

THE PROPHECY AGAINST BABYLON, PART 2

TEXT: JEREMIAH 51:1-11

INTRODUCTION:

1. I mentioned last week that after dealing with Egypt, Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Edom, and Judah's other neighbors, in chapters 50 and 51 Jeremiah focuses on the LORD'S judgment upon Judah's greatest enemy, Babylon.
2. Jeremiah's prophecies are remarkable because they were delivered at the peak of Babylon's power, when it seemed very unlikely that the great nation of Babylon would fall.
3. Just like in chapter 50, chapter 51 alternates between God's judgment upon Babylon, and the future restoration of Israel (cf. 51:5).

I. GOD WILL JUDGE BABYLON.

1. In Jeremiah 51:1, the LORD said He would raise up "a destroying wind" against Babylon. That "destroying wind" refers to the invading armies of the Medes and Persians (cf. 51:11).
2. These prophecies predicting the fall of Babylon at the hands of the Medes and the Persians were graphically fulfilled approximately sixty-five years later, as recorded in Daniel 5.
3. Many of these prophecies refer to the suddenness of the fall of Babylon (51:8, 9).
4. It would be futile for Babylon to try and defend herself (51:2-4, 12).
5. "The vengeance of his temple" (51:11) refers to God taking vengeance on Babylon for destroying His temple in Jerusalem (cf. 50:28).
6. H.A. Ironside said, "Every precaution was taken to insure the safety of Babylon; but they knew not that the hour of the Lord's vengeance had struck, the vengeance of His insulted and wasted temple" (*Jeremiah and Lamentations*).
7. Jeremiah 51:13 says, "O thou that dwellest upon many waters..." This is similar to Revelation 17:1, "Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters."
8. Revelation 17:15 says, "The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues."
9. Jeremiah 50 and 51 should be studied alongside Revelation 17 and 18. There are many parallels. For example, Revelation 17:2 says, "the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication."

10. And Revelation 18:3 says, "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" (cf. Jer. 51:7).
11. Merrill Unger says Babylon "was metaphorically shown as a golden cup in the Lord's hand, because she was the instrument He used to intoxicate other peoples with His wrath" (*Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*). Cf. Jeremiah 25:15-17.
12. Although the fall of Babylon marked the end of Babylon's political rule, much of the Babylonian culture, its pagan religions, and its ideology were continued in the kingdoms which followed (Media-Persia, Greece, Rome, etc.).
13. John Walvoord wrote, "Babylonian influence was perpetuated down through the centuries especially in ancient pagan religions. Babylon, the symbol of religious confusion, was to appear again in the apostate church of Revelation 17, and its political power was to be revived in the final form of the Roman Empire as depicted in Revelation 18...Babylon as an influence for evil politically and religiously will not be terminated until Jesus Christ comes in power and glory to reign" (*The Nations in Prophecy*).
14. Jeremiah 51:15-19 are similar to 10:12-16. We have a contrast between God the Creator and the vanity of idols. The idols will perish, along with the idolaters who made them and those who worship them (51:18).
15. In Jeremiah 50:23 the LORD referred to Babylon as His hammer that He would break. In Jeremiah 51:20, the LORD said to Babylon, "Thou art my battle axe and weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the nations..."
16. Babylon was the LORD'S weapon to judge the nations, but now the time of her judgment had come (51:20-24).
17. In addition to a hammer and a battle axe, the LORD addressed Babylon as, "O destroying mountain...which destroyest all the earth" (51:25).
18. Jeremiah's prophecy contains several recurring themes:
 - Babylon would become desolate forever (51:26, 29, 36, 37, 43, 44).
 - Various nations would align themselves with the Medes and Persians to bring down Babylon (51:27, 28, 48).
 - The Babylonians would be helpless and defenseless (51:30-33, 53-58).

- King Nebuchadnezzar had devoured and had had crushed Jerusalem, and would therefore be judged by God (51:34-36; cf. 50:11).
 - They were overtaken by surprise (51:41). In that very hour they should be given up “as lambs to the slaughter, like rams with he goats” (51:40). The Medes would arise and come upon her like the waves of the sea while the Babylonians were feasting and drinking (51:42). Merrill Unger says their roaring together like lions and yelling as lions' whelps (51:38) refers to King Belshazzar's drunken feast (Daniel 5).
 - God's judgment upon the idolatry of Babylon (51:44, 47, 52). Bel (51:44) is another name for Baal, the demonic idol worshipped throughout Babylon and other heathen lands.
 - Since Babylon had caused the slain of Israel to fall, the LORD would cause Babylon to fall (51:49). Jeremiah 51:56 says, "For the LORD God of recompences shall surely requite."
19. The "broad walls of Babylon" (51:58) were 60 miles long, 87 feet broad, and 300 feet high! But the LORD said, "The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken" (51:58).
20. There were 100 high gates, 25 on each of the four sides to the city of Babylon. There were 250 high towers between the gates. But the LORD said, "Her high gates shall be burned with fire" (51:58).

II. GOD WILL RESTORE ISRAEL (51:5).

1. In contrast to Babylon, Israel and Judah had not been forsaken. Though their land was "filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel" (51:5), the LORD would be merciful to His chosen people.
2. The LORD warned His people to "flee out of the midst of Babylon" (51:6, 45, 46, 50). I heard Harold Camping (on his radio program) say that these prophecies mean Christians should "flee" from local churches. It certainly does not teach that!
3. There is a present day application. Revelation 18:4 and 5 says, "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities."
4. However, this is referring to Christians separating from Mystery Babylon, the false religious system headed up by Rome. The Bible does not teach that Christians should abandon good Bible-preaching churches.

5. Jeremiah 51:51 describes the repentant attitude of the hearts of the people of Judah as they turn back to God -- "We are confounded, because we have heard reproach: shame hath covered our faces..."
6. It describes the people in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, but looks beyond that to the future restoration of Israel.

III. CONCLUDING REMARKS ABOUT BABYLON (51:59-64).

1. Seraiah the son of Neriah (51:59) accompanied King Zedekiah to Babylon "in the fourth year of his reign."
2. Jeremiah told Seraiah that when he came to Babylon, he was to read all the words concerning the fall of Babylon (51:61, 62).
3. As soon as Seraiah was finished reading the scroll, he was to tie a stone to it and throw it into the Euphrates River (51:63, 64).

CONCLUSION:

1. Jeremiah 51:64 ends with, "Thus far are the words of Jeremiah." This concludes our series in the book of Jeremiah.
2. Jeremiah 52 is a "retrospect" or an "Historical Appendix," describing the overthrow of Jerusalem.
3. We dealt with this already back in Chapter 39.
4. The historical details are also given in II Kings 25 and II Chronicles 36.