



The Fiery Bones

Jeremiah 20:9

Text

Jeremiah 49:1-39

Topic

A series of God's judgements against Judah's enemies encourages us that we can be more than conquerors as we walk with Him

Title

"Keep Your Friend Close, but Your Enemies Conquered"

Introduction

If you think of yourself, as a believer in Jesus Christ, as being surrounded by fierce enemies, you'll get something out of today's text.

Judah was surrounded by fierce enemies. Ever wonder why God left those enemies in the land?

The answer is found in a passage in the OT book of Judges.

In chapter three you read, "now these are the nations which the LORD left, that He might test Israel by them, that is, all who had not known any of the wars in Canaan (this was only so that the generations of the children of Israel might be taught to know war, at least those who had not formerly known it)..."

God wasn't testing them to see them fail. Quite the opposite. It was to show them success. It was one thing to hear stories like the one about Joshua marching on Jericho and the walls falling down by the miraculous intervention of God. It was quite another to experience that sort of thing by faith for yourself.

We, too, are surrounded by enemies. It is said of us, as believers,

Ephesians 2:2-3a. You once walked, following the course of this **world**, following the **prince of the power of the air**, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience - among whom we all once lived in the passions of our **flesh**...

Our enemies are the world, the devil, and our flesh.

- The "course of this world" refers to the ways of culture and society that oppose The LORD. There are ungodly trends in the world - materialism, naturalism, desire for instant gratification, and more - that once ruled all of our passions but are now defeated in Christ.
- The devil is real and he rules as "the prince of the power of the air." He is elsewhere called "the god of this world." With him are legions of fallen angels we now call demons. He also influences nonbelievers to be against us, here called "the sons of disobedience."

- Our "flesh" isn't our physical body per se but rather that principle in our human bodies that remains after we are saved demanding we fulfill its sinful appetites; or that we satisfy its normal appetites in sinful ways.

These remain as enemies for us to battle so we might experience firsthand the power of God by faith for ourselves.

Revivalist and author Vance Havner probably had this in mind when he said, "The enemy surrounds us; *don't let one escape!*"

Surrounded from without by the world and the devil and having an enemy within, we are not conquered but are more than conquerors through Jesus.

We will encounter six of Judah's enemies and, for each one, I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 There's Always Something About Your Enemy That Appeals To You, but #2 There's Always Something About God That He Reveals To You.

We start with Ammon.

Jeremiah 49:1 Against the Ammonites. Thus says the LORD: "Has Israel no sons? Has he no heir? Why then does Milcom inherit Gad, And his people dwell in its cities?"

Jeremiah 49:2 Therefore behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "That I will cause to be heard an alarm of war In Rabbah of the Ammonites; It shall be a desolate mound, And her villages shall be burned with fire. Then Israel shall take possession of his inheritance," says the LORD.

Jeremiah 49:3 "Wail, O Heshbon, for Ai is plundered! Cry, you daughters of Rabbah, Gird yourselves with sackcloth! Lament and run to and fro by the walls; For Milcom shall go into captivity With his priests and his princes together.

Jeremiah 49:4 Why do you boast in the valleys, Your flowing valley, O backsliding daughter? Who trusted in her treasures, saying, 'Who will come against me?'

Jeremiah 49:5 Behold, I will bring fear upon you," Says the Lord GOD of hosts, "From all those who are around you; You shall be driven out, everyone headlong, And no one will gather those who wander off.

Jeremiah 49:6 But afterward I will bring back The captives of the people of Ammon," says the LORD.

By asking four questions Jeremiah focused on Ammon's major sin. The Northern Kingdom of Israel had been taken captive in 722BC and Ammon, assuming Israel would have no sons or heirs who would return to the land, seized it for herself.

God announced that days were coming when an enemy would attack Ammon's capital city of Rabbah. Rabbah would become nothing but ruins, and Israel would drive out the Ammonites who had settled in her villages. The people of Rabbah would put on sackcloth and mourn.

Milcom might be a reference to their king or it might be a different name for their god, Molech.

Here you see the world, the devil, and the flesh all at work. The culture surrounding the Jews worshipped a false god, Molech, inspired by the devil. The worship was appealing to the flesh because, among other things, it involved having sex with the priests and priestesses of Molech.

What God revealed to them is unspoken but understood. As His people they would again possess the inheritance that the Ammonites had squatted upon. It was given them by God through Abraham and He would see to it they had it forever.

When the world and the devil appeal to your flesh to bow down to some idol, it would do you well to realize that you are promised an inheritance in Heaven. You build your heavenly inheritance by seeking first the kingdom of God and building alongside God while you are here on the Earth.

One day you will stand before Jesus to be rewarded. "Only one life, will soon be passed; only what's done for Christ will last." Don't allow your enemies to keep you from building wealth in Heaven with their lame appeals to temporary pleasures.

The nation of Edom was next in God's prophetic sites.

Jeremiah 49:7 Against Edom. Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Is wisdom no more in Teman? Has counsel perished from the prudent? Has their wisdom vanished?"

Jeremiah 49:8 Flee, turn back, dwell in the depths, O inhabitants of Dedan! For I will bring the calamity of Esau upon him, The time that I will punish him.

Jeremiah 49:9 If grape-gatherers came to you, Would they not leave some gleaning grapes? If thieves by night, Would they not destroy until they have enough?

Jeremiah 49:10 But I have made Esau bare; I have uncovered his secret places, And he shall not be able to hide himself. His descendants are plundered, His brethren and his neighbors, And he is no more.

Jeremiah 49:11 Leave your fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; And let your widows trust in Me."

Jeremiah 49:12 For thus says the LORD: "Behold, those whose judgment was not to drink of the cup have assuredly drunk. And are you the one who will altogether go unpunished? You shall not go unpunished, but you shall surely drink of it.

Jeremiah 49:13 For I have sworn by Myself," says the LORD, "that Bozrah shall become a desolation, a reproach, a waste, and a curse. And all its cities shall be perpetual wastes."

Jeremiah 49:14 I have heard a message from the LORD, And an ambassador has been sent to the nations: "Gather together, come against her, And rise up to battle!

Jeremiah 49:15 "For indeed, I will make you small among nations, Despised among men.

Jeremiah 49:16 Your fierceness has deceived you, The pride of your heart, O you who dwell in the clefts of the rock, Who hold the height of the hill! Though you make your nest as high as the eagle, I will bring you down from there," says the LORD.

Jeremiah 49:17 "Edom also shall be an astonishment; Everyone who goes by it will be astonished And will hiss at all its plagues.

Jeremiah 49:18 As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah And their neighbors," says the LORD, "No one shall remain there, Nor shall a son of man dwell in it.

Jeremiah 49:19 "Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the floodplain of the Jordan Against the dwelling place of the strong; But I will suddenly make him run away from her. And who is a chosen man that I may appoint over her? For who is like Me? Who will arraign Me? And who is that shepherd Who will withstand Me?"

Jeremiah 49:20 Therefore hear the counsel of the LORD that He has taken against Edom, And His purposes that He has proposed against the inhabitants of Teman: Surely the least of the flock shall draw them out; Surely He shall make their dwelling places desolate with them.

Jeremiah 49:21 The earth shakes at the noise of their fall; At the cry its noise is heard at the Red Sea.

Jeremiah 49:22 Behold, He shall come up and fly like the eagle, And spread His wings over Bozrah; The heart of the mighty men of Edom in that day shall be Like the heart of a woman in birth pangs.

The name Edom was given to Esau, the first-born son of Isaac and twin brother of Jacob, when he sold his birthright to the latter for a meal of lentil soup. The country which the Lord, subsequently, gave to Esau was called "the country of Edom," and his descendants were called Edomites. Edom was also called Mount Seir and Idumea.

Edom was a mountainous country. Her strong natural defenses gave her a false sense of security. You're probably familiar with the famous city of Petra. It was in Edom.

When the time came, God would cause Edom to fall. In the period of time between the Old and New Testaments desert tribesmen called the Nabateans drove the Edomites from their land. The people of Edom were forced to migrate into southern Judah where they were called Idumeans. In 125BC John Hyrcanus I, a Maccabean, subjugated the Idumeans and made them accept Judaism. The Edomites thus ceased to be a distinct national group.

We learn, in verse seven, that Edomites were known for their "prudent counsel" and "wisdom." But theirs was a worldly wisdom, a fleshly wisdom.

The wisdom of the world is appealing. The wisdom of God can seem foolish in comparison. Take almost any of the great characters or stories in the Bible and you have an example of this.

Abraham is as good an example as any.

- He believed God and set out for a land not knowing where he was headed.
- He claimed to be the father of many nations when he had no children and his wife was past child bearing age.
- Once he received the son God promised him, he almost killed him in a sacrifice.

God loves to take the foolish to confound the wise. We are the foolish He uses!

Not "fools," but "foolish" from the world's point of view. That's the reveal from God in these verses. You are going to be called upon, as a follower of Jesus, to make choices that will seem foolish to the world's way of thinking.

Can you think of something in your life, some choice or decision, that your nonbelieving friends and relatives consider foolish? I hope so! Because it is par for the course you are on in a walk with God.

Damascus is next in our text, referring to not just the ancient city but to the Aramean people who were settled there.

Jeremiah 49:23 Against Damascus. "Hamath and Arpad are shamed, For they have heard bad news. They are fainthearted; There is trouble on the sea; It cannot be quiet.

Jeremiah 49:24 Damascus has grown feeble; She turns to flee,
And fear has seized her. Anguish and sorrows have taken her like
a woman in labor.

Jeremiah 49:25 Why is the city of praise not deserted, the city of
My joy?

Jeremiah 49:26 Therefore her young men shall fall in her streets,
And all the men of war shall be cut off in that day," says the LORD
of hosts.

Jeremiah 49:27 "I will kindle a fire in the wall of Damascus, And it
shall consume the palaces of Ben-Hadad."

Damascus and two other Aramean cities, Hamath and Arpad,
were to be judged. "Ben-Hadad" was the name of the dynasty
that ruled in Damascus in the ninth and eighth centuries BC.

We're not given a reason for God's judgment but we know from
Bible history that in the days of the kings of Israel and Judah,
Aramaean kings raided their villages.

What's revealed here for us? I think it's in verse twenty-five. First
let's find an alternate translation that makes more sense. The
Amplified Version reads like this: "How [remarkable that] the
renowned city is not deserted, the city of my joy! [exclaims one
from Damascus]."

Damascus was, and remains, the world's oldest continuously
inhabited city. While other cities and nations came and went,
Damascus seemed to survive and thrive. It never was totally
deserted.

The Babylonians came as the hand of God and "her young men
[fell] in her streets, and all the men of war [were] cut off." But
Damascus survived and survives to this day.

Damascus is as close to an 'eternal' city as it gets on earth. It's been around since at least the second millennium BC.

The appeal here, by the devil to our flesh, is to think the world will go on as before. It can be summed up in the question of the scoffers, "Where is the promise of God's coming judgement, seeing everything continues as it always was?"

Nonbelievers don't understand that The Lord delays because of them. He is longsuffering, not willing that any of them should perish once He acts in judgment.

The reveal here is that we have a heavenly city to look forward to, the New Jerusalem. The Lord is there now, personally doing the finish work on our mansions. Set your affections there; look for that city whose builder and maker is God.

Our text mentions three more nations surrounding Judah - obscure nations - starting with Kedar and Hazor together.

Jeremiah 49:28 Against Kedar and against the kingdoms of Hazor, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon shall strike. Thus says the LORD: "Arise, go up to Kedar, And devastate the men of the East!

Jeremiah 49:29 Their tents and their flocks they shall take away. They shall take for themselves their curtains, All their vessels and their camels; And they shall cry out to them, 'Fear is on every side!'

Jeremiah 49:30 "Flee, get far away! Dwell in the depths, O inhabitants of Hazor!" says the LORD. "For Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has taken counsel against you, And has conceived a plan against you.

Jeremiah 49:31 "Arise, go up to the wealthy nation that dwells securely," says the LORD, "Which has neither gates nor bars, Dwelling alone.

Jeremiah 49:32 Their camels shall be for booty, And the multitude of their cattle for plunder. I will scatter to all winds those in the farthest corners, And I will bring their calamity from all its sides," says the LORD.

Jeremiah 49:33 "Hazor shall be a dwelling for jackals, a desolation forever; No one shall reside there, Nor son of man dwell in it."

Kedar was a nomadic tribe of Ishmaelites (Genesis 25:13) in the Arabian desert known for their skills in archery (Isaiah 21:16-17), their flocks of sheep (Isaiah 60:7; Jeremiah 49:28-29), their extensive trade (Ezekiel 27:21), and their warlike nature (Psalm 120:5-6). Less is known about Hazor, as a people; but we can assume that by their being included with Kedar they, too, were nomadic herdsman.

We're given no information here as to why God sent the Babylonians against them. The Jews Jeremiah was addressing would have known their history.

We would do well to recall that God deals with all nations according to their righteousness or lack of it.

I've talked to you before about the current Prepper movement and their shelters and plans for survival. Maybe they are the modern equivalent of Kedar and Hazor as they seek to get away from society and live self- sufficiently.

There is a certain appeal, even sometimes to Christians, to try to get away from it all, to live under the radar, providing for yourself and protecting yourself.

It's up to each of us, individually, to determine how prepared we want to be for a natural disaster. I don't know how much Spam, or how many bullets, are appropriate.

I do know that we are to be in the world, as salt and light, spreading the Gospel. We have the Great Commission, do we not, to be going through the world making disciples. *And I think it's hard to do that from a bunker!*

The apostle Peter said the world was about to end and he exhorted us, saying, "Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?" (Second Peter 3:11-12).

Key in on the word "hastening." It means *to accelerate*. How can we accelerate the coming of The Lord? The only way I can think is by sharing the Gospel more and seeing more folks receive Jesus Christ.

Be more of a hastener than you are a Prepper.

Elam is last in our text.

Jeremiah 49:34 The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet against Elam, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, saying,

Jeremiah 49:35 "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Behold, I will break the bow of Elam, The foremost of their might.

Jeremiah 49:36 Against Elam I will bring the four winds From the four quarters of heaven, And scatter them toward all those winds; There shall be no nations where the outcasts of Elam will not go.

Jeremiah 49:37 For I will cause Elam to be dismayed before their enemies And before those who seek their life. I will bring disaster upon them, My fierce anger,' says the LORD; 'And I will send the sword after them Until I have consumed them.

Jeremiah 49:38 I will set My throne in Elam, And will destroy from there the king and the princes,' says the LORD.

Jeremiah 49:39 'But it shall come to pass in the latter days: I will bring back the captives of Elam,' says the LORD."

This prophecy was given early in the reign of Zedekiah, about 597BC. God promised to break the bow of Elam which He called the mainstay of their might. This is significant because the Elamites were known for their archery skills (Isaiah 22:6).

Elam was with the Assyrians when they attacked Israel and they assisted the Babylons in their attacks on Jerusalem.

The judgment against Elam was not fulfilled at any time in history.

- The prophecy speaks of the people being driven off the land and scattered into all the world. This has never happened in recorded history.
- It also speaks of the God of Israel setting His throne in Elam. This has never happened.

This prophecy, then, awaits fulfillment.

Elam was east of Babylon in what is today the country of Iran. According to one source, the actual location of Elam would be the very northern end of the Persian Gulf and down along with the west coast of Iran.

Today one of main sections of ancient Elam would include Bushehr Province with the capital city of Bushehr.

Hmm. Where have we heard that name before? It's ground zero for Iran's nuclear ambitions. It is feared that Iran would use this plant to help build nuclear weapons to destroy Israel and threaten other nations. Israel has stated that it will not allow Iran to become a nuclear power, and it is very possible Israel will attack Iran to destroy this nuclear complex at Bushehr. It is also possible that World War 3 could start over the Bushehr nuclear plant. Ancient Elam has become a focal point in dealing with Israel and fits directly into God's prophetic plan as the world heads toward the day of the LORD.

Lots of people watched *The Bible* on the History Channel. The consensus is that it was pretty inaccurate, and that's a shame.

One thing I did hear about it was that some of the special effects were cool - like the way they portrayed the burning bush from out of which God spoke to Moses.

It's one thing to hear about the burning bush, or in our generation to see it reenacted. But wouldn't you love to actually have seen it? Or to have been there when Jericho's walls fell?

Well, you **are** there for things like that in this sense. God has left enemies for you to defeat the same way previous Bible characters defeated the same enemies - by walking by faith.

- You can come into His holy presence anytime you wish without fear of being consumed by His fire.
- As you march with Him, patiently walking, walls fall down and you take ground for Him.

There's no appeal from the world, the devil, or your flesh that isn't accompanied by some greater reveal of God - of His love, His grace, His mercy, His forgiveness.