



Jeremiah 51:1-64

“All The Evil That Would Come Upon Babylon

[Wow, this is a lot of verses. So many so, that I won't say much by way of exposition.]

NKJ Jeremiah 51:1 Thus says the LORD: "Behold, I will raise up against Babylon, Against those who dwell in Leb Kamai, A destroying wind.

2 And I will send winnowers to Babylon, Who shall winnow her and empty her land. For in the day of doom They shall be against her all around.

3 Against her let the archer bend his bow, And lift himself up against her in his armor. Do not spare her young men; Utterly destroy all her army.

4 Thus the slain shall fall in the land of the Chaldeans, And those thrust through in her streets.

5 For Israel is not forsaken, nor Judah, By his God, the LORD of hosts, Though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel."

6 Flee from the midst of Babylon, And every one save his life! Do not be cut off in her iniquity, For this is the time of the LORD's vengeance; He shall recompense her.

7 Babylon was a golden cup in the LORD's hand, That made all the earth drunk. The nations drank her wine; Therefore the nations are deranged.

8 Babylon has suddenly fallen and been destroyed. Wail for her! Take balm for her pain; Perhaps she may be healed.

9 We would have healed Babylon, But she is not healed. Forsake her, and let us go everyone to his own country; For her judgment reaches to heaven and is lifted up to the skies.

10 The LORD has revealed our righteousness. Come and let us declare in Zion the work of the LORD our God.

11 Make the arrows bright! Gather the shields! The LORD has raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes. For His plan is against Babylon to destroy it, Because it is the vengeance of the LORD, The vengeance for His temple.

12 Set up the standard on the walls of Babylon; Make the guard strong, Set up the watchmen, Prepare the ambushes. For the LORD has both devised and done What He spoke against the inhabitants of Babylon.

13 O you who dwell by many waters, Abundant in treasures, Your end has come, The measure of your covetousness.

14 The LORD of hosts has sworn by Himself: "Surely I will fill you with men, as with locusts, And they shall lift up a shout against you."

15 He has made the earth by His power; He has established the world by His wisdom, And stretched out the heaven by His understanding.

16 When He utters His voice -- There is a multitude of waters in the heavens: "He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; He makes lightnings for the rain; He brings the wind out of His treasures."

17 Everyone is dull-hearted, without knowledge; Every metalsmith is put to shame by the carved image; For his molded image is falsehood, And there is no breath in them.

18 They are futile, a work of errors; In the time of their punishment they shall perish.

19 The Portion of Jacob is not like them, For He is the Maker of all things; And Israel is the tribe of His inheritance. The LORD of hosts is His name.

20 " You are My battle-ax and weapons of war: For with you I will break the nation in pieces; With you I will destroy kingdoms;

21 With you I will break in pieces the horse and its rider; With you I will break in pieces the chariot and its rider;

22 With you also I will break in pieces man and woman; With you I will break in pieces old and young; With you I will break in pieces the young man and the maiden;

23 With you also I will break in pieces the shepherd and his flock; With you I will break in pieces the farmer and his yoke of oxen; And with you I will break in pieces governors and rulers.

24 " And I will repay Babylon And all the inhabitants of Chaldea For all the evil they have done In Zion in your sight," says the LORD.

25 "Behold, I am against you, O destroying mountain, Who destroys all the earth," says the LORD. "And I will stretch out My hand against you, Roll you down from the rocks, And make you a burnt mountain.

26 They shall not take from you a stone for a corner Nor a stone for a foundation, But you shall be desolate forever," says the LORD.

27 Set up a banner in the land, Blow the trumpet among the nations! Prepare the nations against her, Call the kingdoms together against her: Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz. Appoint a general against her; Cause the horses to come up like the bristling locusts.

28 Prepare against her the nations, With the kings of the Medes, Its governors and all its rulers, All the land of his dominion.

29 And the land will tremble and sorrow; For every purpose of the LORD shall be performed against Babylon, To make the land of Babylon a desolation without inhabitant.

30 The mighty men of Babylon have ceased fighting, They have remained in their strongholds; Their might has failed, They became like women; They have burned her dwelling places, The bars of her gate are broken.

31 One runner will run to meet another, And one messenger to meet another, To show the king of Babylon that his city is taken on all sides;

32 The passages are blocked, The reeds they have burned with fire, And the men of war are terrified.

33 For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: "The daughter of Babylon is like a threshing floor When it is time to thresh her; Yet a little while And the time of her harvest will come."

34 " Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon Has devoured me, he has crushed me; He has made me an empty vessel, He has swallowed me up like a monster; He has filled his stomach with my delicacies, He has spit me out.

35 Let the violence done to me and my flesh be upon Babylon," The inhabitant of Zion will say; "And my blood be upon the inhabitants of Chaldea!" Jerusalem will say.

36 Therefore thus says the LORD: "Behold, I will plead your case and take vengeance for you. I will dry up her sea and make her springs dry.

37 Babylon shall become a heap, A dwelling place for jackals, An astonishment and a hissing, Without an inhabitant.

38 They shall roar together like lions, They shall growl like lions' whelps.

39 In their excitement I will prepare their feasts; I will make them drunk, That they may rejoice, And sleep a perpetual sleep And not awake," says the LORD.

40 "I will bring them down Like lambs to the slaughter, Like rams with male goats.

41 " Oh, how Sheshach is taken! Oh, how the praise of the whole earth is seized! How Babylon has become desolate among the nations!

42 The sea has come up over Babylon; She is covered with the multitude of its waves.

43 Her cities are a desolation, A dry land and a wilderness, A land where no one dwells, Through which no son of man passes.

44 I will punish Bel in Babylon, And I will bring out of his mouth what he has swallowed; And the nations shall not stream to him anymore. Yes, the wall of Babylon shall fall.

45 " My people, go out of the midst of her! And let everyone deliver himself from the fierce anger of the LORD.

46 And lest your heart faint, And you fear for the rumor that will be heard in the land (A rumor will come one year, And after that, in another year A rumor will come, And violence in the land, Ruler against ruler),

47 Therefore behold, the days are coming That I will bring judgment on the carved images of Babylon; Her whole land shall be ashamed, And all her slain shall fall in her midst.

48 Then the heavens and the earth and all that is in them Shall sing joyously over Babylon; For the plunderers shall come to her from the north," says the LORD.

49 As Babylon has caused the slain of Israel to fall, So at Babylon the slain of all the earth shall fall.

50 You who have escaped the sword, Get away! Do not stand still! Remember the LORD afar off, And let Jerusalem come to your mind.

51 We are ashamed because we have heard reproach. Shame has covered our faces, For strangers have come into the sanctuaries of the LORD's house.

52 " Therefore behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "That I will bring judgment on her carved images, And throughout all her land the wounded shall groan.

53 Though Babylon were to mount up to heaven, And though she were to fortify the height of her strength, Yet from Me plunderers would come to her," says the LORD.

54 The sound of a cry comes from Babylon, And great destruction from the land of the Chaldeans,

55 Because the LORD is plundering Babylon And silencing her loud voice, Though her waves roar like great waters, And the noise of their voice is uttered,

56 Because the plunderer comes against her, against Babylon, And her mighty men are taken. Every one of their bows is broken; For the LORD is the God of recompense, He will surely repay.

57 "And I will make drunk Her princes and wise men, Her governors, her deputies, and her mighty men. And they shall sleep a perpetual sleep And not awake," says the King, Whose name is the LORD of hosts.

58 Thus says the LORD of hosts: "The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, And her high gates shall be burned with fire; The people will labor in vain, And the nations, because of the fire; And they shall be weary."

59 The word which Jeremiah the prophet commanded Seraiah the son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah, when he went with Zedekiah the king of Judah to Babylon in the fourth year of his reign. And Seraiah was the quartermaster.

60 So Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that would come upon Babylon, all these words that are written against Babylon.

61 And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, "When you arrive in Babylon and see it, and read all these words,

62 "then you shall say, 'O LORD, You have spoken against this place to cut it off, so that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but it shall be desolate forever.'

63 "Now it shall be, when you have finished reading this book, that you shall tie a stone to it and throw it out into the Euphrates.

64 "Then you shall say, 'Thus Babylon shall sink and not rise from the catastrophe that I will bring upon her. And they shall be weary.' " Thus far are the words of Jeremiah.

A lot of people have wondered why Jeremiah would devote so much space to a prophecy about the destruction of Babylon. 2 Chapters and 110 verses in total! Calvin made this comment: *"Jeremiah seems, indeed, to have used more words than necessary; but we have stated the reason why he dwelt at large on a matter so clear: His object was not only to teach, for this he might have done in a few words, and have thus included all that we have hitherto seen and shall find in the whole of this chapter; but as it was an event hardly credible, it was necessary to illustrate the prophecy respecting it with many figures, and to inculcate with many repetitions what had been already said, and also to confirm by many reasons what no one hardly admitted."*

What Calvin is pointing out is that Jeremiah devoted so much space because no one at the time would have believed it was possible. It's possible we don't understand why. Well, imagine if I came to you and told you that 55 years from now America would be conquered, and I mean entirely conquered by

another nation, from sea to shining sea, America and its military would be entirely destroyed and not gradually but in one great cataclysmic defeat. It would seem hard to believe.

Just so, to an ancient the idea that the Babylonian Empire that seemed to be unstoppable, that went from victory to victory, and whose capital had walls so thick you could drive two lanes of chariots on the top could suddenly fall seemed impossible. And so Jeremiah loaded his prophecy with detail right down to how in verses 31-32 runner after runner would report that the crossings of the canals had been simultaneously taken, the reeds set afire and so on. I know it seems impossible now, but all of this will happen.

And 55 years after these words were written by Jeremiah it came to pass, as the great Oracle Wikipedia summarizes, *“In 539 BC, the Neo-Babylonian Empire fell to Cyrus the Great, king of Persia, with a military engagement known as the Battle of Opis. The famed walls of Babylon were indeed impenetrable, with the only way into the city through one of its many gates or through the Euphrates, which ebbed beneath its thick walls. Metal gates at the river's in-flow and out-flow prevented underwater intruders, if one could hold one's breath to reach them. Cyrus (or his generals) devised a plan to use the Euphrates as the mode of entry to the city, ordering large camps of troops at each point and instructed them to wait for the signal. Awaiting an evening of a national feast among Babylonians (generally thought to refer to the feast of Belshazzar mentioned in Daniel V), Cyrus' troops diverted the Euphrates river upstream, causing the Euphrates to drop to about 'mid thigh level on a man' or to dry up altogether. The soldiers marched under the walls through the lowered water. The Persian army conquered the outlying areas of the city's interior while a majority of Babylonians at the city center were oblivious to the breach.”*

But why did it happen that way? Well in 594 BC, eight years before the destruction of *Jerusalem* in 586 Nebuchadnezzar summoned Judah's puppet king Zedekiah to Babylon. The Babylonians had ordered King Zedekiah to report, probably to explain the rumors of the rebellion that Judah had been plotting with several of the other nations at the conference we read about in Jeremiah 27. Zedekiah took his quartermaster Seraiah, the brother of Jeremiah's secretary Baruch with him.

(Incidentally if you still have any lingering doubts about the bible as history, you'll remember that I told you that the Seal of Baruch with what is possibly his fingerprint was discovered in the 1970s and at the same time Baruch's brother, Seraiah. Seal was also discovered, it reads, “Belonging to Seraiah (ben) Neriah.” The seal also identifies Seraiah as the chief chamberlain in the court of King Zedekiah)

Jeremiah trusted his secretary's brother and he gave him an important task, in vs. 59-64 take the words of this prophecy, read them, possibly in the hearing of the exiles who had been taken in the first deportation, and then bind them up and throw them into the Euphrates. This word picture from the prophetic master of word pictures would show that God had spoken His curse on Babylon, it WOULD be destroyed just as He said.

Three Applications:

1) The Lord never forgets his people, and though his mill stones grind slowly they grind exceedingly fine. Although Jerusalem had not yet been destroyed when this prophecy was written the Lord knew that it would be, this catastrophe had to happen for his people to be chastened and refined, but the Lord would not forget the bloodthirsty Babylonians who would be so zealous to destroy his people, his city, and his temple.

Eight years hence the exiles and Jeremiah, would be appalled at what had happened to Zion the city of the Lord, and the magnificent temple of Solomon! How could they worship? What hope did they have. At that point they would have hope that the Lord had not forgotten them, that he would be their righteousness through the sending of His Son, Jesus, the branch who would atone for their sins. And he would be their vindicator and the One who took vengeance on their persecutors!

10 The LORD has revealed our righteousness. Come and let us declare in Zion the work of the LORD our God.

11 Make the arrows bright! Gather the shields! The LORD has raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes. For His plan is against Babylon to destroy it, Because it is the vengeance of the LORD, The vengeance for His temple.

This promise is still good for us today. As we read about what ISIS is doing to God's people in Iraq massacring them, driving them into exile, destroying their churches, I can't help but reflect that the remains of the city of Babylon lie only 53 miles south of Baghdad, while the remains of Nineveh, the capital of ancient Assyria lie under the city of modern day Mosul where Christians are suffering so badly.

Both Assyria, which destroyed the Northern Kingdom and Babylon which destroyed Judah are nothing but ruins now, Assyria was destroyed by Babylon 605 BC, and Babylon was destroyed by Persia in 539 BC precisely because God fulfilled his promise to wipe both empires out for their part in attacking his people.

He also called forth his people in vs. 45-46, Babylon was no place for the people of the Lord, it would soon be time for them to return home.

Well brothers and sisters here is the good news, this prophecy of the destruction of Babylon formed the backbone of the Lord's assurance in Revelation that someday he would destroy the evil world system and all who systematically persecute his people. The doom of groups like ISIS or nations that imprison and persecute the people of God like Iran, and perhaps even America if she doesn't turn from evil materialism, idolatry and stop persecuting the Lord's people is certain, listen to Rev. 18 and think about how all the themes in Jer. 51 are repeated:

Revelation 18:1 After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory.

2 And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!

3 "For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury."

4 And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.

5 "For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.

6 "Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her.

7 "In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, 'I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.'

8 "Therefore her plagues will come in one day -- death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her.

9 " The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning,

10 "standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.'

11 "And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore:

So let me leave you with the words of English Baptist Pastor and Bible Commentator, FB Meyer”

“One is disposed to enlarge the scope of the prophecy, and to believe that every form of anti-Christian power, whether systems of false philosophy, or structures of ancient superstition, or gigantic wrongs... shall wither and die before the all-conquering might of Emmanuel, who was manifested to destroy the works of the devil. He must reign till all enemies are put beneath his feet. Then shall be heard in heaven the voice of a great multitude, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying " Hallelujah ! for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth."

Let us strengthen our confidence in the certain prevalence of good over evil, of the Church over the world, and of Christ over Satan, as we consider the precise fulfilment of Jeremiah's predictions concerning the fall of Babylon. " So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord : but let them that love Thee be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might." – F.B. Meyer