

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

This chapter is a collection of prophecies relating to several nations in the neighborhood of Judea; and, like those preceding, are supposed to have been fulfilled by the ministry of Nebuchadnezzar during the thirteen years' siege of Tyre. The chapter opens with a prophecy concerning the Ammonites, whose chief city, Rabbah, shall be destroyed; and Malcom, the supreme divinity of the people, with all his retinue of priests and officers, carried into captivity, Jeremiah 49:1-5. Promise that the Ammonites shall be restored to their liberty, Jeremiah 49:6. Prophecy against the Edomites, (very like that most dreadful one in the thirty-fourth chapter of Isaiah against the same people), who shall be utterly exterminated, after the similitude of Sodom and Gomorrah, vv. 7-22. Prophecy against Damascus, Jeremiah 49:23-27; and against Kedar, Jeremiah 49:28, Jeremiah 49:29. Utter desolation of the kingdoms of Hazor foretold, Jeremiah 49:30-33. The polity of the Elamites shall be completely dissolved, and the people dispersed throughout the nations, Jeremiah 49:34-38. The Elamites shall be delivered from their captivity in the latter days, Jeremiah 49:39. It will be proper here to observe that these predictions should not be so explained as if they admitted of merely a private interpretation; for, as Bishop Lowth remarks upon Isaiah's prophecy concerning the Idumeans, "by a figure very common in the prophetic writings, any city or people, remarkably distinguished as enemies of the people and kingdom of God, is put for those enemies in general;" therefore, it is under the Gospel dispensation that these prophecies shall be accomplished to their fullest extent upon all the antichristian nations that have sinned after the similitude of the ancient enemies of the people of God under the Mosaic economy.

Verse 1

Concerning the Ammonites - This prophetic discourse was also delivered after the capture of Jerusalem.

Hath Israel no sons? - no heir? - The Ammonites, it appears, took advantage of the depressed state of Israel, and invaded their territories in the tribe of Gad, hoping to make them their own for ever. But the prophet intimates that God will preserve the descendants of Israel, and will bring them back to their forfeited inheritances.

Why then doth their king - מלכא (Malcom) or (Milcom), the chief idol of the Ammonites. That the idol Milcom is here meant is sufficiently evident from Jeremiah 49:3, where it is said: "Milcom (not their king) shall go into captivity; his Priests and his princes together." Milcom is also called Molech. Malcom is put here for the Ammonites, as the people of Chemosh in the preceding chapter are put for the Moabites in general.

Verse 3

Run to and fro by the hedges - It is supposed that this may refer to the women making lamentations for the dead, that were in general buried by the walls of their gardens; but others think that it refers to the smaller cities or villages, called here the daughters of Rabbah, the metropolis; the inhabitants of which are exhorted to seek safety somewhere else, as none can be expected from them, now that the enemy is at hand.

Verse 4

Wherefore gloriest thou - Though thy valleys be fruitful, yet glory not in them. Though thou have much political and military power, do not trust in them, nor in the multitude of thy cities; a stronger than thou is coming against thee.

Verse 6

Afterward I will bring again - The Ammonites are supposed to have returned with the Moabites and Israelites, on permission given by the edict of Cyrus.

Verse 7

Concerning Edom - This is a new and separate discourse.

Teman - A part of Idumea, put here for the whole country.

Verse 8

Dwell deep - An allusion to the custom of the Arabs, who, when about to be attacked by a powerful foe, strike their tents, pack up their utensils, lade their camels, which they can do in a couple of hours, and set off to the great desert, and so bury themselves in it that no enemy either will or can pursue, as it is the Arabs alone that know the deserts, and can find water and provender for their support.

Dedan - Was a city of Idumea, not far from Teman.

Verse 9

If grape-gatherers - Both in vintage and harvest every grape and every stalk are not gathered; hence the gleaners get something for their pains: but your enemies shall not leave one of you behind; all shall be carried into captivity.

Verse 10

I have made Esau bare - I have stripped him of all defense, and have discovered his hiding-places to his enemies.

Verse 11

Leave thy fatherless children - The connection of this with the context is not easy to be discerned; but, as a general maxim, it is of great importance. Widows and orphans are the peculiar care of God. He is as the best of fathers to the one, and the most loving of husbands to the other. Even the widows and orphans of Esau, who escape the general destruction, shall be taken care of by the Lord.

Verse 12

Art thou he that shall altogether go unpunished? - A similar form of speech appears, Jeremiah 25:29. Others, less wicked than thou, have been punished and canst thou expect to escape? Thou shalt not escape.

Verse 13

Bozrah shall become a desolation - Bozrah, a city of Idumea, is here put for the whole country.

Verse 14

I have heard a rumor - The Lord has revealed to me what he is about to do to the Edomites.

An ambassador is sent - I believe this means only that God has given permission, and has stirred up the hearts of these nations to go against those whom he has doomed to destruction.

Verse 16

O thou that dwellest - All Idumea is full of mountains and rocks, and these rocks and mountains full of caves, where, in time of great heats, and in time of war, the people take shelter.

Verse 18

As in the overthrow of Sodom - The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighboring cities was so terrible, that, when God denounces judgments against incorrigible sinners, he tells them they shall be like Sodom and Gomorrah.

No man shall abide there - It shall be so desolate as not to be habitable. Travellers may lodge on the ground for a night; but it cannot become a permanent dwelling.

Verse 19

Behold, he shall come up like a lion - See the note on Jeremiah 12:5. The similitude used here is well illustrated by Dr. Blayney: "When I shall occasion a like commotion in her (Idumea) as a fierce and strong lion may be supposed to do in the sheep-folds, then I will cause him (the man of whom it is said in the preceding verse that he should not dwell in it) to run away from her as the affrighted shepherds and their flocks run from the lion."

A chosen man - Nebuchadnezzar. That is, God has chosen this man, and given him a commission against Idumea.

Verse 20

The inhabitants of Teman - Taken here for the whole of Idumea. These are a kind of synonyms which prevent monotony, and give variety to the poet's versification.

Surely the least or the flock shall draw them out - They shall be like timid sheep; the weakest foe shall overcome them.

Verse 21

The earth is moved - The whole state is represented here as a vast building suddenly thrown down, so as to cause the earth to tremble, and the noise to be heard at a great distance.

Verse 22

He shall come up and fly as the eagle - Nebuchadnezzar. See Jeremiah 48:40.

Verse 23

Concerning Damascus - This is the head or title of another prophecy. Damascus was one of the principal cities of Syria. It was taken by David, 2 Samuel 8:6, was retaken in the reign of Solomon, 1 Kings 11:24, etc., and regained its independence. Its kings were often at war with the ten tribes, and once it joined with them for the destruction of Judah. To defend himself against these powerful enemies Ahaz made a league with the king of Assyria, who besieged Damascus, took, and demolished it. From that time we hear nothing of Damascus till we meet with it in this prophecy. It appears to have been rebuilt and restored to some consequence. It made an obstinate resistance to Nebuchadnezzar; but was at last taken and sacked by him. At present it is both a large and populous city, with considerable commerce.

Hamath is confounded - This is a city of Syria, on the Orontes. The Greeks called it Epiphania.

Arpad - Not far from Damascus.

Sorrow on the sea - They are like the troubled sea, that cannot rest.

Verse 25

How is the city of praise not left - Damascus is so ruined that she can no more be called a praiseworthy or happy city.

Verse 27

The palaces of Ben-hadad - Damascus was a seat of the Syrian kings, and Ben-hadad was a name common to several of its kings.

Verse 28

Concerning Kedar, and Concerning the Kingdoms of Habor - This is the title of another new prophecy. Kedar was the name of one of the sons of Ishmael (Genesis 25:13) who settled in Arabia, and who gave name to a powerful tribe of Arabs who used to traffic with the Tyrians in cattle. It appears from this prophecy that Nebuchadnezzar got a commission to go against and reduce them to great misery.

Verse 29

Their tents and their flocks - This description of property shows that they were Scenite or Nomad Arabs; persons who dwell in tents, and whose principal property was cattle, especially camels, of the whole of which they were plundered by the Chaldeans.

Verse 30

Dwell deep - Retire into the depths of the desert. See on Jeremiah 49:8 (note).

Inhabitants of Habor - I cannot find this place. It was no doubt in Arabia, and a place of considerable importance; but it is now no more.

Verse 31

The wealthy nation - גוֹי שְׁלֵיבִי (goi sheleiv), 'the peaceable nation' -

Have neither gates nor bars - The Arabs, who had nothing but their tents; no cities, nor even permanent villages.

Verse 32

The utmost corners - Even in these utmost inaccessible recesses the sword and pillage shall reach them. 'The utmost corners; insulated coasts; the peninsula of Arabia' - Blayney.

Verse 33

Habor shall be a dwelling for dragons - Shall be turned into a wilderness.

A desolation for ever - Never to be repeopled.

There shalt no man abide there - It may occasionally be visited, but never made a permanent abode.

Verse 34

The Word - Against Elam - Another new head of prophecy. As this was delivered in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah, it can have no natural nor historical connection with the other prophecies in this various chapter. Some think that by Elam Persia is always meant; but this is not at all likely. It was a part of the Babylonian empire in the time of Daniel, (Daniel 8:2), and is most probably what is called Elymais by the Greeks. This, with Susiana, Nebuchadnezzar subdued, and took from Astyages, king of Media.

Verse 35

I will break the bow of Elam - They were eminent archers; and had acquired their power and eminence by their dexterity in the use of the bow. See Isaiah 22:6. Strabo, Livy, and others speak of their eminence in archery.

Verse 36

Will I bring the four winds - Nebuchadnezzar and his armies, gathered out of different provinces, and attacking this people at all points in the same time.

There shall be no nation, etc. - They shall be scattered through the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces of which the Babylonish empire is composed.

Verse 38

I will set my throne in Elam - This is spoken either of Nebuchadnezzar or Cyrus. It is certain that Cyrus did render himself master of Elymais and Media, which are in the land of Elam.

Verse 39

I will bring again the captivity of Elam - As this is to be in the latter days, probably it may mean the spiritual freedom which these people would receive under the Gospel dispensation. Under Cyrus, the Elamites, collected out of all quarters, were united with the Persians, their neighbors, and became, with them, masters of the east. See Calmet and Dahler. There are still, however, difficulties on this subject. Who the Elamites were is still a question. That which appears to be nearest the truth is, that the Elamites and Persians were two distinct people, and continued so till blended together under Cyrus. It is in this light that I have considered the subject in the preceding notes. Neighboring people are frequently confounded in history, and sometimes the name of a people is given to those who have the same character.