

THE FLESH AND THE CALDRON

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In Jeremiah 32:28-29, the Lord pronounced destruction upon the city of Jerusalem: “Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the Chaldeans, and into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and he shall take it: and the Chaldeans, that fight against this city, shall come and set fire on this city, and burn it with the houses, upon whose roofs they have offered incense unto Baal, and poured out drink offerings unto other gods, to provoke me to anger.” God was doing this because the Israelites had turned to idolatry and wickedness, and had refused to repent (Jer 32:30-35). But even when prophets like Jeremiah so plainly foretold of Jerusalem’s impending doom, the people of Israel did not believe God’s word.

Certain destruction upon Jerusalem

Ezekiel 11:3 says that some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, “It is not near; let us build houses: this city is the caldron, and we be the flesh.” As the meat is protected by and remains in the pot, the people of Jerusalem believed that they were safe and secure in their city and that nothing would remove them from it. God refuted this saying of the people of Jerusalem and foretold that they would indeed be removed from the city. They were *not* safe or secure there. The only ones who would remain there were the dead (i.e. only they were the flesh in the pot, but not the living). God said, “Thus have ye said, O house of Israel: for I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them. Ye have multiplied your slain in this city, and ye have filled the streets thereof with the slain. Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Your slain whom ye have laid in the midst of it, they are the flesh, and this city is the caldron: but I will bring you forth out of the midst of it. Ye have feared the sword; and I will bring a sword upon you, saith the Lord God. And I will bring you out of the midst thereof, and deliver you into the hands of strangers, and will execute judgments among you. Ye shall fall by the sword; I will judge you in the border of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. This city shall not be your

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caldron, neither shall ye be the flesh in the midst thereof; but I will judge you in the border of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the Lord: for ye have not walked in my statutes, neither executed my judgments, but have done after the manners of the heathen that are round about you” (Ezek 11:4-12).

A remnant spared as captives in Babylon

In Ezekiel 11:13, the prophet Ezekiel asked the Lord, “Wilt thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel?” God answered in the negative, dividing the “remnant of Israel” into two categories. God made a distinction between the remnant who were in captivity in Babylon and those who were still in Jerusalem. Although the people of Jerusalem justified themselves and condemned the captives as being the wicked ones (Ezek 11:15), God showed that the opposite was true. God was going to protect and spare the captives (Ezek 11:16), give them new hearts as they repented (Ezek 11:18-20) and eventually would return them to Israel (Ezek 11:17-18). But the others (most of those who were still in Jerusalem) would be destroyed because they were beyond hope (Ezek 11:21). This is exactly what God foretold in Jeremiah 24. God showed Jeremiah “two baskets of figs” (Jer 24:1), one basket containing “very good figs, even like the figs that are first ripe: and the other basket had very naughty figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad” (Jer 24:2). The ones who had been carried away captive in Babylon were the “good figs” (Jer 24:5). The captivity was for their good (Jer 24:5-6), and God would build and plant them (Jer 24:6), give them a heart to know Him (Jer 24:7) and return them to the land (Jer 24:6). The “evil figs” included king Zedekiah, his princes, and “the residue of Jerusalem,” and the remaining Jews in Israel and Egypt (Jer 24:8). They would be destroyed by the sword, famine, and pestilence (Jer 24:9-10; see also Jer 14:12; 21:6-10; 27:8,12-13; 29:16-19; 34:17; 38:2-3; 42:17-22; 44:13; Ezek 5:11-12,17; 6:11-14; 7:15; 14:21). Ezekiel 11:13-21 and Jeremiah 24 are in precise agreement, and this was all fulfilled just as God said (Jer 32:24,36; 44:13).