

THE PROPHECY AGAINST BABYLON PART 1

TEXT: JEREMIAH 50:1-10

INTRODUCTION:

1. After dealing with Egypt, Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Edom, and Judah's other neighbors, Jeremiah now focuses on the LORD'S judgment upon Judah's greatest enemy, Babylon.
2. The LORD devoted an entire chapter (46) to His judgment upon Egypt, and a whole chapter to His judgment upon Moab (48).
3. Judgment upon the other nations takes up less space, but the LORD gives us two chapters to describe His judgment upon Babylon.
4. Furthermore, in the New Testament two chapters are devoted to the overthrow of mystery Babylon (Revelation 17, 18).
5. Jeremiah chapters 50 and 51 deal with this important subject. There are also prophecies predicting the future restoration of Israel.
6. Babylon symbolizes everything that is ant-Christ, anti-God, and anti-Bible. Babylon represents idolatry and rebellion against God.
7. H.A. Ironside said, "In no other city did idolatry assume so fearful a form and so dreadful an aspect as in the great city Babylon. She was, as before pointed out, the mother of almost every heathen system. From her, too, mystical Babylon borrowed far more than many have any conception. Almost every unscriptural practice in the great Romish apostasy can be traced back to the Babylonish rites and ceremonies" (*Jeremiah and Lamentations*).
8. Jeremiah's prophecy about Babylon has both a near and a far fulfillment.
9. Merrill Unger said, "The full prophetic scope envisions the future fall of ecclesiastical (Rev. 17) and political Babylon (Rev. 18) preparatory to Israel's restoration to Kingdom blessing (Rev. 20:4-6)" (*Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*).
10. Jeremiah wrote this prophecy during the fourth year of the reign of King Zedekiah (51:59). Jeremiah gave the scroll to Seraiah to read it in Babylon, then bind a stone to it, and then cast it into the midst of the Euphrates River (51:59-63).
11. Then Jeremiah 51:64 says, "And thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her: and they shall be weary. Thus far are the words of Jeremiah."
12. This prophecy has puzzled students of Bible prophecy. They have wondered will Babylon ever be rebuilt (cf. 50:13; 51:26, 37)? Or is modern Iraq Babylon, etc.?

13. Saddam Hussein tried to rebuild Babylon, but when he was killed the American army turned his rebuilt empire into a military camp.
14. Leaving speculation aside, all of these prophecies will be completely fulfilled at the second coming of Christ (cf. 50:4, 5).

I. BABYLON'S DOOM (50:1, 2).

1. H.A. Ironside said, "It is noteworthy that the same man who had previously predicted the ascendancy of Babylon now foretells its doom. He who had counseled submission to its authority now exhorts the remnant of Israel to flee from it, that they be not partakers of its sins and its judgment. This is all perfectly consistent. Jeremiah was no politician, no courtier, no man-pleaser. He spake 'as pleasing God that trieth the heart.' When the Lord would chasten Judah, He chose Nebuchadrezzar to be His rod, When Babylon lifted up herself against Him, she too must fall, and fall lower far than Judah, never to rise again" (*Jeremiah and Lamentations*).
2. Bel (50:2) was the Babylonian sun-god worshiped under the names of Baal, Zeus, Jupiter, Osiris, etc., by the various Gentile nations. Ironside said, "Merodach is but another name for the same demon-deity. He is called Marduk in the Babylonian inscriptions" (*Jeremiah and Lamentations*).
3. "Out of the north" (50:3) refers to Media-Persia (cf. 50:9, 41; 51:11, 48).
4. Babylon recognized that the LORD judged Judah "because they have sinned against the LORD" (50:7; cf. 40:2, 3), but they did not realize the LORD would hold them accountable as well (50:14, 15).
5. Jeremiah 50:15 says, "as she hath done, do unto her." This reminds us of Revelation 18:6 -- "Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double."
6. Psalm 137:8 says, "O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us."
7. The LORD promised to punish the king of Babylon for what Babylon did to His people (50:16-18).
8. "Merathaim" (50:21) means "double rebellion," and "Pekod" means "visitation." The LORD was going to visit rebellious Babylon in judgment.
9. Babylon is described as "the hammer of the whole earth" (50:23), but the LORD was going to break the hammer.

10. Jeremiah 50:24 predicts how Babylon would be surprised and caught off guard. Daniel 5:31 describes how Darius the Median took the kingdom, after his army entered Babylon by night. The Medes diverted the Euphrates River, which flowed under the city walls and through the city. Then they entered into the city by the dry river bed under the big, fortified city wall.
11. Once they got on the inside, they opened the city gates and took the Babylonians by surprise. Daniel 5:30 says, "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain."
12. The LORD judged Babylon because Babylon had "striven against the LORD" (50:24), and "hath been proud against the LORD" (50:29).
13. The LORD'S hand is pictured in Jeremiah 50:25. "The LORD hath opened his armoury, and hath brought forth the weapons of his indignation..." It is God's armoury, and His indignation.
14. The temple in Jerusalem had been despoiled and burned with fire by the ruthless Babylonian army. Its sacred vessels had been carried off to Babylon; and, later the book of Daniel tells us "that the crowning act of Belshazzar's impiety was reached when he caused these holy vessels to be desecrated at his idolatrous feasts by pouring out in them drink offerings to his false gods, and using them for the awful revels of his last great affront to the God of Israel" (HAI, *Jeremiah and Lamentations*).
15. Therefore, "the vengeance of His temple" (50:28) was certain. No hand could stay it. Babylon's doom was sealed. They were weighed in the balances and found wanting. God had numbered their kingdom, and finished it. Their kingdom was divided and given to the Medes and Persians (Daniel 5:26-28).
16. The book of Daniel refers often to the pride of King Nebuchadnezzar, In Daniel 4:30, King Nebuchadnezzar boasted, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?"
17. Then the next verse says, "While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee" (Dan. 4:31).
18. The pride of Babylon is referred to in Jeremiah 50:31 and 32. The LORD would judge the Babylonians for their pride, and for the way they oppressed His people (50:32-40).
19. Jeremiah 50:44-46 are similar to 49:19-21 (in reference to Edom). This reminds us that God is not a respecter of persons. He judged

Israel; He judged Judah; He judged Egypt; He judged Edom; He judged Babylon, etc. And He will surely judge America!

II. THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL (50:4, 5)

1. The "perpetual covenant" (50:5) looks beyond the Jews' return from their seventy-year captivity. It refers to their future return at the second coming of Christ, when they shall be brought into the blessings of the millennial kingdom (cf. 31:31-37).
2. Ezra 3:12 says that many of the priests and Levites "wept with a loud voice" when the foundation of the new temple was laid.
3. But that is not the "weeping" Jeremiah is prophesying. Jeremiah 50:4 does not refer to the partial return under Ezra and Zerubbabel.
4. Merrill Unger says the weeping in the days of Ezra "was an earnest of Israel's future repentance and weeping when she will look upon the Messiah at His second advent" (*Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*).
5. Zechariah 12:10 says, "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn."
6. Hosea 6:1 says, "Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up."
7. God's people had been "lost sheep" (50:6). Their shepherds (leaders) had caused them to go astray (50:6). "They have turned them away on the mountains" means they went up on the mountains to worship idols and pagan gods (cf. 2:20; 3:6, 23).
8. Their Babylonian conquerors said, "We offend not, because they have sinned against the LORD" (50:7), and they had a point (cf. 40:2, 3).
9. After the seventy years expired, the LORD told the Jews, "Remove out of the midst of Babylon..." (50:8).
10. Jeremiah 50:20 refers to the days and the time when the LORD will pardon the iniquity of Israel and the sins of Judah. This has reference to the restoration of Israel.

III. THE LORD RAISED UP THE MEDES (50:3, 9, 41-43; 51:11).

1. Daniel predicted that Babylon would be succeeded by Media-Persia. Daniel told King Nebuchadnezzar, "This image's head was of fine gold (Babylon), his breast and his arms of silver

(Media-Persia), his belly and his thighs of brass (Greece), His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay (Rome)" (Dan. 2:32, 33).

2. He told the troubled king, "Thou art this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee" (Dan. 2:38, 39).
3. Many years passed, and later on Daniel told King Belshazzar, "Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians" (Dan. 5:28).
4. Later on "that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old" (Dan. 5:30, 31).
5. In Daniel 7, Daniel had a dream and he saw "four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another" (Daniel 7:3). The second beast was like a bear, "and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh" (Dan. 7:5).
6. That second beast was Media-Persia, and the "three ribs" refers to Media, Persia, and Babylon.
7. Just as God raised up Babylon to judge Judah and her neighbors, God raised up the Medes and Persians to judge Babylon (50:9-13).

CONCLUSION:

Babylon was God's rod to chasten Judah, but Babylon went too far with their chastisement. They enjoyed punishing Judah a little too much -- "Because ye were glad, because ye rejoiced, O ye destroyers of mine heritage" (50:11). Therefore the LORD had to take the rod out of their hands and use it on them.