

“RUIN, REDEMPTION, AND RESTORATION”

Studies in the Book of Jeremiah

Jeremiah 50:1-46

“Proud Enough to Fall”

Introduction: Babylon is one of the oldest cities in the world. It was founded after the great flood by Nimrod, son of Cush, who also built Nineveh (Genesis 10:10-12). It was at Babylon that God confused the languages and scattered the inhabitants around the world creating the geographical language groups we see today (Genesis 11:1-9). Babylon became an empire by defeating the decaying Assyrian empire and expanding its territory. The Babylonian empire lasted less than 100 years but remains one of the most recognized symbols of idolatry and rebellion. The name of the city means “the gate of god” but a play on words connected Babel to the confusing of languages. Babylon was God’s instrument to execute judgement against the nations, but now we will review the consequences of their sin.

I. Invasion and Emancipation (Jeremiah 50:1-10)

- Message to the original audience: Babylon will be defeated, her idols will be humiliated, the land will be desolate because a nation will rise and conquer them. Bel and Marduk (Merodach) are interchangeable names for the same false god. Marduk was the chief false god of Babylon.
- Jeremiah paints a beautiful word picture of Israel seeking the Lord their God. The primary focus is the return to the Lord rather than merely the return to the land. Prior to the captivity they forsook the Lord for useless idols, after the captivity they will seek a covenant with the Lord. The shepherds should have led the people in the way of the Lord but instead led them into idolatry.
- God made some unconditional promises to Israel – they were chastised for their sin – but the chastisement was corrective in order to purge them of idolatry. The pagans thought it was okay to abuse the people because God allowed them to participate in the disciplinary process. The assembly of nations from the north is referring to the Media-Persian empire.

II. Redemption and Retribution (Jeremiah 50:11-27)

- Instead of being humbled by the judgement of God Babylon rejoiced in their role of bringing pain, suffering, and destruction. Babylon is called the least of the nation’s yet at the historical moment of the prophecy they were a dominant empire. The conquerors are called to

attack Babylon from all sides because she sinned against the Lord. Retribution is declared and Babylon will reap what she has sown.

- Israel (sheep metaphor), Assyria and Babylon (lion metaphor). Assyria was used by God to chastise the northern kingdom, and Babylon was used to chastise the southern kingdom. Assyria and Babylon were punished but Israel and Judah were redeemed. What a beautiful picture of the grace of God. “I will pardon those whom I preserve” – a statement of the unconditional promise of God – this is referring to the remnant (Isaiah 10:22).
- Babylon made the stupid mistake of contending against the Lord. God is taking full responsibility for the fall of Babylon. Media-Persia is commanded by God to destroy Babylon. Woe is the strongest prophetic language of judgement.

III. Pride and Punishment (Jeremiah 50:28-46)

- Babylon has been proud against the Lord. God declared He is against Babylon (most haughty one/arrogant one). Arrogant Babylon will fall and no one will raise him up.
- Israel and Judah will be released from captivity because their Redeemer is the Lord of armies (Lord of hosts). Have you been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb of God – the Lord Jesus Christ?
- Some translations use a metaphor “they will become like women.” Scripture recognizes differences between men and women. The metaphor follows a pattern of contrasts in the context of judgement on Babylon.
- Babylon is described as the land of carved images. Idolatry has negative psychological effects on people because sin affects your mental state. The Hebrew word means to exhibit irrational and unpredictable behavior.
- The Media-Perian Empire was the chosen instrument of God’s wrath against Babylon. Verse 44 contains a repeated metaphor that emphasizes the assurance and swiftness of the judgement to come (Jeremiah 49:19). Verses 45-46 contain another statement of the surety and magnitude of the judgement. The earth will tremble and the cry will be heard for a great distance (Jeremiah 49:21).

“Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall. Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, Than to divide the spoil with the proud” (Proverbs 16:18-19).

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Sunday, August 23, 2026