

Jeremiah 49:28-33 The Rise and Fall of Security Falls Ch. AM 7/9/2023

For multiple sermons, we have been studying Jeremiah chapter 49 about God's judgment, so now ask yourself this question:

Do you believe that the judgment of all the earth is coming?

Some people doubt that there will even be a judgment day. Other people are falsely confident that their lives are good enough to give them a passing grade when judged by God. Other people think that they can hide from God. It is as if they believe that God will only judge the worst people, like active shooters, and those who hurt women and children. Their view is, like everyone goes through the metal detector and scanner, but only certain suspicious people get pulled aside for extra screening. Basically, people think that they can hide in plain sight from God's judgment.

God's Word won't let us believe that. Listen to Romans 14:10, "...we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written, 'As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.' So then each of us will give an account of himself to God."

How about you? Do you believe that you will face God as judge? If no, how can you be sure? If yes, how will you do in that evaluation? How do you know? **No one will be spared the final judgment of God; all must seek reconciliation through Christ while there is yet time.**

Some people think that they can escape God's searching eye. They never killed anyone. They never stayed overnight with the wrong person. In comparison with the average person, they were clean cut, or at least not nasty. They did not become fanatical muslim, nor did they openly oppose Christianity. Their approach was to live and let others live. No harm, no foul. Nothing that should awaken the anger of God. They are confident/secure; does their confidence have a good basis?

1. The warning about the danger of false security (carefree living). (v.28-29)

Verse 28 – God's first 2 words tell us the recipients of today's message, "*concerning Kedar...*" Also notice who is God's instrument of judgment? It was Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon – yes, that is a familiar name – the same ancient King Nebuchadnezzar whom God used to destroy Jerusalem, including God's temple there. Yes, the same King Nebuchadnezzar about whom we read in the Book of Daniel, when our ancient friend Daniel was an exile in Babylon. That Nebuchadnezzar is being used by God now as a weapon of judgment not against a nation or place, but rather against certain tribes wandering in the desert!

So, in verse 28, we read that it was God who spoke the initiating command here, *Thus says the LORD*. Don't make any mistake who stands behind Judgment day. We read it here from the mouth of God in verse 28, "*Rise up, advance against Kedar!*" God commanded Babylon, but not overtly. Not as if Babylon were asking

for God to lead them. God as king of all nations, was using one nation against another, all while Nebuchadnezzar had no idea that God was doing this!

The items referred to in verse 29 – tents, flocks, curtains, camels, are all characteristic of wandering people, traveling groups, rather than settled peoples. The cry “terror on every side!” has been used several times in the Book of Jeremiah. (6:25 20:3-4,10 and 46:5). This is what raiders would shout as they advanced against the camps of the wandering peoples.

These are not people on a camping trip; these are people who have no houses, have no land, have no home. They live their whole lives in tents, so that they can keep moving from one place to another with their tents and camels and gear and all their extended families. Today we might call them nomads, or nomadic tribes or Bedouins.

King Nebuchadnezzar got fed up with the tribe of Kedar swooping in from the desert and attacking Babylonian troops, and taking whatever they wanted to take, and then disappearing again into the desert.

Who could stop Kedar? Who could find Kedar, they were hiding in the desert with black tents, according to the Bible, in Song of Solomon, chapter 1, verse 5! Too hot to attack during the day, and the black tents could not be found at night. Do you subscribe to the Robin Hood theory? Weren't the people of Kedar just poor people who had no home, so they were stealing from the rich King Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian troops for bread and survival? Do you think we should not be so harsh on them? Should King Nebuchadnezzar go easy on them? Should God go easy on them?

Kedar was a main Arab tribe frequently referred to in the OT.

Kedar was the ancient name for Arabia – the home to the wandering, desert-living tribes of the region of land that we now call Arabia, for example, the country of Saudi Arabia.

It is interesting to consider how Kedar peoples in our chapter are related to people living today. What is more important is to understand how the people in the area of Kedar were related to people who lived prior to them. The people in Kedar were descendants of Ishmael, the half-brother of Isaac, both sons of Abraham. So, these tribes of Kedar were related to Israel. As we see in our passage, God's message to the Kedar tribes was a message of judgment and affliction. God's message to Kedar was that they would be attacked, plundered, slaughtered, and terrorized by the army of Babylon.

These judgments prophesied in our passage later actually took place in history. Today in the British Museum, which is a public museum in London, England, dedicated to human history, art and culture, still has preserved tablets called the Babylonian Chronicles. The Babylonian Chronicles, which were official government records written by the officials in Ancient Babylon, recording what

actions the Nation of Babylon took. According to these official records on ancient tablets, the army of King Nebuchadnezzar raided many encampments of Kedar in the year 599 BC. The description of these raids fits with these verses in our passage today about God's judgment against wandering tribes.

2. The certainty of God's coming judgment. (v.30-32a)

Have you settled my earlier question in your mind whether God is just to judge wandering Robin Hood peoples? As we move ahead in our passage we learn the answer – they harbored false security against God's role as Judge. It is that simple.

We unpack verse 30, we see again that it was the LORD who declared His judgment. God issued a warning against the people living in the desert, telling them to run away! Verse 30, "*Flee, wander far away, dwell in the depths, O inhabitants of Hazor!*" declares the LORD."

Wait, who is Hazor? Hazor was previously mentioned in verse 28, and Hazor is repeated here in verse 30. Hazor was simply the name of another Arab tribe in the eastern desert. The point is that God is not only the king over all established nations, but God is also king over all groups of persons and each person. Even those without a home and without land and without an established national government, are accountable to God. The point here is the certainty of God's coming judgment on everyone! To say it another way no one – no matter how innocent or unimportant to our minds – would escape God's judgment.

Despite what we are now told about Nebuchadnezzar in the second half of verse 30 -- that Nebuchadnezzar had a plan and a purpose against Kedar – despite that, it was not Nebuchadnezzar who was the originating, driving force behind these attacks. No, rather, the driving force here was God, who had His plan and purpose to judge, to scatter, and to destroy.

Look at God's next statement in verse 31, "*Rise up, advance against a nation at ease, that dwells securely, declares The LORD.*" This aligns with verse 28, where we already have seen that it was The LORD who told Nebuchadnezzar to rise up against Kedar. Well, the statement from God in verse 28 is now repeated here in verse 31. *Rise up!* Who says? It was God who ordered them to rise up and flee, because it was God who ordered the attack against the people. Why? Look carefully at the reason given in verse 31, because they are a people who were "*at ease, that dwells securely, declares the LORD, that has no gates or bars, that dwells alone.*" God ordered the attack because of their false security, because of their false confidence. They were a people who believed that they were a safe distance, far enough away from the reach of Babylon's army, hey, to be blunt, far enough from the reach of God Himself, that they could live *AT EASE*. They lived in a desert of lies! They lived with the lie of security. They believed that they could live securely, despite having no gates and no walls around their tents and

families. They had no wood or steel bars across the gates. They had no alliances with neighboring countries and no allies. They lived alone. What would happen to people who lived in the false confidence of false security and all alone? God says that they would be attacked.

We read in verse 32, that their camels would be taken “*their camels shall become plunder, their herds of livestock a spoil.*” It was the LORD God who further stated in verse 32, “*I will scatter....I will bring their calamity... from every side of them...declares the LORD.*”

Our author Jeremiah was not confused about the primary actor here, and remember that our author Jeremiah was originally writing to the exiles, to explain to them who was the primary actor here. Remember that the exiles lived under King Nebuchadnezzar! It was spiritually healthy and spiritually refreshing for the exiles to remember that King Nebuchadnezzar was not in charge, ultimately. The primary actor in judgment is the LORD God of Israel, who is the judge of all nations and peoples.

God is the One who has been reminding us since chapter 1 of the book of Jeremiah that the LORD God will *pluck up and tear down* nations, even as He has plucked up and torn down His own city Jerusalem and his own nation Israel. The question is not who will escape judgment. No one will escape. Rather, the question is who has placed their hope in the correct post-judgment realm? It is Judah, God’s own people. They are the ones with the new covenant promise to be restored after judgment, to be brought home after being driven out into exile.

The certainty of the coming restoration is as certain as the coming judgment!

3. The dual outcomes of God’s planned judgment. (v.30,32b-33)

v.33 – all 4 of the phrases in verse 33 are common and conventional phrases, used more than once by Jeremiah himself, and used repeatedly by other prophets. The phrases are 1, “*a haunt of jackals,*” which were wild animals, much like if you saw an abandoned Wisconsin barn, it might have wild animals living in it, 2, “*an everlasting waste,*” which means that the area was so destroyed that no one was thinking of rebuilding it, 3, “*no man shall dwell there,*” and 4, “*no man shall sojourn in her.*” No one was even interested to travel there out of curiosity to take a look. It was a complete disgusting wasteland.

Verse 33 may seem to infer that Hazor was a city, but no city by that name has ever been found. (side note: it is understood that this Hazor is not the same place as the city Hazor that was listed in the Book of Joshua, chapter 11, as a city in Northern Israel. If you think that is confusing and that the ancient world should have done a better job of naming things differently, instead of having two places named Hazor, then it may humble us to realize that there are 27 places in America, and one place in Canada, all called by the name Madison.) The point of Hazor in verse 33 is that Hazor is a little bit more of a stable or sedentary area of the tent-

dwelling people who did not move around from place to place, but also did not build homes and settle in. These were ancient ancestors of the Arabs who were not on the move geographically, but also did not build walls. They were unwalled tent villages, such as this area called Hazor. It is like saying Woodstock. Woodstock was not a city, instead, it was a temporary gathering point where people lived for perhaps too long, during the moments when they were attempting to live carefree, being deeply deceived with a false sense of their own security. Only later did those who lived in Woodstock wake up to reality. Same with ancient Hazor. Military invasion and devastation had a way of rapidly removing people from the delusion of carefree living.

The tent-living people of Hazor, and their partners in Kedar, can be seen as a symbol of the restlessness of sinful human nature. Human beings in each generation are constantly searching here and there for peace and security, and cannot seem to find it. The desert-roaming people of Kedar and Hazor are holding up a mirror to our lives, reflecting back to us so that we can see our own restlessness and our own delusions of safety. People in our generation are attracted to living their lives in a desert of dissatisfaction and despair, apart from God. All this happens while God is calling and calling to us through His prophets like Jeremiah, and later through His Son Jesus, and each generation has people who are searching and searching, wandering and searching, and will not listen. Hebrews 1:1-2, *“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world.”* To wander and search but not to find, is not an innocent process. These people, too, will be punished in God’s judgment. These people, too, know better. These people too, had a constant offer from God that they constantly rejected.

Conclusion:

1. Be always watchful for Christ to come in judgment and mercy.

We have been studying in Jeremiah 49 the oracles to the nations. Oracles of judgment, but within these oracles are messages of hope, messages of mercy, messages of rescue and salvation!

The takeaway lesson is that God sends both judgment and salvation. There is mercy in the God of judgment. Receive it! Consider who was gathered on the day when the Holy Spirit came down on the Day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2. Listen to Acts 2:9-11, *“And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? 9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, 11 both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works*

of God...” There will be Arabians in heaven, because the God of heaven sent His Spirit upon them, and sends His missionaries to them.

If in your travels, you should meet an Arab. Share Christ with him or her! Wherever you go, you are taking the precious good news with you – news to be shared with whomever you meet.

This is the topic of the last section of the last chapter of our doctrinal statement called the Westminster Confession of Faith, “As Christ would have us to be certainly persuaded that there shall be a day of judgment, both to deter all men from sin; and for the greater consolation of the godly in their adversity: so will he have that day unknown to men, that they may shake off all carnal security, and be always watchful, because they know not at what hour the Lord will come; and may be ever prepared to say, Come Lord Jesus, come quickly, Amen.”

2. Be always prepared to say, Come quickly, Lord Jesus.

This prayer is a good heart and a good life. This prayer is not despairing or despondent. This prayer is not giving up at all. This prayer is saying that I know there is a day of Judgment coming, and I know how I will do in the day of Judgment, because of my Lord Jesus. He has died for my sins to cleanse me, and He has risen again to take the place of Lord of my life. He is coming on the day of judgment against the wicked, of whom I once was one, but by His redeeming, I am now a godly one by Christ’s gift. He has sanctified me, and continues to cover my failings. I am in this broken world with the roaming devil and surrounded by sinners, and tempted to sin again and again, and so I am suffering here in exile. I long for home. God has promised me a new covenant in Christ, and those covenant blessings are fulfilled in Christ. My suffering comes to an end the moment my Lord Jesus comes, so my prayer is simple; come quickly, Lord Jesus. If I give in to temptation, it interrupts my prayer of come quickly. So let me repent quickly of my sin and pray quickly for Jesus to quickly forgive and quickly come, that I might be brought out of this broken world, and see my Lord Jesus face to face, and go home to heaven with Him.

3. Don’t be attracted to the mirage of being left alone.

We could call it the Kedar sin. We talk about the Kedar sin it in subtle ways. Alone time. Me time. Unplug. Unreachable. Out of range. No signal. People dream about retiring and pulling away. Live alone. Off the grid. A man cave. Travel. Not deal with the public. Not deal with neighbors. No more extended family members. No more customers, clients, patients or humans. Alone. It is a lie. It is the lie of false security.

The wandering tribes thought that they were escaping conflict, escaping military conflict, but the Babylonian army came marching out into the wilderness, bringing conflict to their black-tented compound in the middle of nowhere.

This is our American hunger for independency. We want to do what we want to do, and we want other people to leave us alone! In our sinful nature, we don't want to be shepherded in the church – pastors, elders, and deacons leave me alone. We don't want membership, because then those things are foisted upon us.

We don't want to give an answer to God for how we are living!

This is a very dangerous spiritual pit. You have no business going there, or being attracted to the gravel that looks like a pure pool – it is a mirage. A lie!

Our lives as Christians, who have been bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:20 and 7:23), must be spent in the service of God by serving people. We are not allowed to withdraw into selfish indulgence and meaningless travel. Travel is for rest in order to return to serving God. God owns our bodies, our time, and our money. We use it all for Him, in order to enjoy God and in order to glorify God.

Sometimes people go to a mega-church to evade everyone. To get lost in the sea of people, and not have to deal with anyone. Going to church to be left alone!

Consider the very different, and compelling and unavoidable call of Christ on our lives to not be so alone, so selfish so secluded, because of what His redemption means for us in 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, “...*the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.*”

We died to selfish seclusion when Christ died. Our desires to be left alone, our desires for pleasure, power and self-glory all are dead desires. We are living after our desires have been mortified. So, we must continue to live not for ourselves, but for Christ. We live for Christ. We work for Christ, we rest for Christ, we travel for Christ, to enjoy Him, to glorify Him, and to bless others while we travel.

We do not pull away into our own version of a desert tent - a secluded place of our own making. No, God designed us to connect to other people. Instead of becoming hermits, we go from one place to another bringing the grace, mercy, and wisdom of Christ. Our security is not found in pulling away by ourselves. Our security is external and true, and is found in Christ and His community of His followers. Our security is a true and strong confidence that the risen Lord Jesus will take us home one day soon, and so we want to use all of our remaining days to unpack the blessings He ships to us, and to serve Him with all that is in us, and rejoice together with His people wherever we find them to be, and to share the good news from Heaven's Judge who says that today is the day of salvation. Today reconciliation with the Judge of all is offered to all through Christ, while there is

yet time. It is not yet the Day of Judgment. If false security has risen in your heart, let it fall. Let true security rise in your heart. The security offered only by our Lord Jesus.

Luke 12:18-21, the words of the fool who had false security, *“And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’” 20 But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ 21 So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”*

Those of us who have received rescue by Jesus are rich toward God and enjoying living in the Christian community of the church, as a gift from Christ Himself. Because Jesus rescued us, we always enjoy Christ and His Church, and we serve Christ and His church. Here we enjoy true security.