

NOTES ON THE PROPHECY AND LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH

“The Weeping Prophet”

H. A. Ironside

Copyright © 1906

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

THE DOOM OF BABYLON AND THE DELIVERANCE OF THE REMNANT (Chaps. 50, 51)

In the New Testament two solemn chapters are devoted to an account of the worldly glory and the awful overthrow of mystical, or spiritual, Babylon (Revelation 17, 18). In our prophet, two chapters give in detail the splendor and ruin of literal Babylon, the city by the Euphrates, which answers to the Babylon of the Apocalypse as type to antitype.

It has been a question with many as to whether or not the literal city in the plain of Shinar is again to be built, and destined to become the queen city of the world. Those who think so consider the Babylon of Revelation to refer, not to Rome and its unholy politico-religious system, but to the actual Chaldean city, when it has awakened from the slumber of centuries. Such point to the fact that Babylon as well as Rome was built upon seven hills, or mounds; and as the prophecy of Jeremiah so closely connects Israel's restoration with Babylon's ruin, they hold that it is essential to prophetic exactness that this city shall once more become the wonder of the world.

On the other hand, the opponents of this view consider the resurrection of literal Babylon to be an idle dream, utterly opposed to the teaching of these chapters now before us. They hold that any plain man, reading Jeremiah's vivid description of the downfall of Shinar's capital, could but gather from it that it was cast down forever. Unless one has a theory to uphold, this would be the plain sense of the passage, in their judgment. There seems to them to be no proper reason for supposing the apocalyptic Babylon to be other than Rome, as held by the majority of Christians of all ages. The description so exactly tallies with papal and pagan Rome in the past, as well as with what one may so readily expect the papacy to develop in the future, when the Church has been caught up - and this view seems so thoroughly in accord with the predictions of Daniel and other prophets of both the Old and New Testaments - that one finds it difficult to believe in the necessity for the rebuilding of the literal city in order to carry out the **“sure word of prophecy.”**

Without desiring to be offensively dogmatic, the writer finds himself in this class, and is compelled, in what follows, to view the present portion of Jeremiah from this standpoint. Let the reader carefully seek to **“prove all things, and hold fast that which is good.”**

Because of these conflicting views, we shall not glance as cursorily at these chapters as we have done in regard to the others that give the prophecies of the nations; but we shall look at them verse by verse, seeking to point out the general trend of the teaching as we go along.

“The Word that the Lord spake against Babylon and against the land of the Chaldeans by Jeremiah the prophet” (chap. 50:1).

It is noteworthy that the same man who had previously predicted the ascendancy of Babylon now foretells its doom. He who had counseled submission to its authority now exhorts the remnant of Israel to flee from it, that they be not partakers of its sins and its judgment. This is all perfectly consistent. Jeremiah was no politician, no courtier, no man-pleaser. He spake **“as pleasing God that trieth the heart.”** When the Lord would chasten Judah, He chose Nebuchadrezzar to be His rod, When Babylon lifted up herself against Him, she too must fall, and fall lower far than Judah, never to rise again.

“Declare ye among the nations, and publish, and set up a standard; publish, and conceal not: say, Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, Merodach is broken in pieces; her idols are confounded, her images are broken in pieces” (ver. 2).

God speaks of the things that are not as though they were. Vividly He describes the downfall of the special form of idolatry that characterized Babylon, together with the taking of the city by the monotheistic armies of Cyrus. Bel was the sun-god worshiped under the names of Baal, Zeus, Jupiter, Osiris, etc., by various nations. Merodach is but another name for the same demon-deity. He is called Marduk in the Babylonian inscriptions. Often the two names are joined together, as Bel-Marduk. Bel was the name under which he was worshiped among the old Accadians. He is sometimes called Bel of Nippur. Before the power of the Lord’s might he is to be put to shame, and all the images broken to pieces.

“For out of the north there cometh up a nation against her, which shall make her land desolate, and none shall dwell therein: they shall remove, they shall depart, both man and beast” (ver. 3).

The northern nation was the Medo-Persian confederacy, whose end we have noted in chapter 49. The Persians generally were believers in one unseen God, whom they worshiped under the symbol of fire. They abhorred idolatry with a relentless hatred, and were a nation of iconoclasts. It was fitting that such a people should be used to overthrow the mother of all idolatrous practices - Babylon, with her powerful secret priest-caste. By this means should the way be opened for the return of the captivity of Israel and Judah to the land of their nativity.

“In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten” (vers. 4, 5). We know that it was a mere handful that thus responded to the opportunity given by Cyrus. Nevertheless they were prospered on their way, and were settled in their land when Messiah appeared.

The perpetual covenant, however, shall not be truly entered into until their future return. The first was but a picture of the final restoration, when they shall be brought into millennial blessing. Touchingly, the Lord describes the afflicted state of His people under Babylon's rule:

“My people hath been lost sheep; their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their resting place. All that found them have devoured them: and their adversaries said, We offend not, because they have sinned against the Lord, the habitation of justice, even the Lord, the hope of their fathers” (vers. 6, 7).

Thus had the nations combined to heap ignominy and reproach upon the failed nation that had enjoyed blessing above every other. But though the Lord permitted all this for their discipline, He had not failed to note the hatred manifested toward them by the haughty Gentile powers. The time was near when He was to awake for the deliverance of His own, and the judgment of their oppressors. To the leaders among the captivity He sends the word, **“Flee”** (or, remove) **“out of the midst of Babylon, and go forth out of the land of the Chaldeans, and be as the he goats before the flocks”** (ver. 8). His wandering sheep are to be restored to their own fold under the guidance and care of the **“Shepherd of Israel.”**

“For, lo, I will raise and cause to come up against Babylon an assembly of great nations from the north country: and they shall set themselves in array against her; from thence she shall be taken; their arrows shall be as of a mighty expert man; none shall return in vain. And Chaldea shall be a spoil: all that spoil her shall be satisfied, saith the Lord” (vers. 9, 10).

The **“assembly of great nations from the north”** under Cyrus consisted of the Persians and Medes, together with the Elamites and the surrounding nations which had become tributary to the mighty conqueror, whose triumph Daniel had plainly predicted in the very court of the kings of Babylon.

The reason for the desolation of this once glorious city is given in the next two verses, as also a Summary of her destruction. **“Because ye were glad, because ye rejoiced, O ye destroyers of My heritage, because ye are grown fat as the heifer at grass and bellow as bulls; your mother shall be sore confounded; she that bare you shall be ashamed: behold, the hindermost of the nations shall be a wilderness, a dry land, and a desert”** (vers. 11, 12).

Only genuine faith in the Word of God could have led anyone to credit a prophecy so unlikely of fulfillment to the mind of the natural man. When Jeremiah spoke, or wrote, the words Babylon was the greatest city in the world, with apparently impregnable defenses. Her massive walls, with their hundred gates, seemed calculated to withstand the siege of centuries; especially as the vast space within, suitable for cultivation, apparently provided against all possibility of famine.

But God had spoken; and though her inhabitants knew it not, the doom of proud, luxurious, idolatrous Babylon was sealed. Where the city once stood, now all is desert, as foretold by both Jeremiah and Isaiah (see Isaiah 47).

It was with great difficulty that archaeologists were even able to find its site, buried deep beneath the rubbish of ages. It shall never be rebuilt; for He who cannot lie hath declared, **“Because of the wrath of the Lord it shall not be inhabited, but it shall be wholly desolate: every one that goeth by Babylon shall be astonished, and hiss at all her plagues”** (ver. 13).

In the light of this verse, if there were no other corroborative, we cannot conceive of any room for the notion that the city is yet to be rebuilt in order to be thrown down once more. No one, without a theory to maintain, could gather from these words other than that, once destroyed, it should rise no more forever. Jeremiah’s hearers must have so understood it. There was no hint that he referred to another destruction than that begun under Cyrus. It is useless to urge against this that the desolation was not accomplished at once, when Belshazzar was conquered and slain by the armies of Cyrus. The prophet does not predict a sudden blotting out. She is to become first the **“hindermost of the nations;”** then, eventually, **“a wilderness.”** This is exactly what took place. God’s word was fulfilled to the letter, for **“the Scripture cannot be broken.”** As though beholding the invading army surrounding the city, Jeremiah vividly describes the onslaught of the Persian cohorts.

“Put yourselves in array against Babylon round about: all ye that bend the bow, shoot at her, spare no arrows; for she hath sinned against the Lord. Shout against her round about: she hath given her hand: her foundations are fallen, her walls are thrown down: for it is the vengeance of the Lord: take vengeance upon her; as she hath done, do unto her. Cut off the sower from Babylon, and him that handleth the sickle in time of harvest: for fear of the oppressing sword they shall turn every one to his people, and they shall flee everyone to his own land” (vers. 14-16).

It is the undeviating law of God’s government that **“whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap”** - and a nation in like manner. According as Babylon had done to others, so was it done to her. The New Testament seer uses language very similar in referring to mystical Babylon. (See Revelation 18:6). Retribution may be long delayed, but it is as certain as the fixed stars. **“God is not mocked.”** He still sits on the throne as the moral Governor of the universe. How important, then, for the nations, as well as individuals, to remember and act upon the words of our Lord Jesus: **“As ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.”** Again the prophet turns to Israel to declare God’s unfailing promises. They have sinned, and sinned most grievously, but His Word cannot be thus made void.

“Israel is a scattered sheep; the lions have driven him away: first the king of Assyria hath devoured him; and last this Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon hath broken his bones. Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will punish the king of Babylon and his land, as I have punished the king of Assyria. And I will bring Israel again to his habitation, and he shall feed on Carmel and Bashan, and his soul shall be satisfied upon mount Ephraim and Gilead” (vers. 17-19).

As surely as Assyria’s haughty power had been broken, so should Babylon fall; and as surely as this seemingly impossible event should take place, so should Israel be brought back to the home of their fathers.

Nor was it the merely temporary return under Ezra and Zerubbabel that is here referred to, for:

“In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve” (ver. 20).

This will only be when **“they shall look upon Him whom they have pierced:”** and the remnant of Judah, as later the remnant of the ten tribes, shall say, **“Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up”** (Hosea 6:1).

Reverting again to the main theme, Jeremiah goes on to picture, as in vision, the desolation of Babylon.

“Go up against the land of Merathaim, even against it, and against the inhabitants of Pekod: waste and utterly destroy after them, saith the Lord, and do according to all that I have commanded thee” (ver. 21).

Merathaim means *“double rebellion,”* according to the best authorities, and seems here to be symbolically applied to Chaldea. Pekod is said by some to mean *“Visitation;”* and by reference to Ezekiel 23:23 it would appear to indicate a tributary city to the capital. If so, it is now impossible to find any trace of it. Some have thought it might simply refer to a certain quarter or suburb of the imperial city.

“A sound of battle is in the land, and of great destruction. How is the hammer of the whole earth cut asunder and broken! How is Babylon become a desolation among the nations! I have laid a snare for thee, and thou art also taken, O Babylon, and thou wast not aware: thou art found, and also caught, because thou hast striven against the Lord” (vers. 22-24).

It was in this that her great offence consisted. She had lifted herself up against the Most High.

In no other city did idolatry assume so fearful a form and so dreadful an aspect as in the great city Babylon. She was, as before pointed out, the mother of almost every heathen system. From her, too, mystical Babylon borrowed far more than many have any conception. Almost every unscriptural practice in the great Romish apostasy can be traced back to the Babylonish rites and ceremonies. Because of her dreadful impiety:

“The Lord hath opened His armory, and hath brought forth the weapons of His indignation: for this is the work of the Lord God of hosts in the land of the Chaldeans” (ver. 25).

Not the superior strategy of Cyrus, nor yet the hardihood of his northern troops, nor the carelessness of her defenders, overcame Babylon. It was the hand of God that subverted that mighty empire when its iniquity had come to the full.

Though the Medo-Persian legions knew Him not, He it was who summoned them, saying:

“Come against her from the utmost border, open her storehouses: cast her up as heaps, and destroy her utterly: let nothing of her be left. Slay all her bullocks;. let them go down to the slaughter: woe unto them! for their day is come, the time of their visitation” (vers. 26, 27).

The prophetic ear, made quick to hear things yet to come, catches the sound borne down from the years of the future, of **“the voice of them that flee and escape out of the land of Babylon, to declare in Zion the vengeance of the Lord our God, the vengeance of His temple”** (ver. 28).

That temple had been despoiled and burned with fire by the ruthless armies of Chaldea. Its sacred vessels had been carried to Babylon; and, later, we learn from the book of Daniel that the crowning act of Belshazzar’s impiety was reached when he caused these holy vessels to be desecrated at his idolatrous feasts by pouring out in them drink offerings to his false gods, and using them for the awful revels of his last great affront to the God of Israel.

“The vengeance of the temple” was certain. No hand could stay it. Even as the feast went on, the wretched monarch’s doom was sealed. Weighed in the balances, he was found wanting; his kingdom, numbered and finished, was given to the Medes and Persians.

“Call together the archers against Babylon: all ye that bend the bow, camp against it round about; let none thereof escape: recompense her according to her work; according to all that she hath done, do unto her: for she hath been proud against the Lord, against the Holy One of Israel” (ver. 29).

It was not ignorance on her part. Testimony after testimony had been given to the true and living God, but she deliberately refused them all and rushed madly upon **“the thick bosses of the Almighty.” “Therefore shall her young men fall in the streets, and all her men of war shall be cut off in that day, saith the Lord”** (ver. 30).

Falling into the hands of the God of judgment, she learns His awful power, when repentance is forever too late.

“Behold, I am against thee, O thou most proud, saith the Lord God of hosts: for thy day is come, the time that I will visit thee. And the most proud shall stumble and fall, and none shall raise him up: and I will kindle a fire in his cities, and it shall devour all round about him” (vers. 31, 32).

Do not the words, **“The most proud shall stumble and fall, and none shall raise him up,”** clearly indicate that there can be no future rebuilding of this abhorred city? She had her day of opportunity. Blindly she refused the things that belonged to her peace. When her time of visitation came, her fall was complete and final.

Precious is the word that follows for the remnant of Israel and for us:

“Thus saith the Lord of hosts: The children of Israel and the children of Judah were oppressed together: and all that took them captive held them fast; they refused to let them go. Their Redeemer is strong; The Lord of hosts is His name: He shall thoroughly plead their cause, that He may give rest to the land, and disquiet the inhabitants of Babylon” (vers. 33, 34).

Israel and Judah should yet know Him as a Saviour-God, delivering them from all that oppressed them. In His love and in His pity He had redeemed them of old, He would never give them up, but in His own appointed time He should arise to their deliverance. His lovingkindness endureth forever. His grace must have its full display, however unworthy the objects of it may be.

But if we read of mercy and compassion for His own, we find His sword of wrath unsheathed for the punishment of His enemies.

“A sword is upon the Chaldeans, saith the Lord, and upon the inhabitants of Babylon, and upon her princes, and upon her wise men. A sword is upon the liars” (or, boasters); **“and they shall dote”** (i.e., utter nonsense): **“a sword is upon her mighty men; and they shall be dismayed. A sword is upon their horses, and upon their chariots, and upon all the mingled people that are in the midst of her; and they shall become as women: a sword is upon her treasures; and they shall be robbed”** (vers. 35-37).

It is a graphic delineation of unsparing judgment. No words of ours are needed as to what is in itself so plain.

The next verse clearly tells the reason for so frightful a catastrophe:

“A drought is upon her waters; and they shall be dried up: for it is the land of graven images, and they are mad upon their idols.”

The Lord’s controversy was not with the people of Babylon and Chaldea alone, but with the whole demoniacal system which, from the days of Nimrod, had its center in the plains of Shinar.

“Therefore the wild beasts of the desert with the wild beasts of the islands shall dwell there, and the owls shall dwell therein; and it shall be no more inhabited forever, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation” (vers. 38, 39).

This is surely conclusive. To look for a resurrection of Babylon only that she may be again destroyed is, in our judgment, an idle dream. She has been blotted off from the face of the earth, and shall be so forever.

“As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbor cities thereof, saith the Lord, so shall no man abide there, neither shall any son of man dwell therein” (ver. 40).

The ruin is complete and irremediable. The silent mounds by the Euphrates are as distinct witness to the holiness of God as the salt plains by the Dead Sea. Verses 41 and 42 are a vivid description of the Persian cavalry, with their allies advancing to the siege of the luxurious city.

“Behold, a people shall come from the north, and a great nation, and many kings shall be raised up from the coasts” (or, uttermost parts) “of the earth. They shall hold the bow and the lance: they are cruel, and will not show mercy: their voice shall roar like the sea, and they shall ride upon horses, every one put in array, like a man to the battle, against thee, O daughter of Babylon.”

One can almost see the advancing armies, with the forest of lances and standards, as they draw near the city that proudly boasted of being impregnable.

“The king of Babylon hath heard the report of them, and his hands waxed feeble: anguish took hold of him, and pangs as of a woman in travail” (ver. 43).

All the might of Chaldea’s armies, the ingenuity of her officers, and the walls and bastions around her capital, could avail nothing to turn aside the dire calamity. Babylon had lifted herself up against the Lord. She sought to measure her strength with the Almighty. She must be crushed to the dust never again to lift up her head. Cyrus, God’s chosen, whom Isaiah had called by name long before (Isaiah 45:1-4), is described as a lion coming up from the swelling of Jordan, driven into the inhabited country from the wilderness because of the rising waters.

“Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan unto the habitation of the strong: but I will make them suddenly run away from her: and who is a chosen man, that I may appoint over her? for who is like Me? and who will appoint Me the time? and who is that shepherd that will stand before Me?” (ver. 44).

Almost the same words are used in chap. 49:19 to describe the enemy of Edom. No strong habitation could withstand the assault of an army sent by God as a punishment for national iniquity.

“Therefore hear ye the counsel of the Lord, that He hath taken against Babylon; and His purposes, that He hath purposed against the land of the Chaldeans. Surely the least of the flock shall draw them out: surely He shall make their habitation desolate with them” (ver. 45).

Even the feeblest could overcome the mighty, when fighting the battles of the Lord. He had but to give the word, and all the defenses of Babylon became as the toppling walls of Jericho. The astonishment of the nations is expressed in the closing verse of this chapter.

“At the noise of the taking of Babylon the earth is moved, and the cry is heard among the nations” (ver. 46).

The following chapter, which closes the series, continues the same general subject.

“Thus saith the Lord: Behold, I will raise up against Babylon, and against them that dwell in the midst of them that rise up against Me, a destroying wind; and I will send unto Babylon fanners, that shall fan her, and shall empty her land: for in the day of trouble they shall be against her round about” (vers. 1, 2).

As grain is winnowed and the chaff carried off by the wind, so should the inhabitants of Babylon be swept away by the “**destroying wind**” of the Lord’s indignation. The only wheat to be found therein was the feeble remnant of Israel and Judah-scattered because of their sins though they were.

“Against him that bendeth let the archer bend his bow, and against him that lifteth himself up in his brigandine: and spare ye not her young men; destroy ye utterly all her host. Thus the slain shall fall in the land of the Chaldeans, and they that are thrust through in her streets” (vers. 3, 4).

All attempts at defensive warfare were destined to be in vain. Neither archers nor strategy could avail anything to save the city when the Lord had devoted it to destruction.

“For Israel hath not been forsaken, nor Judah of his God, of the Lord of hosts; though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel” (ver. 5).

Israel and Judah were under the rod of the Lord’s chastening because of their sins, but nothing could alter His covenanted mercies to them. It was the Holy One with whom they had to do; one who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; but even their failure could not change the word of His grace and the love of His heart. He was for them still, and therefore more than all that could be against them. Accordingly, He apprises them of the judgments before they fall, and warns them to depart from the doomed city.

“Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity; for this is the time of the Lord’s vengeance; He will render unto her a recompense” (ver. 6).

So also, in the days when the apocalyptic vials are being poured out upon the earth, the call will go forth to the Jewish remnant of that fearful time, **“Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues”** (Revelation 18:4).

As righteous Lot was delivered from Sodom ere fire from heaven fell, so the opportunity was given for the men of Judah and Israel to flee out of Babylon in time to escape the visitation of the Lord’s wrath. It was the same before Jerusalem was taken by Titus, when the Christians in accordance with the word of the Lord Jesus, were permitted to retire from the city prior to the final assault.

The same principle holds good in regard to the Church in this dispensation, which is to be caught away to be with the Lord before the seven-sealed book is opened and the trumpet and vial judgments are meted out to this guilty, Christ-rejecting world. **“Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world”** (Revelation 3:10).

“Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord’s hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad” (ver. 7).

It is the wine of idolatry that was passed from one nation to another, but which had its origin in Babylon. Her mystical antitype has in her hand a golden cup, with which she too makes drunk the nations **“with the wine of her fornication”** (Revelation 17:1-6). There, the wine speaks of spiritual adultery, which is the union of the Church and the world. It will be observed how closely the New Testament Babylon is likened to that of the older revelation.

“Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed: howl for her; take balm for her pain, if so be she may be healed.” Though her fall is so sudden, yet, as remarked in our study of the preceding chapter, she was not instantaneously blotted out. Here, after her fall, her admirers have remedies to offer for her recovery. But it is too late. Her end is decreed.

So the remnant declares: **“We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed: forsake her, and let us go every one into his own country: for her judgment reacheth unto heaven, and is lifted up even to the skies. The Lord hath brought forth our righteousness: come, and let us declare in Zion the work of the Lord our God”** (vers. 8-10).

May we not make an application of this solemn word to present conditions in Christendom?

Not yet have the Roman and Protestant communions fully developed into Babylon the Great. But is it not patent, even now, that there is no healing for the professing body?

- The Word of God is rejected, and its inspiration called in question.
- The Holy Spirit is quenched and resisted.
- The Lordship of Christ, the Church's Head, is denied practically.

What remains for those who value the favor and the truth of God in such a time as this but to forsake every company where these conditions prevail? And, like Judah and Israel returning to Zion, ask once more for the old paths and gather in simplicity to the name of the Lord Jesus, refusing, in any sense, to go on with that which dishonors Him through whose precious blood we have been redeemed to God.

“We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed: forsake her!”

It is useless to go on seeking to purify what will never be purified. When evil can no longer be purged out (as in accordance with I Corinthians 5), the only other resource is to purge one's self out of all that is in opposition to God and His Word, as in II Timothy 2:15-21.

When men who take the place of Christian teachers make it manifest that they have but a form of godliness and deny the power thereof, the only course left for those who would be faithful to God and His truth is implicit obedience to the injunction, **“From such turn away”** (II Timothy 3:5).

Turning again to the words of Jeremiah, we note the realistic description of the march upon Babylon.

“Make bright the arrows; gather the shields: the Lord hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for His device is against Babylon, to destroy it; because it is the vengeance of the Lord, the vengeance of His temple. [See chap. 50:28] Set up the standard upon the walls of Babylon, make the watch strong, set up the watchmen, prepare the ambushes: for the Lord hath both devised and done that which He spake against the inhabitants of Babylon” (vers. 11, 12).

With the vividness of an eyewitness, the prophet depicts the advancing army of the enemy, led, be it noted, not by Cyrus in person, though he directed it all, but by **“the kings of the Medes.”** That part of the army which was sent against Babylon was, according to Daniel 5:31, under the command of **“Darius the Median;”** and although contemporary history does not use the actual name Darius, it does assure us that it was a Median chief and not the mighty Cyrus himself who had charge of the troops that besieged and sacked the capital city. Scripture is ever exact. How could it be otherwise, when it is the very breathing of the living God? Not only does Jeremiah vividly portray the assembling of the Median troops, but with a few master-strokes he presents the confident activity of the imperial guard. 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.

Though they dwelt in apparent security **“upon many waters,”** and flattered themselves that they were **“abundant in treasures,”** the Lord had decreed, **“Thine end is come, and the measure of thy covetousness.”** He had therefore sworn by Himself, saying, **“Surely I will fill thee with men, as with caterpillars; and they shall lift up a shout against thee”** (vers. 13, 14).

As the destruction of a field of green herbs by that most common of all tropical plagues - an onslaught of ravenous, crawling creatures - so should be the destruction of haughty Babylon, the queen city of the ancient world, whose gardens were numbered among its seven wonders.

He with whom they had to do was not as the powerless idols of the nations, nor yet as the malignant demons behind them.

“He hath made the earth by His power, He hath established the world by His wisdom, and hath stretched out the heaven by His understanding” (ver. 15).

Against the Mighty One who controls the vapors, the lightnings and the rain, had the Chaldean girded on his armor. Made brutish by idolatry, confounded because of confidence in breathless images, they must learn the vanity of their hope; for **“in the time of their visitation they shall perish”** (vers. 16-18).

How different the **“portion of Jacob.”** **“He is the Former of all things: and Israel is the rod of His inheritance: The Lord of hosts is His name”** (ver. 19).

He, the omnipotent Creator of all things, had deigned to take up the seed of poor, failing Jacob - surnamed, in grace, Israel. This people He had formed for Himself. He would use them as His battle-axe and weapon of war. With them He would break in pieces the nations and destroy the kingdoms of their oppressors.

All classes must learn that the Lord hath chosen Jacob; for with them, not the warrior only, but the people in every walk of life, must be broken, and His word fulfilled which declared, **“And I will render unto Babylon and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea all their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight, saith the Lord”** (vers. 21-24). How deeply significant it was, in view of all this, that in the last night of the Chaldean kingdom, it was a Jewish captive, Daniel, who read the mystic letters of doom upon the wall of Belshazzar’s palace and gave the terrified king the interpretation!

“Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the Lord, which destroyest all the earth: and I will stretch out My hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain. And they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations; but thou shalt be desolate forever, saith the Lord” (vers. 25, 26).

Words could not be plainer to declare Babylon’s absolute destruction.

Not only shall the city itself never be rebuilt, but the very stones should not be used, as in the case of many another fallen capital, for the building of any other place. As an accursed thing, her foundations should be held in perpetual abhorrence and her site given up to continual desolation. Nor can the words, by any process of reasoning, be legitimately made to refer to a future overthrow immediately before the Millennium. For over two millenniums already the wastes of Babylon have been a testimony to the sure Word of God. It will be so forever.

Verses 27 and 28 emphasize what we have been going over by recapitulation, with additional details. The kingdoms of Ararat, Minni and Ashkenaz are found under the Median standard.

“And the land shall tremble and sorrow: for every purpose of the Lord shall be performed against Babylon, to make the land of Babylon a desolation without an inhabitant” (ver. 29).

The final entry into the city **“at either end”** and the demoralization of its defenders, are described before the actual event in language only possible to the pen of inspiration.

“The mighty men of Babylon have forborne to fight, they have remained in their holds: their might hath failed; they became as women: they have burned her dwelling-places; her bars are broken. One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to show the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end and that the passages are stopped, and the reeds they have burned with fire, and the men of war are affrighted” (vers. 30-32).

The waters of the Euphrates, which flowed directly through Babylon, having been, as described by Herodotus, turned out of their course through the city, left an entry way at each end for the warriors of Darius to enter, under the walls, in the dry river bed. Thus they were able to appear suddenly in the streets at a time when the people were given up to frivolity and merry-making, and a thousand of their lords were reveling in the palace of the effeminate Belshazzar. Having thus pictured the consummation, the prophet goes back to continue the recital of the Lord’s grievance against this impious city.

As a ripe field, ready for the threshing-floor, Babylon's harvest was near, when judgment without mercy should be meted out to her because of Nebuchadrezzar's severity to the inhabitants of Zion and Jerusalem.

The violence done to Israel should be upon Babylon, and the bloodshed be upon the inhabitants of Chaldea (vers. 33-35). The Lord would plead the cause of His downtrodden people. He it was, not Darius merely, who would **“dry up her sea, and make her springs dry.”** As a result, **“Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling-place for dragons [jackals],”** **“an astonishment, and a hissing, without an inhabitant. They shall roar together like lions, they shall yell as lions' whelps”** (vers. 36-38).

It is to be noted that this utter desolation is to follow, not some future overthrow, but the sack of the city resulting upon the turning aside of the waters in which her inhabitants trusted. They are doomed to **“sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the Lord”** (ver. 39).

From the bed of her river her enemies should arise and come upon her like the sea while her defenders were feasting and drunken. In that very hour they should be given up **“as lambs to the slaughter, like rams with he goats.”** Thus should Sheshach be taken, and Babylon become a desolation among the nations (vers. 40-42). Sheshach is used symbolically for Babylon. The name is said to be derived from the goddess Shach.

“Her cities are a desolation, a dry land, and a wilderness, a land wherein no man dwelleth, neither doth any son of man pass thereby” (ver. 43).

Such is the present state of the once prosperous land of Chaldea. Even in the Millennium Babylon's judgment will be the perpetual reminder of God's abhorrence of idolatry.

“And I will punish Bel in Babylon, and I will bring forth out of his mouth that which he hath swallowed up: and the nations shall not flow together any more unto him; yea, the wall of Babylon shall fall” (ver. 44).

It was against the demon symbolized by Bel that the wrath of the only true God was vented.

He it was who had instigated Nebuchadrezzar and the Chaldeans to persecute Judah. Because of their sins the Lord had given them into the hands of the Babylonians; but now He was about to visit their cruelties and wickedness upon their own heads. By this means would Judah's deliverance be effected. To them He says,

“My people, go ye out of the midst of her, and deliver ye every man his soul from the fierce anger of the Lord. And lest your heart faint, and ye fear for the rumor that shall be heard in the land; a rumor shall both come one year, and after that in another year shall come a rumor, and violence in the land, ruler against ruler” (vers. 45, 46).

He would have His own little flock delivered from the strife of tongues, dependent upon Himself and resting on His Word.

Whatever might come, He would not forget them. The warring nations should but work out His counsels; for **“He maketh the wrath of man to praise Him, and the remainder of wrath He doth restrain.”**

The disquieting rumors of approaching disaster, that might be calculated to strike terror to their hearts, but pointed to the overthrow of the power of their oppressors and the judgment of **“the graven images of Babylon,”** when **“her whole land shall be confounded, and all her slain shall fall in the midst of her. Then the heaven and the earth, and all that is therein, shall sing for [joy over] Babylon: for the spoilers shall come unto her from the north, saith the Lord. As Babylon hath caused the slain of Israel to fall, so at Babylon shall fall the slain of all the earth”** (vers. 47-49).

Pointedly the remnant are told to count upon God when this awful period of judgment should arrive. It was but the precursor of their deliverance. **“Ye that have escaped the sword, go away, stand not still: remember the Lord afar off, and let Jerusalem come into your mind”** (ver. 50).

In perfect accord with this, we find the Lord stirring up the spirit of Cyrus, in his first year as world-ruler, to permit the rebuilding of the temple and the return of the Jewish remnant to the land of their fathers.

The 51st verse is the suited expression of their hearts as they turn again to their God. **“We are confounded, because we have heard reproach: shame hath covered our faces; for strangers are come into the sanctuaries of the Lord’s house.”**

This might be taken as the key to the attitude of the returned company, as told in the book of Ezra.

Because of the insult to the Lord’s house, the days were near when He would pour judgment upon the idols of Babylon, and cause her wounded to groan through all the land.

“Though Babylon should mount up to heaven, and though she should fortify the height of her strength, yet from Me shall spoilers come unto her, saith the Lord” (ver. 3, 52, 53).

He was about to arise in His might to avenge His own elect. Therefore:

“the sound of a cry cometh from Babylon, and great destruction from the land of the Chaldeans: because the Lord hath spoiled Babylon, and destroyed out of her the great voice; when her waves do roar like great waters, a noise of their voice is uttered: because the spoiler is come upon her, even upon Babylon, and her mighty men are taken, every one of their bows is broken: for the Lord God of recompenses shall surely requite. And I will make drunk her princes, and her wise men, her captains, and her rulers, and her mighty men: and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the King, whose name is The Lord of hosts” (vers. 54-57).

Solemn indeed is the title taken by the offended God of despised Jacob in this section: **“The Lord God of recompenses.”** How seldom do men in general think of Him in this character! In the 24th verse He had declared that He would do unto Babylon and Chaldea **“all their evil that they had done to Zion.”** Here He reveals Himself in a special way as the God of vengeance. In Psalm 94:1 the remnant of Israel are heard addressing Him in this way: **“O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth, show Thyself.”** And in the New Testament the apostle Paul reminds us that He has said, **“Vengeance is Mine, I will repay [or, recompense], saith the Lord”** (Romans 12:19; Hebrews 10:30; Deuteronomy 32:35).

Because of this he entreats the suffering Christians to avenge not themselves, but rather give place unto wrath. It is never necessary for the child of God to be occupied with the thought of self-preservation, or self-vindication. He can afford to leave all in the hands of **“the Lord God of recompenses.”** No power can turn aside His governmental dealings; none can stay His hand, or hinder the activities of His righteousness.

“It is a righteous thing with God,” we are told, **“to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you”** (II Thessalonians 1:6). This being the case, the Christian can well afford to leave his affairs entirely in the hands of infinite wisdom, knowing that **“he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong he hath done; and there is no respect of persons with God.”**

It was because of this principle that Jeremiah had ever counseled submission and obedience to the king of Babylon.

He would have His people accept the affliction as from the Lord, and leave with Him the matter of dealing with the oppressing power in His own way and time. It was given to the same prophet to set forth that judgment, and to make known the nature of the recompense that had been decreed:

“Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, and her high gates shall be burned with fire; and the people shall labour in vain, and the folk in the fire, and they shall be weary” (ver. 58).

With these words he concludes the burden of Babylon. This, then, was to be the end of all her splendor and haughty independence of God. Her broad walls, upon which several chariots could be driven abreast of each other, if Herodotus is to be believed, were to be utterly thrown down, and her massive gates consumed by the flames. The labor of the people to make it the grandest city in all the world would thus end in vanity. They had been building for the fire. How significant the words! May not the same be said of man’s vaunted energy in this progressive age? He fancies he is building what shall be the lasting admiration of generations yet unborn. But, though he realizes it not, **“the coming of the Lord draweth nigh,”** and it soon shall be manifested that he has but been building for the fire!

Having concluded this series of messages to the nations, thus making known the future of the Gentiles surrounding Palestine, Jeremiah wrote in a book **“all the evil that should come upon Babylon,”** and gave it into the hand of Seraiah, chief chamberlain of Zedekiah.

These prophecies were uttered a number of years before this prince was taken captive; it is plain, therefore, there was a moral reason for placing them where they are in the book which we have been considering. Seraiah was going down to Babylon on behalf of the Jewish monarch, as an ambassador to the court of Nebuchadrezzar, in the fourth year of Zedekiah's reign (vers. 59, 60). We thus learn that during much of the time that Jeremiah was urging submission to Babylon, he was aware of its impending doom.

Seraiah was commanded to read the book when he reached his destination; and having done so, he was to say, **"O Lord, Thou hast spoken against this place, to cut it off, that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but that it shall be desolate for ever"** (vers. 61, 62).

Having so said, he was instructed to bind a stone to the roll and cast it into the midst of the Euphrates, crying, **"Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her: and they shall be weary"** (vers. 63, 64). Clearly and unequivocally the finality of her overthrow was thus attested in the mouth of two witnesses.

"Thus far are the words of Jeremiah."

We have now gone briefly over the varied messages of this honored, yet persecuted servant of the Lord, embracing a very wide range of prophetic ministry, commencing with his early appeals to Judah in the revival days of Josiah, and closing with his words to the nations. As to the actual order of his prophecies, the words of chapter 44 are the latest; but it was morally fitting that the messages to Judah and Israel should be given first, then those to the Gentiles. The order in the Septuagint varies considerably from that followed in the Hebrew, but it seems plain that in the Greek translation we have but a sample of mall's meddling, attempting to improve upon the divine order. The words with which the chapter closes are, in our judgment, meant to inform us that Jeremiah was his own editor. He, by the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit, arranged his books in the order we have in our Bibles. A later hand, equally inspired by God, added the Historical Appendix that follows.

~ end of chapter 25 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
