbraided with the mighty preparations they made for this expedition, in which the prophet calls to them to do their utmost, for so they would: “Come then, *order the buckler*, let the weapons of war be got ready,” v. 3. Egypt was famous for *horses* — let them be *harnessed* and the cavalry well mounted: *Get up, you horsemen, and stand forth*, etc., v. 4. See what preparations the children of men make, with abundance of care and trouble and at a vast expense, to kill one another, as if they did not die fast enough of themselves. He compares their marching out upon this expedition to the rising of their river Nile (v. 7, 8): *Egypt now rises up like a flood*, scorning to keep within its own banks and threatening to overflow all the neighbouring lands. It is a very formidable army that the Egyptians bring into the field upon this occasion. The prophet summons them (v. 9): *Come up, you horses; rage, you chariots*. He challenges them to bring all their confederate troops together, *the Ethiopians*, that descended from the same stock with the Egyptians (<sup><1106></sup>Genesis 10:6), and were their neighbours and allies, *the Libyans and Lydians*, both seated in Africa, to the west of Egypt, and from them the Egyptians fetched their auxiliary forces. Let them strengthen themselves with all the art and interest they have, yet it shall be all in vain; they shall be shamefully defeated notwithstanding, for God will fight against them, and against him *there is no wisdom nor counsel*, <sup><1213></sup>Proverbs 21:30, 31. It concerns those that go forth to war not only to *order the buckler*, and *harness the horses*, but to repent of their sins, and pray to God for his presence with them, and that they may have it to keep themselves from every wicked thing.

**II.** They are upbraided with the great expectations they had from this expedition, which were quite contrary to what God intended in bringing them together. They knew their own thoughts, and God knew them, and

sat in heaven and laughed at them,; *but they knew not the thoughts of the Lord, for he gathers them as sheaves into the floor,* ~~3411~~ Micah 4:11, 12. Egypt saith (v. 8): *I will go up; I will cover the earth,* and none shall hinder me; *I will destroy the city,* whatever city it is that stands in my way. Like Pharaoh of old, *I will pursue, I will overtake.* The Egyptians say that they shall have a day of it, but God saith that it shall be his day: *The is the day of the Lord God of hosts* (v. 10), the day in which he will be exalted in the overthrow of the Egyptians. They meant one thing, but God meant another; they designed it for the advancement of their dignity and the enlargement of their dominion, but God designed it for the great abasement and weakening of their kingdom. It is *a day of vengeance* for Josiah's death; it is a day of sacrifice to divine justice, to which multitudes of the sinners of Egypt shall fall as victims. Note, When men think to magnify themselves by pushing on unrighteous enterprises, let them expect that God will glorify himself by blasting them and cutting them off.

**III.** They are upbraided with their cowardice and inglorious flight when they come to an engagement (v. 5, 6): “*Wherefore have I seen them, notwithstanding all these mighty and vast preparations and all these expressions of bravery and resolution, when the Chaldean army faces them, dismayed, turned back, quite disheartened, and no spirit left in them.*”

**1.** They make a shameful retreat. Even *their mighty ones*, who, one would think, should have stood their ground, *flee a flight*, flee by consent, make the best of their way, flee in confusion and with the utmost precipitation; they have neither time nor heart to *look back*, but *fear is round about* them, for they apprehend it so. And yet,

**2.** They cannot make their escape. They have the shame of flying, and yet not the satisfaction of saving themselves by flight; they might as well have stood their ground and died upon the spot; for even *the swift shall not flee away*. The lightness of their heels shall fail them when it comes to the trial, as well as the stoutness of their hearts; the *mighty* shall not escape, nay, they *are beaten down* and broken to pieces. *They shall stumble* in their flight, *and fall towards the north*, towards their enemy's country; for such confusion were they in when they took to their feet that instead of making homeward, as men usually do in that case, they made forward. Note, *The race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong*. Valiant men are not always victorious.

**IV.** They are upbraided with their utter inability ever to recover this blow, which should be fatal to their nation, v. 11, 12. The damsel, *the daughter of Egypt*, that lived in great pomp and state, is sorely wounded by this defeat. Let her now seek for *balm in Gilead* and physicians there; let her use all the medicines her wise men can prescribe for the healing of this hurt, and the repairing of the loss sustained by this defeat; but all in vain; *no cure shall be* to them; they shall never be able to bring such a powerful army as this into the field again. “*The nations that rang of thy glory and strength have now heard of thy shame*, how shamefully thou wast routed and how thou are weakened by it.” It needs not be spread by the triumphs of the conquerors, the shrieks and outcries of the conquered will proclaim it: *Thy cry hath filled the country* about. For, when they fled several ways, one *mighty man stumbled* upon another and dashed against another, such confusion were they in, so that *both together* became a pray to the pursuers, an easy prey. A thousand such dreadful accidents there should be, which should fill the country with the cry of those that were overcome. *Let not the mighty man therefore glory in his might*, for the time may come when it will stand him in no stead.

## ~~2463~~ JEREMIAH 46:13-28

### THE JUDGMENT OF EGYPT

In these verses we have,

**I.** Confusion and terror spoken to Egypt. The accomplishment of the prediction in the former part of the chapter disabled the Egyptians from making any attempts upon other nations; for what could they do when their army was routed? But still they remained strong at home, and none of their neighbours durst make any attempts upon them. Though the kings of Egypt came no more *out of their land* (~~2417~~ 2 Kings 24:7), yet they kept safe and easy in their land; and what would they desire more than peaceably to enjoy their own? One would think all men should be content to do this, and not covet to invade their neighbours. But the measure of Egypt's iniquity is full, and now they shall not long enjoy their own; those that encroached on others shall not be themselves encroached on. The scope of the prophecy here is to show *how the king of Babylon should shortly come and smite the land of Egypt*, and bring the war into their own bosoms

which they had formerly carried into his borders, v. 13. This was fulfilled by the same hand with the former, even Nebuchadnezzar's, but many years after, twenty at least, and probably the prediction of it was long after the former prediction, and perhaps much about the same time with that other prediction of the same event which we had <sup>(248)</sup>Jeremiah 43:10.

1. Here is the alarm of war sounded in Egypt, to their great amazement (v. 14), notice given to the country that the enemy is approaching, *the sword is devouring round about* in the neighbouring countries, and therefore it is time for the Egyptians to put themselves in a posture of defence, to prepare for war, that they may give the enemy a warm reception. This must be proclaimed in all parts of Egypt, particularly in Migdol, Noph, and Tahpanhes, because in these places especially the Jewish refugees, or fugitives rather, had planted themselves, in contempt of God's command (<sup>(249)</sup>Jeremiah 44:1), and let them hear what a sorry shelter Egypt is likely to be to them.

2. The retreat hereupon of the forces of other nations which the Egyptians had in their pay is here foretold. Some considerable number of those troops, it is probable, were posted upon the frontiers to guard them, where they were beaten off by the invaders and put to flights. Then were the *valiant men swept away* (v. 15) as with *a sweeping rain* (it is the word that is used <sup>(250)</sup>Proverbs 28:3); they can none of them stand their ground, *because the Lord drives them* from their respective posts; he drives them by his terrors; he drives them by enabling the Chaldeans to drive them. It is not possible that those should fix whom the wrath of God chases. He it was (v. 16) that *made many to fall, yea*, when their day shall come to fall, the enemy needs not throw them down, they shall *fall one upon another*, every man shall be a stumbling-block to his fellow, to his follower; nay, if God please, they shall be made to *fall upon one another*, they shall be made to *fall upon one another, every man's sword shall be against his fellow*. *Her hired men*, the troops Egypt has in her service, are indeed *in the midst of her like fatted bullocks*, lusty men, able bodied and high spirited, who were likely for action and promised to make their part good against the enemy; but *they are turned back*; their hearts failed them, and, instead of fighting, they have *fled away together*. How could they withstand their fate when *the day of their calamity had come*, the day in which God will visit them in wrath? Some think they are compared to fatted bullocks for their luxury; they had wantoned in pleasures, so that they were very unfit

for hardships, and therefore turned back and could not stand. In this consternation,

**(1.)** They all made homeward towards their own country (v. 16): *They said, "Arise, and let us go again to our own people, where we may be safe from the oppressing sword of the Chaldeans, that bears down all before it."* In times of exigence little confidence is to be put in mercenary troops, that fight purely for pay, and have no interest in theirs whom they fight for.

**(2.)** They exclaimed vehemently against Pharaoh, to whose cowardice or bad management, it is probably, their defeat was owing. When he posted them there upon the borders of his country it is probably that he told them he would within such a time come himself with a gallant army of his own subjects to support them; but he failed them, and, when the enemy advanced, they found they had none to back them, so that they were perfectly abandoned to the fury of the invaders. No marvel then that they quitted their post and deserted the service, crying out, *Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise* (v. 17); he can hector, and talk big of the mighty things he would do, but that is all; he brings nothing to pass. All his promises to those in alliance with him, or that are employed for him, vanish into smoke. He brings not the succours he engaged to bring, or not till it is too late: *He has passed the time appointed*; he did not keep his word, nor keep his day, and therefore they bid him farewell, they will never serve under him any more. Note, Those that make most noise in any business are frequently but a noise. Great talkers are little doers.

**3.** The formidable power of the Chaldean army is here described as bearing down all before it. *The King of kings, whose name is the Lord of hosts, and before whom the mightiest kings on earth, though gods to us, are but as grasshoppers, he hath said it, he hath sworn it, As I live, saith this king, as Tabor overtops the mountains and Carmel overlooks the sea, so shall the king of Babylon overpower all the force of Egypt, such a command shall he have, such a sway shall he bear, v. 18. He and his army shall come against Egypt with axes, as hewers of wood* (v. 22), and the Egyptians shall be no more able to resist them than the tree is to resist the man that comes with an axe to *cut it down*; so that Egypt shall be felled as a forest is by the hewers of wood, which (if there be many of them, and those well provided with instruments for the purpose) will be done in a little time. Egypt is very populous, full of towns and cities, like a forest,

the trees of which *cannot be searched* or numbered, and very rich, full of hidden treasures, many of which will escape the searching eye of the Chaldean soldiers; but they shall make a great spoil in the country, for *they are more than the locusts*, that come in vast swarms and overrun a country, devouring every green thing (<sup>2016</sup> Joel 1:6, 7), so shall the Chaldeans do, for *they are innumerable*. Note, The Lord of hosts hath numberless hosts at his command.

**4.** The desolation of Egypt hereby is foretold, and the waste that should be made of that rich country. *Egypt is now like a very fair heifer*, or calf (v. 20), fat and shining, and not *accustomed to the yoke* of subjection, wanton as a heifer that is well fed, and very sportful. Some think here is an allusion to Apis, the bull or calf which the Egyptians worshipped, from whom the children of Israel learned to worship the golden calf. Egypt is as fair as a goddess, and adores herself, *but destruction comes; cutting up comes* (so some read it); *it comes out of the north*; thence the Chaldean soldiers shall come, as so many butchers or sacrificers, to kill and cut up this *fair heifer*.

**(1.)** The Egyptians shall be brought down, shall be tamed, and their tune changed: *The daughters of Egypt shall be confounded* (v. 24), shall be filled with astonishment. *Their voice shall go like a serpent*, that is, it shall be very low and submissive; they shall not low like a fair heifer, that makes a great noise, but hiss out of their holes like serpents. They shall not dare to make loud complaints of the cruelty of the conquerors, but vent their griefs in silent murmurs. They shall not now, as they used to do, answer roughly, but, with *the poor, use entreaties* and beg for their lives.

**(2.)** They shall be carried away prisoners into their enemy's land (v. 19): *“O thou daughter! dwelling securely and delicately in Egypt, that fruitful pleasant country, do not think this will last always, but furnish thyself to go into captivity; instead of rich clothes, which will but tempt the enemy to strip thee, get plain and warm clothes; instead of fine shoes, provide strong ones; and inure thyself to hardship, that thou mayest bear it the better.”* Note, It concerns us, among all our preparations, to prepare for trouble. We provide for the entertainment of our friends, let us not neglect to provide for the entertainment of our enemies, nor among all our furniture omit furniture for captivity. The Egyptians must prepare to flee; for their cities shall be evacuated. Noph particularly *shall be desolate, without an inhabitant*, so general shall the slaughter and the captivity be.

There are some penalties which, we say, the king and the multitude are exempted from, but here even these are obnoxious: *The multitude of No shall be punished*: it is called *populous No*, <sup><388></sup>Nahum 3:8. *Though hand join in hand*, yet they shall not escape; nor can any think to go off in the crowd. Be they ever so many, they shall find God will be too many for them. Their kings and all their petty princes shall fall; and their gods too (<sup><382></sup>Jeremiah 43:12, 13), their idols and their great men. Those which they call their tutelar deities shall be no protection to them. Pharaoh shall be brought down, and *all those that trust in him* (v. 25), particularly the Jews that came to sojourn in his country, trusting in him rather than in God. All these shall be *delivered into the hands of the northern nations* (v. 24), into the hand not only of Nebuchadnezzar that mighty potentate, but *into the hands of his servants*, according to the curse on Ham's posterity, of which the Egyptians were, that they should be the *servants of servants*. These seek their lives, and into their hands they shall be delivered.

5. An intimation is given that in process of time Egypt shall recover itself again (v. 26): *Afterwards it shall be inhabited*, shall be peopled again, whereas by this destruction it was almost dispeopled. Ezekiel foretels that this should be at the end of forty years, <sup><393></sup>Ezekiel 29:13. See what changes the nations of the earth are subject to, how they are emptied and increased again; and let not nations that prosper be secure, nor those that for the present are in thralldom despair.

II. Comfort and peace are here spoken to the Israel of God, v. 27, 28. Some understand it of those whom the king of Egypt had carried into captivity with Jehoahaz, but we read not of any that were carried away captives with him; it may therefore rather refer to the captives in Babylon, whom God had mercy in store for, or, more generally, to all the people of God, designed for their encouragement in the most difficult times, when the judgments of God are abroad among the nations. We had these words of comfort before, <sup><380></sup>Jeremiah 30:10, 11.

1. Let the wicked of the earth tremble, they have cause for it; *but fear not thou, O my servant Jacob! and be not dismayed, O Israel!* and again, *Fear thou not, O Jacob!* God would not have his people to be a timorous people.

2. The wicked of the earth *shall be put away like dross*, not be looked after any more; but God's people, in order to their being saved, shall be found



out and gathered though they be far off, shall be redeemed though they be held fast in captivity, and shall return.

**3.** The wicked *is like the troubled sea when it cannot rest; they flee when none pursues.* But Jacob, being at home in God, *shall be at rest and at ease, and none shall make him afraid; for what time he is afraid he has a God to trust to.*

**4.** The wicked God *beholds afar off;* but, wherever thou art, *O Jacob! I am with thee, a very present help.*

**5.** A *full end shall be made* of the nations that oppressed God's Israel, as Egypt and Babylon; but mercy shall be kept in store for the Israel of God: they shall be corrected, but not cast off; the correction shall be in measure, in respect of degree and continuance. Nations have their periods; the Jewish nation itself has come to an end as a nation; but the gospel church, God's spiritual Israel, still continues, and will to the end of time; in that this promise is to have its full accomplishment, that, though God correct it, he will never *make a full end of it.*