

The Coming Wrath (Jeremiah 39:1–10)
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Introduction

Jeremiah, among the last of a long line of prophets, for forty years faithfully proclaimed the Word of the Lord, denouncing the sins of the people, calling them to repentance, and warning them of the wrath to come if they did not amend their ways. However, the nation persisted in their rebellion, ignored the divine mercy, refused the divine pleading, and disparaged the impending wrath. At last, the day of reckoning arrived.

What we see in Jeremiah's day, and in any inevitable day of wrath, the method of opposition follows three lines: (1) deny the word of the Lord concerning the impending vengeance, (2) persecute the messenger, and (3) seek to smooth things over by attempted compromise without repentance. The day of wrath came, notwithstanding. The Chaldeans of Babylon captured Jerusalem. The idolaters burned the holy and glorious sanctuary. The people of God, formerly freed from the chains of Egypt, were now carried away in chains to a people of a strange tongue.

The text before us requires us to face the certainty of divine vengeance. Scripture reveals the great mercy of the Lord toward a sinful people (Ex. 34:6, 7). However, God's mercy ends when the King of kings and Lord of lords "*treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty*" (Rev. 19:15). God patiently gave His people every opportunity to return to Him. "*But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord rose against his people, until there was no remedy*" (2 Chron. 36:16).

It has been said that "the mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceedingly fine." God's patience has a limit, and the hour of reckoning is certain. The current "woke" generation has abandoned the truth to wallow in egregious sins. "*On account of these the wrath of God is coming*" (Col. 3:6). This brings us to ask, Are we also at the end of God's patience? Are we at the point where "*there was no remedy*"?

I. The fall of Jerusalem (586 B. C.) from the narrative portion (Chapters 37–45).

1. For forty years, Jeremiah faithfully preached the message of judgment to the nation, finally writing a book to preserve God's Word for future generations.

Jehoiakim destroyed that book because of the wrath revealed in it against Judah. In response, God ended the Davidic line with a curse (Jer. 36:30, 31).

2. Zedekiah attempted to move the Lord to preserve them by compromise without repentance or obedience.

Zedekiah sent Jehucal (an official of the king) and Zephaniah the priest to Jeremiah to intercede for them with Yahweh (Ch. 37). It was hoped that a compromise could be reached. The Lord responded: "*Do not deceive yourselves, saying, 'The Chaldeans will surely go away from us,' for they will not go away*" (37:9, 10).

3. As the day approached, hatred and desperation increased persecution of the messenger.

During the withdrawal, Jeremiah left Jerusalem to take care of some business at Anathoth, but he was stopped and accused of deserting to the Chaldeans (37:11–15).

The king sent for him again, this time “secretly” to inquire as to whether he had any word from the Lord, only to be told again, “*You shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon*” (v. 17).

4. Judgment day arrived in the eleventh year of Zedekiah’s reign (Ch. 39).

The siege of the city lasted from the tenth month of the ninth year to the ninth day of the fourth month of Zedekiah’s eleventh year. When the Chaldeans took the city, the king, his sons, the officials, and soldiers fled the city, hoping to get away, but were overtaken in the plains of Jericho. Zedekiah was led away in chains to Babylon. The city and temple were destroyed. The word of Yahweh was fulfilled.

II. What We Learn from This Text

1. Denial of the truth of God’s vengeance against sin will not prevent its inevitability (Heb. 9:27).

Why, then, are people so inclined to oppose the conception of divine wrath? They simply cannot conceive of a loving God punishing anyone in eternal fire. Some suppose that the OT God was an angry God; whereas the NT God is loving and gentle. The fact is, the anger of Jesus is far more terrible (Matt. 11:24; 23:33, 38).

Two things about denial must be remembered: (1) denial usually indicates that spiritual degeneration has already set in, and (2) denial never prevents the inevitable.

2. The purpose of God is never altered by attempts to compromise.

Seeking to avoid judgment by substituting good deeds, partial obedience, religious exercises, or one’s good intentions will not deter it (Acts 17:31).

3. The consequences of sin are never removed by ignoring them.

Four methods are used by sinners to deceive themselves about the judgment. (1) They presume they do not deserve God’s wrath but do deserve His love and mercy. (2) They mistake the patience and longsuffering of God as evidence that there is no danger of wrath. (3) They adopt false teachers and false teaching to allay their concerns about God’s wrath. (4) They drown fears and anxiety over judgment with distractions such as computer games, binge watching of movies or TV, and, worse, drugs and alcohol (Isa. 28:7, 15, 22).

4. The only escape from divine vengeance is returning to God in true repentance (Luke 13:5).

How do we amend our lives? We must agree with God about our condition and hear Him when He tells us to seek a change in our lifestyles to conform with His righteousness. When we begin to do that, we will find just how sinful we are and how weak and powerless we are to amend our ways. In saving us, the Spirit breaks us of ourselves and moves us to seek His mercy. We seek Him with all our hearts because He promises that those who seek Him will find Him. We agree with God about our condition and hear Him when He tells us to change our lifestyles to conform with His righteousness. As the Spirit of God continues to work in us, He points us to the narrow gate and the constricted way, and we enter, praising and rejoicing in His glorious grace.