*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

August 12 - 17

*The Prophet Jeremiah*

**Monday, August 12 Jeremiah 46:1-12**

*“Concerning foreign nations”*

Chapters 46-51 contain a series of prophecies about other nations. These prophecies are not to be read as blueprints for international events in the late seventh/early sixth centuries BC any more than they are to be read as blueprints for the twenty-first century AD. They do indicate elements of historical relations during Jeremiah’s day, but more fundamentally they indicate God’s resolve to judge idolatry, pride, and cruelty through the historical process and his intention to use that same process to reveal his glory. They speak of judgment (present or to come) and, in some cases, indicate the possibilities of restoration and renewal.

In 609BC the army of Pharaoh Necho marched from Egypt toward Syria in order to oppose the emerging power of Babylon. The date of this prophecy is the fourth year of King Jehoiakim (605BC). The language of the prophecy depicts elements of the Egyptian army preparing to fight and then fleeing in terror. The boastful pride of the Egyptians has been reversed by divine judgment against a nation that persecuted the people of God.

*You, Lord, say “Pride goeth before a fall,” and you make your word true. Amen.*

**Tuesday, August 13 Jeremiah 46:13-28**

*“I will punish Egypt”*

Nebuchadnezzar invaded Egypt in 570BC, late in his reign, but there were periodic encounters of various kinds between Egypt and Babylon throughout Jeremiah’s lifetime. Essentially the prophecy announces that Babylon will work God’s judgment on Egypt. For some in Egypt it will be defeat and exile. Egypt is personified as a female who will be put to shame by a people from the north. Part of the judgment to come is directed at Amon, one of the Egyptian deities. Judgment, however, is not the end of Egypt as a nation; it will again be inhabited.

Following the prophecy against Egypt is a prediction of the restoration of God’s people. Those on whom God’s judgment has fallen have been disciplined justly, but in his mercy God will not make an end of them. Correspondingly, those whom God used to discipline his people (such as the Egyptians) will suffer the fate of those whose pride, cruelty, and idolatry have kept them from acknowledging the work of God.

*The nations, Lord, will be held accountable to your sovereign justice. Amen.*

**Wednesday, August 14 Jeremiah 47:1-7**

*“’The Philistines will be destroyed”*

The Philistines lived in some of the cities on the Mediterranean coast of Palestine. They had been neighbors and often enemies of Judah since the twelfth century BC, having immigrated to the area from some of the Aegean islands and southwestern Turkey. Two Philistine cities are named here: Gaza and Ashkelon. Gaza was a trading center and an important point of contact between Egypt, the nomadic tribes living in the Sinai wilderness, and the states immediately to the north and east (including Judah).

The assault being prophesied could have been perpetrated by the Egyptians between 609BC, when Necho took his armies north and 605, when the Egyptians were defeated by the Babylonians. In form and vocabulary, the prophecy against the Philistines is similar to the preceding prophecy against Egypt. The Philistines will be defeated on some future day. People will mourn for Gaza and Ashkelon. God’s historical judgment, personified in verse six through a poetic address to his sword, will surely come upon this enemy of Judah.

*You oppose those, Lord, who seek to do evil to your people. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

August 12 - 17

T*he Prophet Jeremiah*

**Thursday, August 15 Jeremiah 48:1-17**

*“A message concerning Moab”*

The Moabites receive an extensive address in this chapter, with over twenty different cities named in the indictment of Judah’s eastern neighbor on the far side of the Dead Sea. According to Genesis 19:30-38, a drunken Lot slept with his two daughters, and as a result they bore Moab and Ben-Ammi. The child named Moab is the ancestor of the Moabite people. Thus the Moabites and Israelites were distant relatives. Later, David’s family was related to the Moabites through Ruth, his great-grandmother (Ruth 4:13-22), and Solomon married a Moabite princess and built for her a temple to Chemosh, the chief Moabite deity.

One way to refer to Moab was to call them “the people of Chemosh.” He, like his people, will suffer defeat and go into exile, and in the future Moab will be ashamed of the god Chemosh just as the Israelites were ashamed of the golden calf that they had worshiped. The judgment language includes references to salt, an agent that ruins agricultural products, and to curses on whoever is lax in doing the Lord’s work of execution.

*You, Lord, will judge the false gods of the nations. Amen.*

**Friday, August 16 Jeremiah 48:18-33**

*“Moab lies in ruins”*

Jeremiah’s prophecy contains mourning language, prediction of judgment and exile, and disdain for those who live in opposition to the holy God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. As with Egypt and Judah, Jeremiah uses familial language for Moab as a daughter (i.e., “Daughter of Dibon”). Her cities will be ruined, and she will wail a funeral lament. Even physical mutilation is mentioned. Moab’s “horn,” a metaphor for strength, will be cut off and her arm broken.

These prophecies depict Moab’s humiliation and degradation. As with previous prophetic judgments, the language is graphic. Moab will wallow in vomit, and cries of anguish over disregard for her suffering will be heard. So moved is the prophet by the intensity of depicting Moab’s downfall that he portrays himself in mourning. While the historical agent of all this destruction is not named, the first-century Jewish historian Josephus preserves an account that has the Babylonians campaigning in the region of Moab after the defeat of Judah in the late sixth century BC.

*It is a terrible thing, Lord, to come under your divine judgment. Amen.*

**Saturday, August 17 Jeremiah 48:34-47**

*“Moab has boasted against the Lord”*

The prophecies against the nations are valuable for more than simply compiling a checklist to see how and when, or if, judgment befell the nations addressed. Like all announcements of judgment, these prophecies get the attention of audiences and warn them; they also speak of eternal truths about God and his people.

First, they assume without argument that God is the Creator of the broader historical process in which the nations find themselves. This is practically the same as claiming that God is Creator of the world, since creation in the Bible is not simply about a past act but about the ongoing interaction with God and the events of history. Second, the prophecies assume that there are recognized standards of conduct to which any group may be held accountable. God has the right to judge the nations, his standards are just, and he may restore the nation as part of a future in which his mercy is as surprising as his judgment. As such, these prophecies play the role of protest against governmental injustice.

*Whether individual or corporate, Lord, you stand against injustice. Amen.*