

The Disgrace Trade-Place

Jeremiah 51:51 - 57

Purpose: To rest in God's fixed purpose to recompense evil.

Nutshell: God assured His people in Jeremiah's time that Babylon would be paid back, especially for the disgraces she had heaped on the Temple. In the short term, Babylon was protected because she was housing God's people. When Persia quietly overtook Babylon, the next generation of Israel was ready to travel back to the Land.

Final Babylon will be utterly destroyed, having accumulated great judgment over the centuries. Our greatest danger, though, is participating in Spiritual Babylon.

I. Context: Prophecies against the nations and Babylon.

II. Text

Jer 51:51 We have been ashamed, for we heard disgrace, || Dishonor has covered our faces, || For strangers have come upon the consecrated *places* of the house of YHWH.

Literal 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. גְּבִל, *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 head of gold in Daniel 2, 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 book of the Bible are we studying today?
Who was the king of Babylon in Jeremiah's time?

- 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 **B**abylon's capture
 2. 50:4-8, God will return straying Israel from **B**abylon
 3. 50:9-16, **B**abylon's fate for opposing God
 4. 50:17-20, God will be finished punishing Israel & Judah
 5. 50:21-32, **B**abylon 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, **Babylon** will *receive* what she *did* to Judah
11. 51:34-58, **Israel**'s **ADVOCATE** will guide **Babylon**'s fall
12. 51:59-64, Read this in **Babylon** & 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.

Kid-speak: How many Babylons are there in the Bible? 4. Which one has always been around and is still around today? Spiritual Babylon. Which one are we in? Spiritual Babylon. When God saves us, He's taking us out of Spiritual Babylon.

G. 51:51, Israel's shame brings us back to Jeremiah's present day

1. As in 50:7 and 51:5b. 50:33 is similar.
2. Revenge for the Temple's destruction takes us back to 50:28
 - a. Babylon was building a cumulative account that God would pay back
 - b. That's why it's important to see Babylon as a continuing entity, with its 3 main geographical outcroppings
3. 51:51 is how Israel was *supposed* to respond to the Temple's ransacking and destruction
 - a. Though we see that it carried only temporary weight for the Jews left in the land, Jer 39-45. They *weren't* ashamed to dishonor God again.
 - b. Ezekiel shows us that the Jews in Babylon fared no better at first
 - c. But after 70 years, Nehemiah led back a humbled people, truly ashamed of what they had brought on the Temple, ready to rebuild it.

- H. They had “heard disgrace.” Most of them were already captured and unable to witness the Temple’s ransacking and destruction firsthand
1. “Dishonor” had “covered” their “faces,” indicating that when you looked at them, that’s what you’d see
 - a. Jeremiah wrote this for the Jews who would finally acknowledge their guilt in captivity
 - b. Just as Psalms confessing sin are only for the repentant
 2. The “consecrated *places*” is a form of the word for “holy”
 - a. In the singular, it is used mostly of the Tabernacle and Temple, as well as of dwelling with God generally/ spiritually, Isa 8:14
 - b. In the plural, as here, it also used of the component parts of the Temple, Lev 21:23
 - c. When they would finally feel shame, they would think regretfully of each part of the Temple, “the consecrated places of the house of Yahweh” that had been defiled: the Candelabra, the Table of Bread of the Presence, the Altar of Incense, the Bronze Laver, etc.

Kid-speak: What was the big thing Nebuchadnezzar did against God? He destroyed God’s Temple.

- I. Babylon’s shame is the one that was most recently noted, 51:47

Jer 51:52 For this reason, behold *the* coming days!” || A declaration of YHWH, || “And I have visited her carved *images*, || And the wounded one groans in all her land.

- J. “For this reason, behold, *the* coming days! A declaration of Yahweh” is a Hebrew phrase that occurs 7x, all in Jeremiah. This is the only time it is about Babylon
- K. God describes a 2-pronged consequence:
1. The carved images will be shown as their lifeless, un-saving selves
 2. The people will suffer from the battle
 - a. A single wounded person is pictured, representing the many throughout the land
 - b. Suffering quarantines us from others

Kid-speak: Why do people make statues to worship? Because *they* control the statues. In Christianity, who is in control? God.

Jer 51:53 Because Babylon ascends the heavens, || And because she fences off [isolates] the high place of her strength, || Ruffians come into her from Me," || A declaration of YHWH.

- L. The prevalent way to translate this is making “because,” “though” both times. A slight shift of meaning.
- M. Note Babylon’s age-old offensive-defensive strategy, as typified at Babel
 1. Babel built *upwards*, aggressively challenging God
 2. Babel *gathered into one place*, thinking to protect herself in isolation
 3. Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon used the same components a bit differently. Insanely high walls (320 feet, 56 mis. long, 80 ft. thick) (The highest part of the Great Wall is 46 ft.), enclosing and isolating the great city.
 4. This is Man at his ‘finest’: challenging God
- N. “Ascending” the “heavens” is an action Satan took as well
 1. 1 of Satan’s 5 declarations was “ascending the heavens”
 2. Hence, Babylon was following Satan’s lead
 - a. Man’s spirit was adaptable to a Satanic spirit, and, in the Fall, we adopted it
 - b. Meaning that we, like Satan, rejected God’s place for us

Kid-speak: What did Babylon do that Satan had said he would do? Go up high in the heavens. Satan wanted to be just as powerful as God. So did Babylon.

- O. Note the cause and effect: because of Babylon’s digging in to protect her arrogance, God’s just reaction was to infiltrate her protections, bringing her low
 1. Babylon strongly raised herself. Strong armies would bring her down
 2. Sin is the strongest cause for man. Its effect is fixed. Payment is required.

Jer 51:54 “A sound of an outcry from Babylon! || And of a great breakage from the land of the Chaldean.

- P. Babylon was the city and the Chaldeans were the people. The words are paired 8x in Jer 50-51
- Q. The outcry and breaking sounds are *prophesied* ones: i.e., just stop and reflect on it, for it will occur
1. Considering Babylon in that day, this was asking a lot
 2. The 539 B.C. fall of Babylon *would* be surprising, but there would be no breaking, burning, or even military sounds. It was a very quiet takeover.
 3. But Babylon over the centuries will have earned a violent payback for her own violence in the earth (Rev 17:16)

Kid-speak: Jeremiah talks about sounds that hadn't happened yet. Why did he do that? Because they were sounds of Babylon falling, and it helps us think, "Yes, Babylon will really fall, just like Satan will."

Jer 51:55 For YHWH is assaulting Babylon, || and He has terminated *the* great noise from her, || And their waves have clamored as many waters, || Their voice has produced [given] an uproar.

- R. "Assaulting" is a theme in this paragraph, 48, 53 (ruffians), 56
- S. "Noise/voice/sound" (Heb. קוֹל, *qol*) is the dominant idea in v 54-55
1. Babylon is ordinarily busy and noisy, 55b
 2. God will bring that business and its noise to a halt, 55b
 3. Their last sound will be their outcry in defeat, 54a, 55d
- T. 55c & d suggests an intriguing analogy between ocean waves and sound waves (recognized in Jeremiah's day by echoes, for instance)
1. Babylon is seen as a body of water with waves
 2. But the agitation of battle will greatly multiply its energy (and anxiety)
- U. Notice that Yahweh is doing the assaulting. He's not just 'allowing' Babylon's enemies to do it. Though they attack freely and heartily, still, God is ultimately at the helm.

Kid-speak: What if an ocean dried up? Would there be any more waves? Babylon will be like an ocean without any waves.

Jer 51:56 For an assaulter has come in upon her—upon Babylon, || And her warriors have been captured, || Their bows have been broken, || For the God of recompenses - YHWH - *in order* to settle, He will *certainly* settle accounts.

- V. Having guaranteed the closing down of Babylon, God once again assures us that He hears our objections about Babylon's invulnerability
1. Therefore, He tells us how Babylon will be disabled. Is Babylon mighty? There will come mightier. God will prepare them, just as He did Babylon.
 2. This is God's special domain: recompense
 - a. His instinct for justice is as deep as He is
 - b. It is therefore backed by limitless power
 - c. But it is complemented by perfect wisdom. Babylon's power will keep pace with the world's history. Her end will accompany the world's.
 3. All humans (except wrongdoers) have a craving for the righting of wrongs
 - a. Most men lose heart. Christians wait.
 - b. Psalm 37. The meek will inherit the earth.
- W. "*In order* to settle, He will *certainly* settle accounts" is a Heb word-doubling for emphasis. It's the verb of *shalom* (peace)! To *shalom* is to bring to completion. Peace = wholeness.

Kid-speak: Would God be good if he just let bad people and bad angels get away with it? No. But will He pay them back? Yes.

Jer 51:57 And I have caused her officials to drink, || And her sages, her prefects, || And her governor, and her warriors, || And they have slept a perpetual sleep, || And they do not awaken - an affirmation of the King, || YHWH of Hosts [*is*] His Name.

- X. The point? The 'spell' God will put on Babylon will be so complete, they might as well fall to sleep as fall in battle
1. Who will fall? Whoever Israel might have considered indomitable: by list, by name.
 2. Who assures it? This unusually long valediction and signature (underlined) also occurs in Jer 46:18 of Egypt and in 48:15 of Moab

3. No need to assure God, “OK, I get it! I get it!” He’ll say, “Then why still all the worry and frustration? Why no perfect peace?”
- Y. “They do not awaken.” When God puts out of commission, He can make it permanent
 1. No coming back into this life, where we defined ourselves.
 2. No coming back from the Second Death either.

Kid-speak: Are bad people hurting God’s people somewhere in the world? Yes. Every day. Will they be able to get away with that? No.

IV. Conviction (2 Tim 4:2, “Convince, rebuke”): **What have I done wrong?**
How have I lost righteousness?

Do I believe that God cares about the disgrace that unbelievers heap on me?

V. Correction/ Realignment (2 Tim 4:2, “Exhort/encourage”):

How will I correct my error? How will I regain uprightness?

I will bear the shame of Christ’s name. I mean men only good. Their hatred of God is on their own heads.

VI. Schooling in Righteousness: **How will I avoid the error and follow Christ?**

If God’s name is my chief concern, my wellbeing will be His chief concern.

Wrap-up: God’s vengeance centered on His Temple.

We are God’s temple, 1 Cor 3:16-17.

Protection for the temple begins at home, 1 Thess 4:6.

Lips are the most easily defiled part of the temple, Jms 3:2, 6.

If we honor God with our spirits, bodies, and lips (2 Cor 7:1), God’s fatherly care will not depart from us (2 Cor 6:17-18).