

Jer. 6:1 ¶ 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 Bethhaccerem: for evil appeareth out of the north, and great destruction.

It appears that the Lord is referencing the Southern Kingdom in the name of Benjamin at this point. My first thought was, "Why?" I found out that Jerusalem, the capital of the kingdom, is located in the territory of Benjamin. The call is for the people to flee from Jerusalem and head south (Tekoa is 12 miles south of Jerusalem) because enemies are approaching from the north intent on great destruction. According to Eerdman's, Bethhaccerem was one of the "fire signal stations" used to send messages for military purposes throughout the kingdom.

Jer. 6:2 I have likened the daughter of Zion to a comely and delicate woman.

Jerusalem had been chosen as God's dwelling place on earth. It was a beautiful city that was chosen as a place of His special delight. The prophet Isaiah declares this truth beautifully.

Isaiah 5:1-4 "Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?"

Jer. 6:3 The shepherds with their flocks shall come unto her; they shall pitch their tents against her round about; they shall feed every one in his place.

Jer. 6:4 Prepare ye war against her; arise, and let us go up at noon. Woe unto us! for the day goeth away, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out.

Jer. 6:5 Arise, and let us go by night, and let us destroy her palaces.

One generally associates the reference to a shepherd as good, but the context of these verses clearly identifies these shepherds as the enemy. They are surrounding Jerusalem in the position of a siege. They are coming against Jerusalem in war. Some of the commentaries indicate that the enemy is eager as indicated by their desire to attack at noon (when it is hottest) and to continue their attack into the night in spite of the lack of light.

Jer. 6:6 For thus hath the LORD of hosts said, Hew ye down trees, and cast a mount against Jerusalem: this is the city to be visited; she is wholly oppression in the midst of her.

Jer. 6:7 As a fountain casteth out her waters, so she casteth out her wickedness: violence and spoil is heard in her; before me continually is grief and wounds.

It is obvious from these verses that the LORD is on the side of the enemy. He is expressing His encouragement for the enemy to cut down trees and build a siege ramp. He intends for the city of Jerusalem to be punished (visited) for her

wickedness. Her wicked actions are pictured as waters gushing from a fountain—many and affecting those surrounding her. God declares that the sounds coming from her testify to the violence and oppression that characterizes her. Instead of a place in which He can delight, all He sees when He looks at her is sickness and wounds—a place in need of healing.

Jer. 6:8 Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee; lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited.

Jer. 6:9 ¶ Thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall thoroughly glean the remnant of Israel as a vine: turn back thine hand as a grapegatherer into the baskets.

Through the prophet God calls for the people of Jerusalem to listen to His message of warning. He is still pleading with them to repent; otherwise, He is going to distance Himself from them and cleanse the land of their wicked presence by causing them to be taken captive by the enemy. He paints a word picture by comparing them to a vine that will be thoroughly gleaned. The vine won't be completely destroyed, but all the fruit will have been removed. It is very clear from the wording that God is in control.

Jer. 6:10 To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? behold, their ear *is* uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it.

Jer. 6:11 Therefore I am full of the fury of the LORD; I am weary with holding in: I will pour it out upon the children abroad, and upon the assembly of young men together: for even the husband with the wife shall be taken, the aged with *him that is* full of days.

Jer. 6:12 And their houses shall be turned unto others, *with their* fields and wives together: for I will stretch out my hand upon the inhabitants of the land, saith the LORD.

The prophet is wondering if there is anyone willing to listen to the word of God. He observes that their ear is uncircumcised; in other words, their ears were not attuned to hearing spiritual truth; this prevented them from understanding that they were in danger. They took no delight in being confronted with their sin and told that they needed to repent and obey. I wonder how many in the “church” today have uncircumcised ears?

Verse 11 seems to picture the prophet in righteous anger and exhausted from the lack of response of the people. He calls out for God to pour out His wrath on the city—from youngest to oldest. He urges the LORD to give the enemy success, and the LORD affirms that He will.

Jer. 6:13 For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one *is* given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely.

Jer. 6:14 They have healed also the hurt of *the daughter* of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when *there is* no peace.

Jer. 6:15 Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they

were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time *that* I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the LORD.

The LORD testifies to the depravity of the people. Every level of society is described as covetous—even the prophets and priests, those who should be representing God to the people, cannot be trusted. They have told the people that God is going to give them peace, while His true prophets are declaring judgment to come. They are blatant and unashamed in their sin; it was to the point that couldn't even blush in light of their wicked actions. Bottom line—God is going to destroy them in punishment for their sin.

Again, I can't help but make comparison to the prevalent culture in America today. What was clearly identified as sin when I was young is now openly embraced as acceptable behavior today. Evangelical churches were known for teaching according to the truth of God's word and identifying sin and the need for repentance and salvation. It seems to me that the number of churches doing the same today is much fewer, and those who do are being categorized as radical and intolerant. I believe we are incurring God's wrath just as surely as did Israel and can expect to be punished with His judgment with the same certainty.

Jer. 6:16 Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where *is* the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk *therein*.

Jer. 6:17 Also I set watchmen over you, *saying*, Harken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken.

Again the LORD entreats His people to stop and look at themselves. Pay attention to the conditions of the covenant promises declared by Moses and follow them. If they will do this, they will find rest and protection. But the belligerent response of the people—We will not obey the LORD. The LORD was faithful to give them watchmen who were faithful to declare His truth; the response of the people—We will not listen. They are determined to live their own lives according to their own desires. The mantra in America and much of the world today is the same—just stated a little differently: If it feels good, do it.

Jer. 6:18 ¶ Therefore hear, ye nations, and know, O congregation, what *is* among them.

Jer. 6:19 Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, *even* the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it.

Jer. 6:20 To what purpose cometh there to me incense from Sheba, and the sweet cane from a far country? your burnt offerings *are* not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto me.

The LORD now calls for the Gentile nations and the earth to witness His declaration. My paraphrase—I am going to judge my people according to their own way of reasoning since they have chosen to reject Me as LORD. I don't

know why they are still going through the motions of offering incense before Me. These offerings are unacceptable and mean nothing to Me.

This thinking is in tune with the thinking of so many today. They expect God to be happy with the offerings they bring to Him of their own choosing without any regard as to what He wants. God is sovereign. His way is the only acceptable way to approach Him. Anything we try to offer Him outside of His declared will will be rejected.

John 14:6 "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

Samuel was very clear in declaring God's heart regarding sacrifices and offerings.

1 Samuel 15:22 "And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

Solomon adds to our understanding from the Proverbs.

Proverbs 21:2-3 & 27 "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts. To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.... The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?"

Jer. 6:21 Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will lay stumblingblocks before this people, and the fathers and the sons together shall fall upon them; the neighbour and his friend shall perish.

Jer. 6:22 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.

Jer. 6:23 They shall lay hold on bow and spear; they *are* cruel, and have no mercy; their voice roareth like the sea; and they ride upon horses, set in array as men for war against thee, O daughter of Zion.

In this section of verses YHWH is basically saying that He is going to ensure His wicked people are destroyed with a vicious refining fire. The word for *stumblingblock* means "cause to fall" and is from a root that means to cause the ruination of or to cause to be overthrown. He is going to send a people from the north, a great nation (later to be identified as Babylon) against Judah. The enemy will be strong, cruel and merciless. They will be so great in number that their approach on horseback will sound like the roaring of the sea.

Jer. 6:24 We have heard the fame thereof: our hands wax feeble: anguish hath taken hold of us, *and* pain, as of a woman in travail.

Jer. 6:25 Go not forth into the field, nor walk by the way; for the sword of the enemy *and* fear is on every side.

Jer. 6:26 O daughter of my people, gird *thee* with sackcloth, and wallow thyself in ashes: make thee mourning, *as for* an only son, most bitter lamentation: for

the spoiler shall suddenly come upon us.

Jeremiah indicates that the people knew about this mighty nation. Just the thought of their approach provoked fear and great anxiety comparable to a woman in the throes of childbirth or as the pain caused by the loss of an only son. Warning is to expect attack from every direction. Jeremiah calls for his people to clothe themselves in sackcloth in mourning and repentance of their sin.

Jer. 6:27 I have set thee *for a tower and a fortress among my people, that thou mayest know and try their way.*

Jer. 6:28 They *are all grievous revolters, walking with slanders: they are brass and iron; they are all corrupters.*

Jer. 6:29 The bellows are burned, the lead is consumed of the fire; the founder melteth in vain: for the wicked are not plucked away.

Jer. 6:30 Reprobate silver shall *men call them, because the LORD hath rejected them.*

It seems that the LORD is declaring Jeremiah to be strong tower of truth among the people with the gifts of knowledge and discernment regarding the people of Judah. He can verify God's declaration that the people are "hardened rebels" (NIV) and liars. They are comparable to bronze and iron, inferior metals (as noted by the CJB). They are corrupters—those who are spoiling and ruining the health of the nation.

Verse 29 represents what is supposed to be a refining fire that will burn away the waste and leave what is pure. In fact, the fire is so hot that the bellows used to fan the flame is burned. The problem—there is just too much dross; the nation is wicked to the core. They are identified as "rejected silver," because the LORD has rejected them.

The prophet Isaiah declared this same message.

Isaiah 1:21–22 "How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water:"

This is a very sad commentary on a nation that was established with such blessing and promise. How do you think America would emerge from this process today? I believe we too would be identified as rejected silver.