

Read and Sink
Jeremiah 51:58 - 64

Purpose: To understand the consequences of descending into sin.

Nutshell: God had His prophecy against Babylon read in Babylon, then cast into the Euphrates, picturing Babylon's fate. God's case against any man will weigh him down to a final descent from which he will not rise. Only in Christ can we rise from our state of death.

I. Context: God's judgments against Babylon.

II. Text

Jer 51:58 Thus said YHWH of Hosts: The walls of Babylon—The broad *one*—to bare is laid bare, || And her high gates are burned with fire, || And peoples toil sufficient for emptiness, || And communities *toil* sufficient for fire. And they have tired!"

Literal Standard Version with modifications

The next four outline items, III. - VI., are based on the 4 uses of Scripture listed in 2 Tim 3:16 AND the 3 depictions of preaching in 2 Tim 4:2.

III. Teaching

A. Review

1. Jer 1-38 is mainly prophecies of Jerusalem's coming fall
2. Jer 39-45 shows the depth & stubbornness of man's sin, as the few remaining Judeans ask for God's counsel, *then spurn it!*
3. Jer 46-52 are prophecies against *other* nations: Egypt (46), Philistia (47), Moab (48), Ammon (49:1-6), Edom (49:7-22), Damascus (49:23-27), Kedar (49:28-33) and Elam (49:34-39). Now **Babylon** (50-51).
4. Babylon destroyed Jerusalem and nearly all ↑ those nations. Now her own fate is set out.
5. God deals with *nations* as He does *individuals*, on the basis of their good or evil, Jer 18. This includes America.

B. The **Four Babylons** of the Bible

1. The overriding Babylon of the Bible is the **spiritual** one

- a. Rev 17:5 identifies Babylon as *the spiritual influence which spawns all of earth's unfaithfulness to God*
- b. This Babylon is in every place and generation. We're told to exit her, 2 Cor 6:17; Jer 51:45
- c. She also motivates *persecution*, Rev 17:6, undergirds *commerce*, Rev 18:11, and rules *political leaders*, Rev 17:18 (until Antichrist takes vengeance, Rev 17:16)
2. The **1st geographical** Babylon was Gen 11, **the City & Tower**: man's 1st spiritual/NATIONAL solidarity
 - a. God saw and responded to its direct challenge
 - b. בָּבֶל, *babel*, is both "Babel," Gen 11, and "Babylon"
3. **Nebuchadnezzar's** was the **2nd geographical** Babylon
 - a. His dream of a statue in Dan 2 gives us a 'modern history', from his day to the world's end
 - b. Nebuchadnezzar was the statue's head of gold, and his Babylon was the *most glorious* of man's kingdoms
 - c. Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome (silver, bronze, iron) were successively less glorious but increasingly strong
 - d. The feet of the image: iron mixed with clay (Rome bound poorly with succeeding peoples): = this age
 - i. Christ will strike this 'Extended Rome', Dan 2:44-45,
 - ii. toppling the *whole image*, Babylon, Persia, and Greece: all *preserved in* Extended Rome
4. Rev 17-18 describe **future** Babylon in her pure, spiritual traits *and* her final, **3rd geographical** manifestation

Kid-speak: What language was the Old Testament written in? Hebrew. And what language do we translate it into so we can read it? English.

- C. *Babylon* and *Israel* are intertwined: see outline below. *Babylon* birthed *Israel* **more** than *Egypt* did! Jer16:14-15
- D. An outline of 50-51. Note the *Babylon/ Israel* alternation.
 1. 50:1-3, Prophecy of **Babylon's** capture
 2. 50:4-8, God will return straying Israel *from* **Babylon**
 3. 50:9-16, **Babylon's** fate for opposing God
 4. 50:17-20, God will be finished punishing Israel & Judah
 5. 50:21-32, **Babylon** will be an utter ruin
 6. 50:33-34, God **PLEADS** captive Israel's cause
 7. 50:35-46, Many nations will cause **Babylon** to fall
 8. 51:1-10, God will save Israel *in* **Babylon's** destruction

9. 51:11-23, Babylon's destruction will be complete
10. 51:24-33, **B**abylon will *receive* what she *did* to Judah
11. 51:34-58, Israel's **ADVOCATE** will guide **B**abylon's fall
12. 51:59-64, Read this in **B**abylon & sink it in the Euphrates

E. Jer 50-51 defy past fulfillment.

1. A *league* of northern nations will defeat future Babylon, 50:9, 26, 41. *Lone* Persia defeated the 539 B.C. Babylon.
2. Future Babylon will be *leveled*, 50:13, 15, 16, 23, 32, 39, 40, 45. The Babylon of 539 B.C. remained *intact*.

F. One main message of Jer 50-51: DON'T BE AFRAID OF BABYLON.

1. She's doomed. We must apply Psalm 37 to her.
2. God easily ended Babylon in 539 B.C. Final Babylon too.

G. 51:58, Yet again we note that Babylon's walls were not recorded as having been leveled, 50:15 (though Darius is reported to have lowered their height)

1. But *future* Babylon will apparently build huge walls again. Those will be dismantled, 51:44
 - a. The completeness of the dismantling is seen in the doubling of the word "laid bare."
 - b. "To bare is laid bare." Most translations use a separate intensifying adverb: e.g., "Is utterly laid bare."
 - c. (There is a grammatical disagreement between "walls," plural, and "broad *one*," singular. This isn't necessarily a big deal in Hebrew.)

Kid-speak: What will happen to the big walls all around the city of Babylon? God will send armies to fight Babylon, and they will break Babylon's big, tall walls all the way down.

2. The massive gates will be set ablaze
 - a. In response, the peoples will toil against the flames, but failing to the point that emptiness would have seemed their goal: "peoples toil sufficient for emptiness"
 - b. Babylon's supporting "communities," especially merchants, will also toil for her, but, again, failing as though they were *aiding* the fire: they "*toil* sufficient for the fire."
3. "They have tired." Their efforts to salvage something from the great city will have been utterly exhausting.

4. It's the old Humpty Dumpty story
- H. What's the point of recording so much about Babylon that would *not* take place in the short term?
 1. God is underscoring His *ongoing* contention with Babylon
 2. God could have easily seen to Babylon's destruction in 539 B.C., but that Babylon was merely one manifestation of an age-long entity
 3. Leaving that Babylon intact was a way of God insuring us that Babylon remains alive and well, and His dramatic finale with her is yet to come
 4. Putting us in Wait mode. Exit Babylon and flourish in the fruit of the Spirit
- I. Thus end the prophecies against Babylon
 1. Now they will be copied in a separate scroll and sent to Babylon
 2. God's messengers play a crucial role in men's accountability- and, for the elect, in their conversion

Jer 51:59 The word that Jeremiah the prophet has commanded Seraiah son of Neriah, son of Maaseiah, in his going with Zedekiah king of Judah to Babylon, in the fourth year of his reign. And Seraiah [*is*] a housing official;

- J. The prophecies of chaps 50-51 were part of the the whole book, but also a separate message to Babylon
 1. This message will be committed to Seraiah ("Yah has prevailed"), son of Neriah ("Light of Yah"), son of Masseiah ("Refuge of Yah")

Kid-speak: Jeremiah got a guy named Seraiah to be like a mailman for him, to take everything Jeremiah wrote about Babylon and take it to Babylon to read it there.

- a. Naming by parents/grandparents narrowed an individual's identity and/or identified notable influences
- b. In this case, the identification is probably to connect Seraiah to a brother of his we know, Baruch, 32:12
2. Baruch's was Jeremiah's scribe, 36:4
- K. Seraiah was an "official of rest"
 1. This could be describing his serene character
 2. Or it could be describing his official duties: securing

- housing accommodations on a journey: a quartermaster
- L. The fourth year of Zedekiah's reign was 593 B.C., some seven years before the fall of Jerusalem, 586 B.C.
1. Jerusalem's fall is recorded in Jer 39. This record therefore preceded that. The book of Jeremiah is not in strict chronological order, as we've seen previously.
 2. Large-scale Babylonian deportations began in 597 B.C., but Daniel was taken even before that.
 3. Note, then, that the prophecy of Jer 50-51 alludes to a *soon-to-come* destruction of the Temple, 51:11

Kid-speak: When Jeremiah wrote all this down to send it, he wrote about the Babylonian's burning God's temple- but that hadn't happened yet. When you write down something that hasn't happened yet, what is it called? A prophecy.

- M. We don't know why Zedekiah was visiting Babylon. He may have been summoned. He may have been seeking some favor from Babylon or disavowing an insurrection that arose.

Jer 51:60 and Jeremiah writes all the adversity [or "evil"] that comes to Babylon on one scroll—all these words that are written concerning Babylon.

- N. Jer 50-51 could easily fit on one scroll

Jer 51:61 And Jeremiah says to Seraiah, "As you enter Babylon, and you have seen, and have read all these words, **62** and have said: 'YHWH, You have spoken concerning this place, to cut it off, that there is none dwelling in it, from man even to livestock, for it is a perpetual devastation.'"

- O. Jeremiah first instructs Seraiah to be a witness: "You have seen." Seraiah would act sort of like God's court reporter.
1. Second, Seraiah was to read the scroll aloud, we do not know to whom
 - a. It could have been simply read, since it was a testimony not to be fulfilled for multiple millennia
 - b. Or it could have been read to a Babylonian official. Hard to believe Zedekiah would have allowed that, though,

- since he would have desired no ruffling of feathers
- c. Perhaps it was read aloud by the river to whoever was nearby
2. Third, after reading the scroll, Seraiah was to address God concerning what was written
 - a. This was an address back to the Judge who had passed this sentence
 - b. The sentence was Babylon's complete cutting off, again, yet future
 - c. *This scroll reading reminds us of the "books" of men's deeds, opened in Rev 20:12*

Kid-speak: After Seraiah read the scroll out loud, Jeremiah told him to talk to God and say, "God, you're the one who said all these things against Babylon." Whoever was listening to Seraiah read would know that Seraiah believed in God.

Jer 51:63 "And it has come to pass, when you finish reading this scroll, you bind a stone to it, and have cast it into the midst of the Euphrates, **64** and said, 'Thus Babylon sinks, and she does not arise, because of the adversity [or "evil"] that I- I am bringing in upon it. And they have been weary.'" Up to here [*are the*] words of Jeremiah.

- P. This scroll was not meant to remain. It was intended to **sink** in the Euphrates (Heb. *puhrat*), the river that ran through Babylon. This is the fourth part of Seraiah's instruction.
 1. The scroll, therefore would symbolize the nation against whom it prophesied. As the scroll sank, so Babylon would eventually sink to rise no more.
 2. Extinction is the fate of Babylonians in every age
- Q. Seraiah would then make a final pronouncement, his fifth instruction
 1. He would make the connection between the scroll and Babylon: "Thus Babylon will finally sink"
 2. And he would make the connection between the pronouncement and God's authorship of the words and the acts: "that I- I am bringing upon it"
 - a. Seraiah was a spokesman in God's name
 - b. The preaching of the Word is to be a pronouncement in God's name each week, 1 Peter 4:11

Kid-speak: When Seraiah was done reading and praying, he was supposed to tie a rock to the scroll and throw it into the big river that ran through the city of Babylon. Then he was supposed to say, “That’s what’s going to happen to Babylon. It will sink and never come back up.”

- R. This is our second encounter at the Euphrates in Jeremiah
1. The first was in chap 13:1-11. There Jeremiah was to bind a sash around his waist. This symbolized God binding Israel and Judah to himself.
 - a. Jeremiah was to take the sash to the Euphrates and hide it in the crevice of a rock. After “many days,” he was to return and retrieve the sash. It was now useless.
 - b. God said the sash was like His evil people, who had followed other gods. They had become rotted and useless spiritually. They had served foreign gods, and they would be sent to a foreign land.
 2. Now we have a simpler use of the Euphrates. It would swallow a scroll like Babylon would be swallowed in defeat.
 - a. The Euphrates was one of the four rivers flowing from Eden. It provided Neb’s Babylon with her commerce. It will presumably help provide future Babylon with hers.
 - b. The earth and its waters that bear man will still remain when men have done putting the earth to evil uses
- S. “And they have been weary.” “Weary” = “tired” from v 58
1. EVERYTHING ABOUT BABYLON IS WEARYING. Man expends so much effort to seek comfort and/or pleasure, but expending as much effort to dodge God, who made all good things.
 2. When Jesus says to come and rest- we need it! Matt 11:28-30
- T. This was the end of Jeremiah’s part of the book
1. Though, as we have said, it was not chronologically the last thing he wrote.
 2. If this is Jeremiah’s last writing, then Baruch penned chap 52. Jeremiah himself may have sanctioned it as the epilogue.
 3. If not, Baruch had the authority to write, just as certain men wrote alongside the Apostles, e.g., 1 Cor 1:1
 - a. Silvanus, Peter’s scribe, was very like Baruch, 1 Pet 5:12
 - b. But Paul’s co-writers were more like Baruch- IF he wrote this section
 4. OR, “Until now are the words of Jeremiah” may only be an ending for that *section*. I.e., it was just Jeremiah

acknowledging that he had written up to that point, **not** that any succeeding sections were *not* authored by him.

- U. Jeremiah's authorship of the book is very much in doubt in scholarly circles in our day
 - 1. Duhm made the initial speculation (an anonymous group of priests or prophets wrote the book), 1901, premised like the Wellhausen theory (JEPD), 1878. Mowinckel expanded on it, 1914, etc. and so forth.
 - 2. Short version: if someone besides Jeremiah authored the book, they were liars, because they put his name on it. So there's an inspired book written by frauds?

Kid-speak: Who wrote the book of Jeremiah? Jeremiah!
Jeremiah's scribe Baruch might have written the last chapter.

IV. Conviction (2 Tim 4:2, "Convince, rebuke"): **What have I done wrong?**
How have I lost righteousness?
Do I recognize the judgment in my hand in Scriptures?

V. Correction/ Realignment (2 Tim 4:2, "Exhort/encourage"):
How will I correct my error? How will I regain uprightness?
Any man's road to salvation begins with his knowledge of his just judgment.

VI. Schooling in Righteousness: **How will I avoid the error and follow Christ?**
Lord, I will allow Your message of judgment to do its work.

Wrap-up: Babylon has a scroll. Every man has a scroll/book, Rev 20:11. Our books, too, are Babylonian, UNLESS AND UNTIL God changes our citizenship, Philip 3:20. Our new book becomes the Book of Life, and our boast is the Lamb.

In witnessing, we seek to 'read men their scrolls'. It comes with an automatic 'out': "But you can be written into the Lamb's Book of Life, having your deeds/sins washed away."

But it also comes with a warning. Anyone not found in the Book of Life is cast into the Lake of Fire, Rev 20:15. Ironically, that warning can make men bristle more than the news of their sin.