

Journey through Jeremiah Part 56, Judgment Against Babylon Pt.4

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney, Th.D. – Wednesday, Jan. 31, 2018

† Jeremiah 51:33-64

33 For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; The daughter of Babylon *is* like a threshingfloor, *it is* time to thresh her: yet a little while, and the time of her harvest shall come.

Babylon had been basking in her riches and power for a long time but now it is time for her to be made like the **threshing floor**. The threshing floor was a flat piece of land about 50-feet in circumference that had been prepared before the grain was reaped. They would clear the land of any rocks and then they would beat the ground flat or run oxen round and round over it to make the ground hard to prepare for the grain to be poured on it.

“time to thresh her” Then, after the threshing floor was prepared they would reap the grain and pour it on the threshing floor to be beat to separate the grain from the chaff – the LORD is using this description as to what he is going to do to Babylon.

34 Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon hath devoured me, he hath crushed me, he hath made me an empty vessel, he hath swallowed me up like a dragon, he hath filled his belly with my delicates, he hath cast me out. 35 The violence done to me and to my flesh be upon Babylon, shall the inhabitant of Zion say; and my blood upon the inhabitants of Chaldea, shall Jerusalem say.

When it says **“he hath crushed me,”** this is not the LORD being crushed but it is His people saying that they have been crushed. That is why it says at the end of verse 35 **“shall Jerusalem say.”** The Israelites are crying out for the LORD to avenge them and take vengeance out on the inhabitants of Chaldea.

36 Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will plead thy cause, and take vengeance for thee; and I will dry up her sea, and make her springs dry. 37 And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwellingplace for dragons, an astonishment, and an hissing, without an inhabitant.

The LORD answers His people with assurance of vengeance on the inhabitants of Babylon. He describes how He will dry up their lands and make it a place uninhabitable by human life.

He uses those words **“an astonishment, and an hissing.”** You will see this description several times in the Bible of nations becoming **“an astonishment and an hissing.”** We saw the same thing when Jerusalem was destroyed. This is typical language in the Book of Jeremiah. When we studied back in Chapter 25 the LORD said he would pour out his fury on all nations and make them an “astonishment and hissing.”

Jeremiah 25:15-18

15 For thus saith the LORD God of Israel unto me; Take the wine cup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it.

16 And they shall drink, and be moved, and be mad, because of the sword that I will send among them.

17 Then took I the cup at the LORD'S hand, and made all the nations to drink, unto whom the LORD had sent me:

18 *To wit,* Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, and the kings thereof, and the princes thereof, to make them a desolation, an astonishment, an hissing, and a curse; as *it is* this day;

The word **“astonishment”** means **“an amazed confusion from a mind in fear.”**

The word **“hissing”** means; **“a derision; a whistling of scorn”**

Everyone that sees the devastation that the LORD performs on Babylon will be astonished and will hiss at the loss.

38 They shall roar together like lions: they shall yell as lions' whelps.

39 In their heat I will make their feasts, and I will make them drunken, that they may rejoice, and sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the LORD.

40 I will bring them down like lambs to the slaughter, like rams with he goats.

More descriptions of how the LORD is going to destroy them. Though the Chaldeans will growl like lions, the LORD will lead them to slaughter like lambs.

41 How is Sheshach taken! and how is the praise of the whole earth surprised! how is Babylon become an astonishment among the nations!

The name **“Sheshach”** means **“thy fine linen,”** but it is used as a symbolic name for Babylon. It is only used twice in the Bible, here and in Jeremiah chapter 25:26.

42 The sea is come up upon Babylon: she is covered with the multitude of the waves thereof. 43 Her cities are a desolation, a dry land, and a wilderness, a land wherein no man dwelleth, neither doth *any* son of man pass thereby.

Another description of their utter destruction. Again, do not forget that we are dealing with a double prophecy here. As we read about the final destruction of Babylon in the Book of Revelation chapter 18: **Revelation 18:1-2** And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. 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.

44 And I will punish Bel in Babylon, and I will bring forth out of his mouth that which he hath swallowed up: and the nations shall not flow together any more unto him: yea, the wall of Babylon shall fall.

This is the condemnation of Babylon's chief god, Bel. Wile Bel was not real, he was only a false god, the LORD describes his punishment as if he was real because in the lives of the Chaldeans, he was.

If you recall in the Book of Daniel when Daniel and his friends were brought into Babylonian captivity they renamed them all. **Daniel 1:6-7:** Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: 7 Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel *the name* of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego.

Notice what they named Daniel; **“Bel-teshazzar.”** That name means **“Bel's Prince”** or **“Whom Bel favors.”** This was an attempt to indoctrinate the Hebrews into Chaldean society and culture.

45 My people, go ye out of the midst of her, and deliver ye every man his soul from the fierce anger of the LORD. 46 And lest your heart faint, and ye fear for the rumour that shall be heard in the land; a rumour shall both come *one* year, and after that in *another* year *shall come* a rumour, and violence in the land, ruler against ruler.

God's people are warned to flee from the midst of Babylon so they aren't caught up in her destruction. Many of them had become completely ingrained into the Babylonian culture and would refuse to leave.

47 Therefore, behold, the days come, that I will do judgment upon the graven images of Babylon: and her whole land shall be confounded, and all her slain shall fall in the midst of her.

All the inhabitants of Babylon will be in utter shock of the destruction of their land. They had trusted their gods to protect them but their gods are not real. He says that they **“shall be confounded,”** meaning running around in bewilderment not knowing what to do.

48 Then the heaven and the earth, and all that *is* therein, shall sing for Babylon: for the spoilers shall come unto her from the north, saith the LORD.

The destruction of Babylon will cause all of heaven and earth to rejoice. They will sing praises to the LORD God of Heaven and marvel at His mighty and marvelous works and his vengeance on sin and evil man.

49 As Babylon *hath* caused the slain of Israel to fall, so at Babylon shall fall the slain of all the earth.

Just as Babylon caused so much death and destruction to God's people, they too shall experience what it's like to be on the wrath end of God's Sword.

50 Ye that have escaped the sword, go away, stand not still: remember the LORD afar off, and let Jerusalem come into your mind.

This is another call for any of God's people that survive the destruction of Babylon, to return to Jerusalem when Cyrus gives the edict. We read about this Proclamation from Cyrus over in the Book of **Ezra 1:1-6** Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and *put it* also in writing, saying, 2 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which *is* in Judah. 3 Who *is there* among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which *is* in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he *is* the God,) which *is* in Jerusalem. 4 And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that *is* in Jerusalem. 5 Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all *them* whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the LORD which *is* in Jerusalem. 6 And all they that *were* about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all *that* was willingly offered.

It's hard to say how many Jews remained in Babylon after the 70-years and Cyrus gave the proclamation to return, but numerous stayed behind. This would have included those that were **too old to travel** – remember it has been 70-years so anyone that had went to Babylon would at least be 70 but most would be in their 80's and 90's. -- Then there would be those that were **born during the captivity** – it was the only place they had ever known. They didn't know anything about Judah and would have lives in Babylon and would not want to leave.

51 We are confounded, because we have heard reproach: shame hath covered our faces: for strangers are come into the sanctuaries of the LORD'S house.

And, as we just read, some of those in captivity wouldn't return out of shame of what has been done in their land and probably out of fear of going back and something similar happening.

52 Wherefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will do judgment upon her graven images: and through all her land the wounded shall groan. 53 Though Babylon should mount up to heaven, and though she should fortify the height of her strength, yet from me shall spoilers come unto her, saith the LORD. 54 A sound of a cry *cometh* from Babylon, and great destruction from the land of the Chaldeans: 55 Because the LORD hath spoiled Babylon, and destroyed out of her the great voice; when her waves do roar like great waters, a noise of their voice is uttered: 56 Because the spoiler is come upon her, *even* upon Babylon, and her mighty men are taken, every one of their bows is broken: for the LORD God of recompences shall surely requite. 57 And I will make drunk her princes, and her wise *men*, her captains, and her rulers, and her mighty men: and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the King, whose name *is* the LORD of hosts.

Still more describing the thoroughness of the LORD's destruction of Babylon. I don't know what else to say on these verses other than what we have already been saying.

58 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, and her high gates shall be burned with fire; and the people shall labour in vain, and the folk in the fire, and they shall be weary.

"The broad walls of Babylon." The Greek historian **Herodotus** claimed that "Babylon surpasses in wonder any city in the known world" and praised the walls which he said were 56 miles long, 80 feet thick, and 320 feet high. It is said that the walls were so massive that chariots could race along the top of them.

He also mentions **"her high gates."** This is most likely referring to the **Ishtar Gate** that Nebuchadnezzar had built for the main entrance into Babylon. At one time it was considered one of the 7-wonders of the ancient world. It was dedicated to the goddess, Ishtar. According to **Ancient History Encyclopedia**: *The front of the gate is adorned with glazed bricks with alternating rows of dragons and bulls. The beasts are furnished in yellow and brown tiles, while the bricks surrounding them are blue. The blue enameled tiles are thought to be of lapis lazuli (which is a very rare blue stone), but there is some debate to this conjecture. The gates measured more than 38 feet high with a vast antechamber on the southern side.*

Nebuchadnezzar had placed a plaque on the outside of the gate inscribed with the following message: **"I placed wild bulls and ferocious dragons in the gateways and thus adorned them with luxurious splendour so that people might gaze on them in wonder."**

The Ishtar gate was one of the items that Sadam Hussein built a replica of when he was trying to restore the City of Babylon. Several parts of the gate have been dug up and are show in various different museums throughout the world.

59 The word which Jeremiah the prophet commanded Seraiah the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, when he went with Zedekiah the king of Judah into Babylon in the fourth year of his reign. And *this* Seraiah was a quiet prince.

According to this at some point during the 4th year of the reign of Zedekiah, Jeremiah had gone with the king to Babylon to deliver this prophecy about their destruction.

60 So Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that should come upon Babylon, *even* all these words that are written against Babylon. 61 And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, When thou comest to Babylon, and shalt see, and shalt read all these words; 62 Then shalt thou say, O LORD, thou hast spoken against this place, to cut it off, that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but that it shall be desolate for ever. 63 And it shall be, when thou hast made an end of reading this book, *that* thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates: 64 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.

And with that we conclude the prophecy of the judgment against the Gentile nation of Babylon. Jeremiah instructed Seraiah to tie a rock around the book of prophecy (which would have been a scroll) and throw it out into the Euphrates river. This was not to destroy the book, but to indicate how quickly this judgment come and how fast Babylon would fall. -- And just as John prophecies of what he saw will happen to Babylon in the end of times, over in the Book of Revelation: **Revelation 18:21** And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast *it* into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.

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