

“RUIN, REDEMPTION, AND RESTORATION”

Studies in the Book of Jeremiah

Jeremiah 51:1-64

“The Day of Destruction”

Introduction: Prophetic oracles contain metaphors and symbolism that sometimes convey how there is nothing new under the sun (Ecclesiastes 1:9). Babylon, the infamous site of rebellion after the flood, became a symbol of idolatry and abominations (Revelation 17-18). Jeremiah 51 is the conclusion of the judgement oracle against Babylon. The day of destruction was set for Babylon and God’s people are called to come out.

I. The Time of the Lord’s Vengeance (Jeremiah 51:1-19)

- Verses 1-4: The destroying wind and winnowers (workers who separate wheat from chaff) are two metaphors representing the invading army (Media-Persia).
- Verse 5-6: Babylon is judged but Israel is spared – this shows the distinction between God’s people and God’s enemies (Revelation 18:4-5).
- Verse 7: The golden cup is metaphor about Babylon. The wine represents how idolatry flowed out of Babylon and intoxicated the nations. The nations are described as deranged because they were given over to idolatry represented by the metaphor of drunkenness (Revelation 17:1-5; Revelation 18:3)
- Verses 8-10: This poetic language represents the former captives responding to the message to leave Babylon due to the impending judgement. They return to Jerusalem (Zion) and declare what the Lord has done.
- Verses 11-14: The Media-Persian Empire was the chosen instrument to execute punishment on Babylon. This language is calling out preparations for war.
- Verses 15-19: This section is a contrast of the True and Living God and idols. The Living God is the Creator of heaven and earth. Only God has the power, wisdom and understanding create the universe. The Bible describes idolators as senseless and without knowledge. An idol is a fraud because there is no life in them and they are ridiculous lies. The Creator chose to interact with His creation and to select a tribe out of all of humanity as His inheritance. The good news is Jews and Gentiles are united in one body in Christ! (Ephesians 2:11-18)

II. The Declaration of Desolation (Jeremiah 51:20-40)

- Verses 20-24: The Media-Persia empire is the instrument of destruction against the ancient Babylonian empire.
- Verses 25-26: Babylon is described as a destroying mountain. God will roll it down and make it a heap of burnt rubble. The metaphor emphasizes how thorough destruction will be.
- Verses 27-32: Media- Persia will begin this process of bringing the Lord's word to pass. The fall of the Babylonian empire was the beginning of the end for the city of Babylon. The city lost its prominence and deteriorated over time.
- Verse 33: The threshing floor was the place where wheat was separated from chaff. This metaphor presents Babylon as ripe for judgement.
- Verses 34-40: This is another statement of vengeance against Babylon for abuse of God's people.

III. When Judgement Comes to Babylon... (Jeremiah 51:41-64)

- Verse 41: This is a poetic exclamation of how Babylon is taken, seized, and made desolate. Sheshach is a cryptic word for Babylon, the "praise of the whole earth" is a sarcastic taunt of how proud Babylon will be brought low.
- Verses 42-43: The sea and waters are prophetic symbolism for people (Revelation 17:15). Enemy soldiers will flow through Babylon like water.
- Verse 44: Bel/Marduk is the Babylonian version of Zeus/Jupiter which most likely represent Satan. Idols are statues representing false gods, the false gods represented by idols are demons (1 Corinthians 10:20), the leader of the demons is Satan (Matthew 12:24-26), Satan was cast out of heaven for desiring to replace God (Isaiah 14:12-15). Satan rebranded himself many times throughout history to receive worship and the final iteration will be during the reign of the Anti-Christ (Revelation 13:4).
- Verse 45: God's people are called to leave Babylon, and this call is echoed in the New Testament (Revelation 18:4). God the Father has translated us from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of Christ (Colossians 1:13).
- Verses 46-48: This prophecy had immediate fulfillment and future fulfillment as a similar fate awaits the final iteration of Babylon (Revelation 18:20).
- Verses 49-58: A final statement of vengeance: No level of high fortifications will save Babylon from the Lord's vengeance.
- Verses 59-64: This predictive prophecy has a time stamp of the 4th year of Zedekiah which is approximately 54 years before the fall of Babylon.



- Verse 60: This is another clear statement of the divine inspiration of Scripture. Seraiah's Hebrew title means "officer of the resting place" because he possibly prepared the overnight quarters for the soldiers to receive resupply or he possibly delivered the tribute to Nebuchadnezzar. His assignment from Jeremiah was to read the prophecy in Babylon, tie a stone to the book, and throw it in the Euphrates.

The day of destruction is coming sooner than later. Will you escape?

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