

Dr. Gary Yates, Jeremiah, Lecture 11, Jeremiah 4-6, The Coming Invasion

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This is Dr. Gary Yates in his course on the book of Jeremiah. This is session 11, Jeremiah 4:5-6:30, The Coming Invasion.

In this session of our study of the book of Jeremiah, we're going to be covering from Jeremiah chapter four, verse five, the unit that extends to Jeremiah chapter six, verse 30.

And we're going to be looking at the topic of the coming invasion. And as we're looking at this, the warnings of judgment that are going to come upon Judah because of their failures to repent, I want to remind us and just give us something to think about at the beginning of this. We definitely see a relationship of cause and effect between what we studied in the last section and what Jeremiah is warning about in this section.

When Judah refuses to respond in a positive way to God's offer of repentance and avoidance of judgment, perhaps there's the possibility that God will relent from judgment. These are the consequences that they are going to experience. I think, in some ways, in the beginning part of the book of Judges, you have a cause.

Israel did not drive the Canaanites out of the land. As a result of that, the consequence was they began to worship their gods and the Lord subjected them to this series of judgments. We have the same thing going on here.

We're reminded of the spiritual principle of sowing and reaping. Whatsoever a man sows, that will he also reap. Jeremiah is warning the people about the sins that they have sowed.

He's also showing them the consequences that they are going to reap. Hosea said Israel has sown the wind; they have reaped the whirlwind. And so one of the principles about sin is that we not only receive back in kind what we have done, but the consequences of that sin intensify and magnify as they're not dealt with.

Let me remind us what was at the end of the last section of Jeremiah that we studied. There are these incredible recurring calls for Israel to shub, to turn back to God, to return to him. And we're left with this question: how are they going to respond? How are they going to react to this? Obviously, our initial thought is that if we've never read the book before if we didn't know the history of Israel, or if we didn't know the story of Jeremiah, our response would be in light of this incredible offer, they snatched it up.

They returned to the Lord. They grabbed up his grace. How could they fail to respond to this offer so that they would miss the disaster that would come upon them? But we saw at the end of the lesson that these calls to return are not going to be responded to in the right way.

And again, just reminding us of how that's going to work itself through the book of Jeremiah. Chapter five, verse three says this: they refused to take correction. They have made their faces harder than rock.

They have refused to shub. Chapter eight, verses four and five. Again, when someone falls down, you expect them to get up.

When people go away on a trip, and they turn away, you expect them to come back. So why is there this perpetual turning away? Why hasn't Israel returned? The Lord says, circumcise your heart. Chapter six, verse 10, says they have uncircumcised ears.

And in chapter nine, verses 25 and 26, they have uncircumcised hearts, just like all the pagan nations around them. So, they're not going to respond. In a sense, the Lord knows, before he ever reaches out to his people, what their response is going to be.

Jeremiah chapter seven, verses 27 and 28, the Lord says, so you shall still speak all of these words to them, but they will not listen to you. You shall call to them, but they will not answer you. The Lord's giving them a legitimate opportunity to respond.

But the Lord knows in light of their character, in light of Israel's past history, what the response is going to be. But the offer is genuinely there. I think this helps us to understand Isaiah.

The Lord tells Isaiah to preach and by his preaching, he's going to harden their hearts and make them blind and make them deaf. It's not that God is purposely causing them not to believe in the message. It's simply that he realizes that in light of their hearts, the preaching of God's word and the offer of grace is going to make them more resistant.

And one of the frightening things in the Old Testament is the idea that God often punishes unbelief with unbelief. And God, as we refuse to respond to God, there are layers of resistance or callousness that develop over the human heart. And there's a layer of callousness each time we say no to God that ultimately makes it difficult for us to respond.

And in a sense, that's what's going to happen through the preaching of the prophets. There's a legitimate offer here, but the Lord says, I know how they're going to respond. They're not going to listen.

They're not going to pay attention. In fact, the preaching of the prophets is going to make their eyes more clouded and their ears more hardened so that they cannot hear. What is happening to Israel and Judah in this process is very much like what happened to Pharaoh during the time of the plagues.

The Lord at the beginning of that process tells Moses, I'm going to harden Pharaoh's heart, and I'm going to gain glory for myself by delivering my people out of bondage. But when we see the actual working out of the hardening of the heart in the plagues that God sends to Egypt in the beginning, the Pharaoh hardens his own heart. And in the last series of plagues, in response to that, God's judicial decree, his sentence, his punishment on the Pharaoh is that the Lord hardens his heart and makes him unable to respond.

He gives him essentially what the Pharaoh wants. And Romans chapter 1 reminds us that God does this with the entire human race. We reject God, we turn away from the knowledge, and so the Lord gives them over to their sinful thoughts and their sinful desires, and that whole process is laid out for us.

So, the prophets are giving the people a legitimate opportunity to respond, but Judah is not going to respond in the right way. They are not going to come back to God, and so the message in chapters 4 to 6 is overwhelmingly a message of judgment. In our last session, we also talked about the genres of prophetic speech, and I think it's important for us to study these and to understand them.

As we're going through the book of Jeremiah, I don't want to just prepare a fish dinner for you. In some ways, I'd like for you to be able to fish through the prophets yourselves. And so, part of that involves understanding the genres.

Throughout the prophets, we have the genre of a judgment speech. And in Jeremiah chapter 5, I'd like us to work through what's involved. What does a judgment speech contain? But again, I think it helps at times to see examples of this in other prophetic books as well.

And so I'd like to look at a judgment speech in Isaiah chapter 5, verses 8 to 25. The two key elements in a judgment speech are accusation and announcement. And often, between the accusation and the announcement, we will have the word *le ken*, therefore.

Here's the accusation, the indictment. This is the crimes that Israel has committed. The announcement is the specific judgment.

Therefore, in light of this, God is planning to do this. We have a series of judgment speeches that are put together as a unit in Isaiah 5, 8 to 25. I just want us to observe how these two elements interact with each other.

This judgment speech in the form of a woe oracle, which remember, is calling for the death of the people if they do not change their ways. But Isaiah chapter 5, verse 8 says this: woe to those who join house to house and field to field until there is no more room and you're made to dwell alone in the midst of the land. There's the accusation.

They have ripped off the property of their neighbors and their fellow Israelites. Verse 9, the Lord of Hosts has sworn in my hearing, surely many houses shall be desolate, large and beautiful houses without inhabitant. For 10 acres of vineyard shall yield but one bath and a homer of seed only in Ephah.

There's the announcement. The Lord is going to take these beautiful houses away. They've ripped people off to get them.

The punishment fits the crime. They're not going to enjoy the houses that they've taken. Verse 11: woe to those who rise early in the morning that they may run after strong drink, who tarry late into the evening as wine inflames them.

They have leers and harp, tambourine and flute and wine at their feast, but they do not regard the deeds of the Lord or see the works of his hands. There's the accusation. They're consumed with pleasure, and they drink wine by the bowlfuls.

They rise up early to drink it. They're inflamed with the wine. They love the music and the celebrations and the parties but have no regard for God.

Therefore, in verse 12, here's the announcement. My people shall go into exile for lack of knowledge. Their honored men shall go hungry.

Their multitude is parched with thirst. Therefore, Sheol has enlarged its appetite and opened its mouth beyond measure. And the nobility of Jerusalem and her multitude will go down.

And we have a long and extended announcement of judgment here. And again, the punishment fits the crime. They're consumed with pleasure.

They're consumed with food and drink. Therefore, the Lord is going to cause them to starve in exile. And in the same way that they have gobbled down food and wine, it says in verse 14, Sheol has enlarged its appetite and it's opened its mouth beyond measure and is going to swallow them up.

This is a devastating announcement. Verse 18, we're back to accusation. Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of falsehood, who draw sin as with carts of rope, and who say, let him be quick.

Let him speed his work so that we may see it. Let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near and let it come that we may know it. I mean, they're proud of their sin, and they're dragging it around with a cart, and they're defying God to, like, Lord, if you're going to judge us, hurry up and do it.

If the prophets are, if what they're saying is accurate, bring it on. Verse 20, before we get to the announcement, there's more accusation. Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.

Verse 21, another accusation. Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and shrewd in their own sight. Verse 22: woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine and valiant men and mixing strong drink, who equip the guilty for a bribe and deprive the innocent of his right.

So, depending on what the prophet wants to emphasize, he may give a very brief accusation and a long announcement, or in this case, what he's doing with these various repetitions of the word woe, he's piling up the accusations. This is all the stuff that Israel has done. Look at how guilty they are.

Finally, the hammer drops in verse 24. Therefore, as the tongue of fire devours the stubble and as dry grass sinks down in the flame, so their root will be as rottenness. Verse 25, therefore, the anger of the Lord was kindled against his people and he stretched out his hand against them.

Verse 26, he will raise a signal for nations far away and whistle for them from the ends of the earth and behold, quickly and speedily they come. None is weary, none stumbles, none slumbers or sleeps, none has a waistband that is loose, not a sandal strap is broken, their arrows are sharp, their bows are bent, their horses' hooves are like flint, and they are going to devastate and consume Israel. The people of Judah had said, look, the Lord's going to judge us. Bring it on. Let it happen speedily.

The Lord says the army of Assyria is going to come speedily. They're not even going to have a broken sandal strap as they come to attack you. My people are heroes at drinking wine.

They're on the Olympic drinking team. They are about to go to battle with the Marines, who are heroes in warfare and are valiant in battle. Who's going to win?

The frat party or the Marines? And there's this beautiful judgment speech, accusation, and announcement.

And in these accusations and announcements, the reality is the punishment fits the crime. Now, we see exactly the same thing in Jeremiah chapter five. And I'd like us to look at this passage as a judgment speech, where, just like in Isaiah chapter five, there's a mixing and a mingling of accusation and announcement.

When the prophets use these genres, they are not handed a form by their school teacher, who says, oh, you must follow the genre of prophetic judgment speech. It must be this word length. It must have 50% accusation and 50% announcement.

They take these things and creatively use the genres as really just a very effective spokesman of God. Sometimes, the accusation is what's emphasized. Sometimes, it's the announcement, but again, it's cause and effect.

They have failed to listen to God. Here is what is going to happen to them. In Jeremiah, the Lord gives them the opportunity to shub.

They have not returned back to God. Here's the consequence. Again, even in this section, the Lord is not simply telling them that this is what's going to happen automatically.

This is still part of the process of God attempting to get Israel and Judah to respond to him and to turn from their ways. But here we go. Here's a Jeremiah chapter five as a prophetic judgment speech.

We begin in verses one to five with an extended accusation against the people. And here's what the Lord says to the prophet. Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem.

Look and take note. Search your squares to see if you can find a man, one who does justice and seeks the truth that I may pardon her. Though they say as the Lord lives, which is what the Lord had told them to do back in chapter four, as they responded to him in repentance, yet they swear falsely.

Oh Lord, do not your eyes look for truth? You have struck them down, but they have felt no anguish. You have consumed them, but they refuse to take correction. They have made their faces harder than rock.

They have refused to repent. What's the accusation? The Lord's given them this opportunity to return and to repent, but instead of taking correction, they've made their faces harder. They're not going to respond to God, so that's why judgment has come.

So, the prophet goes on to say, well, I thought these are only the poor people. They have no sense, it says. Yeah, I was talking to the poor, uneducated people.

If I go talk to the people that are educated, that are the movers and shakers in society, the affluent people, the people that know what's going on, they're going to respond. It's the poor people who don't know the way of the Lord or the justice of their God. I will go to the great, and I will speak to them, for they know the way of the justice of their God, but they all alike had broken their yoke.

They had burst their bonds. Okay, I thought, yeah, this is just a problem with the uneducated. If we talk to the people with the PhDs and the influence, they'll respond.

No, they don't respond either. And rhetorically, what we have going on here is that the Lord is looking for one righteous person. He's combing the streets of Jerusalem for one person that he can spare from judgment, and the prophet's having a hard time finding even that.

There's a very similar passage in Ezekiel chapter 9. If we go back to the book of Genesis, we are reminded of Abraham negotiating with God about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Remember, it starts out with if there are 50 people and righteous ones in Sodom, and Abraham ultimately negotiates with God down to where if there are 10 righteous people in the city, God will not destroy it. Well, if Abraham had been negotiating for Jerusalem, he would have had to have gone all the way down to one.

In a sense, that's what the rhetoric is saying here. And as a result of that pervasive wickedness in the city, the accusation in verses 1 to 5 turns into an announcement in verse 6. It says, therefore, like a lion from the forest shall strike them down. A wolf from the desert shall devastate them.

A leopard is watching their cities, and everyone who goes out of them will be torn to pieces. They're going to be invaded by a wild animal that will attack them and bring them down. That's it.

Very brief but very effective and powerful in what he's telling them is going to happen. We go back to the accusation in verse 7. How can I pardon you? Your children have forsaken me. You have sworn by those who are no gods.

When I fed them to the full, they committed adultery, and they trooped to the houses of whores. They were well fed, lest they stallions, each name for his neighbor's wife. Shall I not punish them for these things, declares the Lord? Okay,

there's the accusation again, and it brings us right back to the imagery of chapter 2 and the indictment that the Lord gave there.

Israel is a prostitute. I fed them, I blessed them, and instead of honoring me at the temple, they trooped off to the house of the whores and worshiped their false gods. Chapter 2, they are like wild donkeys in heat.

Here, they are like well-fed, lusty stallions and like an animal that can't control his lust. I think both in terms of personal morality and worship for God, they have been unable to constrain themselves. The announcement then becomes, shall I not punish them for these things? Go up through her vine rows and destroy, but make not a full end.

Strip away her branches, for they are not the Lord's. For the house of Israel and Judah have been utterly treacherous to me. They have spoken falsely of the Lord.

So, there's the announcement. The Lord is going to strip them like a vineyard, and yet he says, in spite of the fact that I'm bringing this devastating judgment, I will not make a full end to them. We're back to the accusation in verse 12.

They have spoken falsely of the word of the Lord, and they have said, he will do nothing, no disaster will come upon us, nor shall we see sword or famine. The prophets will become wind. The word is not in them; thus, shall it be done to them.

We don't believe these warnings of judgment. In verse 14, here's the announcement: Therefore, says the Lord, the God of hosts, because you have spoken this word, behold, I am making my words in your mouth a fire.

And this people would, and the fire shall consume them. Behold, I am bringing against you a nation from afar, declares the Lord, an enduring nation, an ancient nation, a nation whose language you do not know, nor can you understand what they say. And again, it's very much like Isaiah 5. I am bringing this powerful, vicious army, and the Marines are about to attack.

And the champions at war and at battle are going to attack the frat house. And the Lord is going to bring devastating judgment. They will not be able to stand against them.

And I am drawn to this passage where we go back to accusation and announcement. I'm drawn to that passage in verse 14, where it says the word of the Lord in Jeremiah's mouth becomes like a fire. Do we have any understanding of the power of the word of God? I mean, we see all these devastating things that are going to happen.

A city and a nation are about to be destroyed. An enemy army is about to wreak absolute destruction on this place. But ultimately, it's not the army.

It's the power of the word of God. I remember Andy Dillard once said that if we really understood the power that we were invoking when we came to worship God on Sunday, we would be wearing combat helmets instead of bonnets to worship because God and his word is an absolute fire.

And as we preach and teach the word of God, the word of the Lord has incredible power. It breaks stone and rock. It overcomes human hearts.

Spurgeon said something to the effect that we, as individuals and as preachers, do not have the power to give life to a housefly. How do we think that we can regenerate sinners? It's the word of God that does that. But the reverse effect of that is that the word of the Lord is also a fire that has the power to bring destruction.

As we're faithful to God, God either uses his word to build up and plant or to break down and destroy. But either way, God is accomplishing his purposes, and the word of God is doing its work.

And it's a fire in the prophet's mouth. Remember what the Lord had said to Jeremiah in chapter one, I am going to put my words in your mouth, and then you will tear down, overthrow, uproot, and destroy, or you will build and plant. In a sense, Jeremiah is actually doing these things.

It looks like what a king would do. It looks like, ultimately, what God would do. But that's God working through the power of his word to accomplish his purposes.

So, the judgment speech in chapter five, the interplay between accusation and announcement, as you're studying the prophets, note how these judgment speeches work. If you're preaching a message or teaching a lesson on Jeremiah 5, often dividing this passage up into these different sections helps you to know how to divide your message. It provides the outline for you.

And so, this is one of the benefits of paying attention to genre. But the accusation is that the Lord is about to bring an invading army. And that's what chapters four to six are all about.

Going along again with genre, I want us to turn our focus back again to another device that the prophets use. Again, the images, the figures of speech, and the word pictures. An invading army is coming.

Now the prophet could have simply given, here's the troop sizes, here's the numbers, here's the strategic places that they are going to invade, here's the time of the

invasion. But the prophet doesn't really do that. The prophet doesn't give us a military report.

He does not give us a CNN update. What he does instead is he paints vivid pictures of what it is going to be like when this army invades Judah. As we've mentioned in previous videos, the name of the nation and the identity of the army at this point in the book is not even specified.

We don't know who it is. We wonder if, in the early days of Jeremiah's ministry, Jeremiah himself even knew who this was going to be. Maybe there were other possibilities. But Jeremiah is going to paint the vivid picture through various word images.

Look at the strength and the power of this army. What is it going to be like when this army comes? And so, the first image that is provided in this section of Jeremiah is that the enemy army is compared to a ravaging predator. In chapter four, verse seven, a lion has gone up from his thicket, and a destroyer of nations has gone from his place to make your land a waste, and your cities will be ruined.

Judah is about to have a lion raging and roaring against them. Chapter five, verse six, the same thing. Therefore, a lion from the forest will strike them down.

A wolf from the desert shall devastate them. A leopard is watching their cities. Everyone who goes out from them shall be torn in pieces because their transgressions are many and their apostasies are great.

Can you imagine the picture of a lion being let loose in your neighborhood? That's what God is threatening to bring against the people of Judah. In chapter four, verses 11 to 13, another image is used. Another picture is given of what the army will be like.

The army there is going to be like a hot east Sirocco wind that blows into the land of Judah with gale force. Sometimes, when these winds came in with that kind of power, they destroyed houses or they destroyed crops. At the very least, they brought great inconvenience.

I've seen images and pictures from Jerusalem of these wind storms when the sand and the particles just fill the sky and basically almost blot out the sun. That's what this enemy army is going to be like. Chapter four, verse 11 says, and it will be said of this people in Jerusalem, a hot wind from the bare heights in the desert toward the daughter of my people, not to winnow or to cleanse them.

A wind too full for this comes for me. Now it is I who speak in judgment upon them. It's picturing one of these winds that I think during the months of May and June can

blow in from the desert from the east instead of the calm winds that blow in from the sea on the west. It's going to bring devastation.

During the time of the year when the people were harvesting grain, they would go up to the winnowing floors at the top of a hill, and the wind would help them to winnow the grain because it would blow away the chaff and the grain would fall to the floor, and they then were able to gather it together. This wind is going to blow away both the chaff and the grain. This is a wind that is designed to devastate and to destroy.

The army, in verse 13, is going to come up like clouds and his chariots like a whirlwind. His horses are swifter than eagles. Woe to us, for we are ruined.

So, you can imagine this devastating wind blowing through the land. Another picture of the judgment and of the invading army, chapters 4, verses 23 to 26. And maybe this is, perhaps, in this section, the most extreme portrayal of what this invading army is going to do because we're going to hear the echo of another scripture passage in Jeremiah chapter 4, verse 23.

The prophet says, I looked on the earth and behold it was without form and void. And I looked to the heavens, and they had no light. I looked on the mountains, and behold, they were quaking.

And all of the mountains and the hills moved to and fro. I looked, and behold, there was no man. And all the birds of the air had fled.

I looked, and behold, the fruitful land was a desert. And all the cities were laid in ruins before the Lord and before His fierce anger. If I were to give a quiz now and ask, what biblical passage did you think about? I think most of us would know the answer.

I looked at the earth, and behold it was without form and void. It was *tohu vobohu*, exactly the same expression that is used in Genesis chapter 1, verse 2, to talk about the unformed earth before the days when God began to create and shape and form. When Babylon invades Judah, it is going to be like the undoing of creation itself.

And we see in times in the book of Jeremiah that the Lord is going to basically undo salvation history. The Lord had taken Israel out of Egypt at the end of Jeremiah's life. The Lord is going to take them back to Egypt.

But here's something much more serious than that. The Lord is actually going to undo creation itself. And going back to an earlier statement that we made from Brent Sandy's book, *Plowshares, and Pruning Hooks*, we see the extremes of God's anger and God's love in the prophets.

And in a sense, what's happening here is that the Babylonian invasion through the use of prophetic hyperbole is as if God is going to undo the earth itself. And then in the verses that follow, there are further echoes of Genesis 1. The things that God created in Genesis 1. Man, verse 25. The Birds of the air, verse 25.

The animals, the light, all of those things that God creates, they disappear. So imagine an undone, devastated, barren land. That's what it's going to be like when the army comes through.

Verse 28. For this, the earth shall mourn, and the heavens above shall be dark. For I have spoken, I have purposed, and I will not relent; I will not turn back.

So, they refuse to turn to God, and so God would not turn back to them. And so, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. In verse 28, it's the earth and the heavens that experience the effect of this devastating judgment.

And then, finally, in a verse that we've already read, an actual portrayal of the army itself. This is what all these images are about. I am bringing against you, chapter 5, verse 15, a nation from afar, O house of the Lord, declares the Lord.

It is an enduring nation. It is an ancient nation. It is a nation whose language you do not know, nor can you understand what they say.

And here's more imagery. Their quiver is like an open tomb. They are all mighty warriors.

There's going to be a funeral in Israel. They're going to eat up your harvest and your food. They shall eat up your sons and your daughters.

This army is going to totally consume you. Now if I'm thinking about this, the army alone is devastating enough. But something that I also hear in these passages is that this imagery is ultimately pointing us to the fact that God himself is going to be the attacker.

When the prophet says that the army that's coming against Israel or against Judah is a roaring lion, we're reminded in the book of Amos, the very first verse, the Lord roars from Zion and he is coming against his own people in judgment. They are not simply facing a Babylonian lion. They are ready to face God himself.

And remember Amos says, prepare to meet your God. That's what Judah is about to have the opportunity to do. When it speaks of the army as a hot gale force wind and coming on the chariots of the wings and the clouds, we're reminded that God is often portrayed in the Psalms or in other places in the Old Testament as the God who is

the rider of the clouds, who rides across the sky in his cloud chariot and he wages war.

When he comes down to earth, the earth melts and is consumed in his presence. Judah has something much more serious to think about than simply the Babylonian army. God, in his storm chariot, the rider of the clouds, is coming down to fight against Israel.

One of the other images that's used of the army that will attack them is in chapter five, verse 17, it mentions them eating up the harvest and consuming their food. I think the portrayal there is given of a locust swarm that would often go through the Middle East and bring absolute devastation and destruction. In fact, if you keep your eyes on the news, you'll often read of ways that locust swarms today present tremendous problems for people in this part of the world.

In Afghanistan in 2002, they were dealing with a swarm of hundreds of millions of locusts that ultimately affected four million people. In order to get rid of these locusts, it was such a severe problem that the people of Afghanistan, 10,000 of them, were involved in this; they built trenches. They chased the locusts into the trenches with pieces of plastic and whatever they had and then ultimately buried them and covered them up.

In 1988, one of the worst locust swarms in history ended up affecting 11 million square miles and 55 countries. Typically, a major locust swarm would include clouds of locusts that could extend for 100 or 150 square miles. This particular one had locust swarms where the clouds were 400 square miles and essentially involved 50 million locusts that were able to eat 100 tons of food every night.

That's what Judah is about to experience. The armies of Babylon and God as the roaring lion behind all of this, as the rider of the clouds coming in the storm that was going to attack Judah, the Lord is using this army to accomplish his purposes. Now, there's also another very important theological concept in the prophets that I want to mention that's related to these ideas of judgment.

When the prophets speak of armies that are going to come to affect God's judgment, to bring the Lord's destruction on the people, this is often described as the day of the Lord. It's just a common prophetic expression. In Jeremiah chapter 4, verse 9, we don't have the term day of the Lord, but in verse 9, it says, in that day declares, the Lord courage will fail both king and officials.

And so, I believe that as he's describing this devastating judgment, what Jeremiah is doing is that he is portraying this within Israel's prophetic tradition as the day of the Lord. And when the prophets use that term, they use it in a way that's a little bit different than sometimes we think about it from a New Testament perspective. Our

perspective on the day of the tribulation, or we're drawn to the judgment of the last days and the eschatological judgments that God is going to bring in preparation for his kingdom.

The prophets use the term day of the Lord in a slightly different way. They use the term day of the Lord to refer to the judgment that is going to happen in the end times, but probably more often, they use that to refer to the judgment that is going to happen in the near future. And sometimes, like what happens here, as I travel in Virginia and go to see beautiful places where we have mountains, you often see two mountain peaks that, as you're looking at them in the distance, they look like they're right together.

As you drive closer or go to the other side and get a different perspective, you come to understand there's a wide gap between them. So, I think sometimes in the prophets, the prophets see the coming day of the Lord. They see both the near judgment that's going to happen in the near future.

They, at times, see the distant judgment that's going to happen in the end days or the great tribulation. Sometimes it's very difficult as we read the prophets to distinguish the difference between the two. But this expression day of the Lord seems to be related to the idea that God has a day where he, as a warrior, is going to come down and judge his enemies.

Often in the chronicles of ancient Near Eastern kings or in their records as they wrote about their accomplishments, one of the things that's amazing about politicians in the ancient Near East is that occasionally they lied and fabricated and exaggerated. I know it's hard to imagine it doesn't ever happen again, but sometimes they would exaggerate their accomplishments by saying something to the effect of, I not only defeated my enemy, but I defeated them in a single day. There's a passage in some of the Egyptian chronicles that involves the king and moving his troops obviously from places that they could not have traveled to in a single day, but in one day, I defeated my enemy.

One of the battles that the Israelites are involved in, I defeated the Israelites before noon. I took care of them before lunchtime. So, the prophetic message is, and this reminds me of ancient Near Eastern trash talking.

I can beat my enemy in a single day. God literally will defeat his enemies in a single day. And the power and the wrath of God to do that, the day may refer to an extended period, but it is as if God gets in his chariot, rides to the earth, the earth melts in his presence, and God simply by his presence overwhelms his enemies.

The Assyrian kings would often say, by the power of my splendor, I defeated my enemy. The Lord literally will be able to do that. Now, what the prophets wanted the

people of Israel to see is that the day of the Lord was the time when God would defeat his enemies.

But the element that was difficult for them to understand was that they were the ones now who had become Israel's enemies. God has become a free agent. He switched uniforms.

Now, instead of the holy war traditions where God would fight for Israel, Israel has become the enemy of God. And so that's what Jeremiah is alluding to and referring to. On that day, the day of the Lord, God will not fight for Israel.

It's going to be the day of the Lord when God fights against Israel. In Amos chapter five, verses 18 and 19, Amos, one of the prophetic predecessors to Jeremiah, has already established this idea: the turning upside down of Israel's holy war traditions and putting that in the context of the day of the Lord. The day of the Lord now becomes the time when the Lord is going to come down and fight against the people of Israel.

And here's what Amos says about the coming day of the Lord. He says, in verse 18, Woe to you. And remember what we hear when we hear the word oi or woe, it's a death sentence.

Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord. Why would you have the day of the Lord? It is a day of darkness and not a day of light. Okay, here's what's going on in Israel.

They were beginning to be oppressed by the Assyrians and later the Babylonians. And the prophet says, based on your holy war traditions, and maybe some of their, you know, false prophets of peace, they're longing for the day of the Lord. We want God to come down and defeat our enemies and to deliver us.

And they were looking for the day of the Lord the way that my kids looked forward to Christmas when they were little children. But Amos says, here's what you got to understand. The day of the Lord is not going to be a day of light and deliverance for Israel.

It's going to be a day of darkness. Verse 19 in Amos 5 it's going to be as if a man fled from a lion. We've already seen that analogy being used in Jeremiah.

And a bear met him. Or he went into the house and leaned his hand against the wall, and a serpent bit him. Okay, here's what the day of the Lord is going to be like for Israel.

It's not a day when God comes down to defeat your enemies. It's a day when God comes down to defeat you. And you're not going to get away from the judgment.

You're going to be like someone who is running away from a lion, and you think you've got a few steps on him, and you're going to run head-on into a bear. Or maybe somehow you take a right turn, and you get away from a lion and a bear, and you go into the house, and you lean your hand against the wall, and you're like, wow, I avoided that. And a snake comes out of the wall and bites you.

You will not avoid the day of God. And in verse 20, it's not the day of the Lord, darkness and not light, and gloom with no brightness in it. Amos was Jeremiah's predecessor.

He had established this idea that the day of the Lord was going to be a time of judgment. And so, the prophets in Jeremiah's day were saying, the day of the Lord is coming again. Zephaniah, one of Jeremiah's contemporaries, the day of the Lord is coming.

And it is going to be a time of devastation for the people of Israel. Here's how he describes it. Be silent before the Lord God, for the day of the Lord is near.

The Lord has prepared a sacrifice. The city of Jerusalem is going to be offered up like a sacrifice. Verse 8, and on the day of that sacrifice, I will punish the officials and the king's sons and all who array themselves in foreign attire.

On that day, I will punish everyone who leaps over the threshold. And those who fill their master's house with violence and fraud, on that day, declares the Lord, a cry will be heard from the fish gate. Verse 12: at that time, I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the men.

I'm going to find every evildoer and punish them. The great day of the Lord is near. It is near and hastening fast.

Jeremiah, Jeremiah chapter 4, verse 9, in that day, declares the Lord, courage shall fail both king and officials. Now, you see, in all of this, there is ultimately a message for us as well. Remember, the day of the Lord is near, and the day of the Lord is far.

And every judgment that God has brought in history is a reminder that, ultimately, there is a final judgment on that last day of the Lord. Isaiah, when he talks about the day of the Lord in chapter 2, it is a judgment where God will bring down the pride of all of humanity. And every people, every nation, every individual will face the judgment of God.

What the prophets would say is that the judgments that we warned the people about, the coming of the Assyrians, the coming of the Babylonians, every one of them is a reminder of the principle that we discussed at the beginning of this session, the principle of sowing and reaping. And if you look at history and think that we can avoid the judgment of God, you are missing the obvious point. Every day of the Lord, little d, in past history is a reminder of the great day of the Lord, the future time.

And the Bible says that we need to live in light of that and with an awareness of that. I want to conclude the session by reading a New Testament passage from 2 Peter chapter 3, verses 10 to 13, and reminding us to live in light of the day of the Lord that is far from the perspective of the prophets but a day of the Lord that is getting closer every day. Peter says this: the day of the Lord will come as a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works and all that are in them shall be exposed.

Remember, Jeremiah had talked about the undoing of creation. The Babylonian invasion would be like that. This will not be like that.

This will be that. Verse 11, here's the punchline. Since all of these things are ultimately to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming day of the Lord, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn, but according to his promise, we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

I believe that we are living in times like the days of Noah. People are eating and drinking and saying, hey, where's the promise of his coming? The Lord says, if you want to be reminded of what reality is, look at the past. and every judgment of God in the past has been a reminder of the day of accounting that is coming in the future, and because of that, as God's people, we live in light of that. We live in light of the reality of judgment that will fall on those who do not know God, but we also live in light of the reality of blessing and salvation.

There will come a time when the day of the Lord will be a day of salvation for God's people. The prophets spoke of the day of the Lord as something that is near and far, and that's why their message is something that still matters to us today.

This is Dr. Gary Yates in his course on the book of Jeremiah. This is session 11, Jeremiah 4:5-6:30, The Coming Invasion.