

Journey through Jeremiah Part 55, Judgment Against Babylon Pt.3

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney, Th.D. – Wednesday, Jan. 24, 2018

† Jeremiah 51:1-32

1 Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will raise up against Babylon, and against them that dwell in the midst of them that rise up against me, a destroying wind;
2 And will send unto Babylon fanners, that shall fan her, and shall empty her land: for in the day of trouble they shall be against her round about.
3 Against *him that bendeth let the archer bend his bow, and against him that lifteth himself up in his brigandine: and spare ye not her young men; destroy ye utterly all her host.*
4 Thus the slain shall fall in the land of the Chaldeans, and *they that are thrust through in her streets.*

We continue with the pronouncement of judgment against the nation of Babylon. Here in verse one the LORD says he will raise up “**a destroying wind**,” this is, of course, referring to the armies of the Medes and Persians. They will sweep across the land of the Chaldeans like a mighty destroying wind.

He says he will send “**fanners**,” into Babylon to “**fan her**.” This is symbolic of when they would thrash the wheat and the corn, they would crush it and then scoop it up and throw it up into the air and let the winds blow away the chaff and the straw.

Also, the archers, those that guard the city and the brigandine, the enemy will slay them and all the young men and leave their dead bodies strewn in the streets. Much the same way that Babylon did to Jerusalem when they invaded it.

5 For Israel *hath not been forsaken, nor Judah of his God, of the LORD of hosts; though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel.* 6 Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity; for this *is the time of the LORD'S vengeance; he will render unto her a recompence.*

Though Israel and Judah had sinned against the LORD and though He punished them because of it, he did not forsake them. They are still his people and he intends to preserve them. Again they are urged to flee from Babylon – don't stay behind and remain there because all will be destroyed in Babylon.

7 Babylon *hath been a golden cup in the LORD'S hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad.*

Yes, Babylon was like a golden cup of strong wine which caused the nations to get drunk. This is speaking of the wine cup of God's wrath. Babylon offered all of the sensual, sexual, and lavish lifestyles of sin and many partook of her offerings. So much so that their sinful lifestyles have made them mad.

We also read of this in the final fall of Babylon in **Revelation 18:3** *For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.*

8 Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed: howl for her; take balm for her pain, if so be she may be healed.

In Jeremiah's time, this prophecy of Babylon “suddenly” falling, is referring to that one night we read about in **Daniel 5:30** *In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.*

But there is certainly a reference to the final fall of Babylon that we read about in the Book of Revelation chapter 18 as well. **Revelation 18:2** *And he cried mightily with a*

strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.

9 We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed: forsake her, and let us go every one into his own country: for her judgment reacheth unto heaven, and is lifted up *even to the skies.* 10 The LORD hath brought forth our righteousness: come, and let us declare in Zion the work of the LORD our God.

This would be the words of the Children of Israel and Judah. They are praising the LORD for bringing righteous judgment upon their enemies and state that they will declare His name and works in Zion – which of course, is another name for Jerusalem. Zion was the mountain in which the first Temple originally stood. Zion is also called the holy mountain, the City of David as well as Jerusalem.

11 Make bright the arrows; gather the shields: the LORD hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for his device *is against Babylon, to destroy it; because it is the vengeance of the LORD, the vengeance of his temple.*

Here the call goes out to prepare the arrows and shields. The LORD has now raised the Medes and Persians to come against Babylon. As we read in the Book of Daniel, Darius the Mede then took over the throne in Babylon. He was appointed over them from King Cyrus which we will talk about more when we get to verse 28.

12 Set up the standard upon the walls of Babylon, make the watch strong, set up the watchmen, prepare the ambushes: for the LORD hath both devised and done that which he spake against the inhabitants of Babylon. 13 O thou that dwellest upon many waters, abundant in treasures, thine end is come, *and the measure of thy covetousness.*

Despite the prophetic warnings from Jeremiah, the Babylonians did not heed the call for them to prepare for this enemy that would come upon them. When the Medes invaded Babylon the Chaldeans were completely caught off guard. So much so that they were overthrown in just one night! **Daniel 5:30-31** *In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. 31 And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.*

14 The LORD of hosts hath sworn by himself, *saying, Surely I will fill thee with men, as with caterpillars; and they shall lift up a shout against thee.*

This is describing the sheer number of the Medes and Persians that would invade the land of Babylon. The word “**caterpillars**” as used here, comes from a Hebrew word meaning “**to lick up**.” Nearly every Hebrew lexicon and dictionary will translate this word as “**locusts**.” Perhaps it is the early stage of a locust before fully developing into the winged creature as we know it.

When I think of caterpillars, I think of the big cocoons that I could always find in the trees at my parent's house. There was a black cherry tree outside my parents' house, and every year there would be a big one just filled with caterpillars. I used to play with those things when I was a boy.

15 He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heaven by his understanding. 16 When he uttereth *his voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens; and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth: he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures.*

This is a testimony to the awesome power of the LORD. He spoke the worlds into existence. Even the earth and nature obey his voice. If He declares something, you can rest assured it will come to be.

17 Every man is brutish by *his* knowledge; every founder is confounded by the graven image: for his molten image *is* falsehood, and *there is* no breath in them. 18 They *are* vanity, the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish.

Babylon with all of their graven images, their false idols, their Baal worship, none of these things that they hold so dear to and rely upon can help them. They don't even have breath in them. He says that these things are nothing but vanity and will perish.

19 The portion of Jacob *is* not like them; for he *is* the former of all things: and *Israel is* the rod of his inheritance: the LORD of hosts *is* his name.

Unlike the vanity of Babylon's graven images and false idols, the God of Israel (here called "*the portion of Jacob*," is not like them. In fact, he is the former of all things. In other words, God has always been. God is always previous. As Pastor Sexton often said during my years in Seminary, "It All Begins With God."

20 Thou *art* my battle axe *and* weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms; 21 And with thee will I break in pieces the horse and his rider; and with thee will I break in pieces the chariot and his rider; 22 With thee also will I break in pieces man and woman; and with thee will I break in pieces old and young; and with thee will I break in pieces the young man and the maid; 23 I will also break in pieces with thee the shepherd and his flock; and with thee will I break in pieces the husbandman and his yoke of oxen; and with thee will I break in pieces captains and rulers. 24 And I will render unto Babylon and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea all their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight, saith the LORD.

The commentators and religious scholars are divided concerning how the LORD is referring to as being the "*battle axe and weapons of war*," that he uses to destroy nations and kingdoms. There are 3 major thoughts on who he means:

1. That he is referring to Babylon in past tense. Since he used Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon to destroy nations. However, the problem I have with that is he is speaking about destroying Babylon, will Babylon destroy Babylon?
2. That he is referring to King Cyrus. This is a possibility because we know that it is Cyrus who is accredited with being the destroyer of Babylon and the one who also sets the Jews free.
3. The last thought is that he is referring to his people, Israel. This seems very reasonable to me considering in verse 24 he is definitely speaking about destroying Babylon for all the evil they had done in Zion in the sight of the Israelites and he says "your sight," meaning the Israelites.

Regardless of who He is referring to, one thing is for sure, God is the one that provides the power behind the destroyer. And, after all, as we have already studied in Jeremiah, God himself said that His word was like a fire and hammer: **Jeremiah 23:29** *Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?*

25 Behold, I *am* against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the LORD, which destroyest all the earth: and I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain. 26 And they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations; but thou shalt be desolate for ever, saith the LORD.

Here the LORD is comparing Babylon to a destroying mountain – from the way he describes it, this is most likely a picture of a spewing volcano. Remember, Babylon is more than just a city and a nation, it is an entire political and religious system. With the great power and influence they had, they destroyed or corrupted all those around them.

27 Set ye up a standard in the land, blow the trumpet among the nations, prepare the nations against her, call together against her the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and Ashchenaz; appoint a captain against her; cause the horses to come up as the rough caterpillars.

This is the battle cry of the LORD to the Medes and Persians to make war upon Babylon. He says to "*set ye up a standard in the land*." A "standard," means the nation's flag or banner. It was a symbol of which country was in charge. When one country destroys another country, the first thing they do is to raise up their flag showing they were the victor and rulers of the land now.

28 Prepare against her the nations with the kings of the Medes, the captains thereof, and all the rulers thereof, and all the land of his dominion. 29 And the land shall tremble and sorrow: for every purpose of the LORD shall be performed against Babylon, to make the land of Babylon a desolation without an inhabitant.

Here He specifically mentions the Medes – as already stated that Babylon was taken by Darius the Mede. There is a lot of debate on who Darius was. Some believe that Darius was another name for Cyrus but I can't buy that because we read also from the Book of **Daniel 6:28** *So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian*. If it's the same man then why would Daniel write that?

One of the issues is that secular history does not mention any Darius the Mede being king of Babylon. However, Babylonian history refers to a man named **Gabaru the Mede** who was appointed over Babylon by King Cyrus. Gabaru was born in 601 B.C. which would have made him 62-years old when Babylon was invaded which lines up perfectly with Scripture that says Darius the Mede was about 3 score and 2 years old.

It is very likely that the name **Darius** was not his given name but his **title**. Because the name Darius means "**Lord**," or "**One who holds the scepter**." So, it may be similar to the titles of Pharaoh, or Caesar.

The Jewish Historian, Joseph writes this about Darius and he says this about him: ***but when Babylon was taken by Darius, and when he, with his kinsman Cyrus, had put an end to the dominion of the Babylonians, he was sixty-two years old. He was the son of Astyages, and had another name among the Greeks.***

The truth is, we could get all caught up on chasing rabbits that we could get lost on the trail trying to figure it out. The most important thing we need to know is that God used this foreign nation to destroy another foreign nation because of the treatment of His people.

30 The mighty men of Babylon have forborn to fight, they have remained in *their* holds: their might hath failed; they became as women: they have burned her dwellingplaces; her bars are broken. 31 One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to shew the king of Babylon that his city is taken at *one* end, 32 And that the passages are stopped, and the reeds they have burned with fire, and the men of war are affrighted.

The description of the fighting men of Babylon is a pitiful one. Once known for their strength and might and fierceness, but in the face of the Medes and Persians they become "*as women*," and "*are affrighted*." My, how the mighty have fallen.

Lord willing, we will finish up this chapter next Wednesday and finalized the prophecy against Babylon. Then only one more lesson from Chapter 52 and we will be finished.

† All Scripture from the Authorized King James Version of the Bible