

Jeremiah 50:21-46 Vengeance For His Temple Falls Ch. AM 8/6/2023

Think of a teeter-totter on a playground. A long board with one child sitting on one end, and another child sitting on the other end, with a balance point in the middle. When one child goes down, the other child goes up.

That is how this passage is set up. When God's enemy Babylon goes down, God's own people go up. There is a double reversal, meaning that there is one reversal for Babylon and a reversal for Israel, and the two reversals are tied together, just like a teeter totter.

The child who thought that he was on top of the world, suddenly finds himself at the level of the ground. And the child who was at the level of the ground, is suddenly celebrating an exhilarating take-off high into the air!

The LORD God opened His armory in order to exact vengeance against Babylon for destroying His temple.

The vengeance of God against Babylon results in the restoration of the exiles of God's own people.

1. God the Warrior opened His armory of wrath and vengeance. (v.21-32)

Starting in verse 21, the unnamed army of the North was authorized to proceed to attack Babylon. It is emphasized that the command comes from none other than God Himself, by the important phrase "...*all that I have commanded you.*" Beginning in verse 22, the battle against Babylon is shown vividly, and we are asked to imagine the noise of battle winning against Babylon? No one knows what that might sound like, because it has never happened! Babylon was always winning. In verse 23, there is a sarcastic taunt, as God was saying, 'I can hardly believe what has happened to Babylon!' Next, what would it sound like for the hammer to be broken? Then we are asked to imagine the destruction that we would see, as if a video camera were slowly scanning across the destruction. Babylon has become a horror. Babylon was "taken" or demolished. If Babylon asked why, then verse 24 answered Babylon, "...*because you opposed The LORD.*"

Beginning in verse 25, we saw The LORD Himself presented as a warrior, and He opened His armory in order to bring out weapons of His wrath against the Babylonians, who were also called the Chaldeans. The mention of grain and bulls in verses 26 and 27 shows that this destruction was like a spiritual sacrifice. God's temple had been attacked, so God must conduct religious war, a holy war.

In verse 28, the scene shifted focus, as if to say, "meanwhile..." The exiles got to flee from Babylon and finally escape from their 70 years in prison there. If Israel asked why, then verse 28 answered Israel, in order "...*to declare in Zion the vengeance of the LORD our God, vengeance for His temple.*" The exiles were suddenly back in Jerusalem, standing at the temple mount, grieving, and giving voice or talking about God's vengeance. This vengeance is in reply to the disdain

shown to the temple, the place where God made His presence known in Jerusalem. An attack on God's temple was viewed by God as an attack on God Himself.

Moving ahead to verse 29, God the attack activated archers using bows and arrows. The case was made how the punishment fit the crime – it was repayment “*according to her deeds,*” and “*according to all that she has done.*” What was that? She has “*proudly defied the LORD, the Holy One of Israel.*” Pride!

The result is shown in verse 30, that the young men who constituted the army fell in Babylon, unable to defend. The reason was their pride.

Verse 31 confirmed this in a poem, “*Behold I am against you, O proud one, declares the LORD God of hosts,*” and again in verse 32, “*The proud one shall stumble and fall...*” What happens to the other end of the teeter-totter?

2. God the Strong Redeemer freed His people with a sword from an enemy who wouldn't let God's people go (like Egypt all over again!) (v.33-39)

Verse 33, the LORD emphasized the low condition of His people – in need of rescue. It was not that they were constant slaves in chains, but they were also not free to leave, and not free to worship God as God had called them to do. Daniel and his 3 friends were good examples, as was reported over in the Book of Daniel. The exiles were closely watched, and were not allowed to even pray to the LORD God of Israel, but instead were commanded to worship the king of Babylon.

These captors in Babylon sounded just like previously famous captors in Egypt, back when God kept saying that classic phrase through Moses, “*Let My people go!*” Here in verse 33, “*all who took them captive have held them fast; they refuse to let them go.*”

In verse 34, the one who acted was their Redeemer. He is strong. The LORD of hosts is His name. See the teeter-totter rise for God's people. The God who at the start of the exile was the prosecuting attorney against His sinful people, now at the end of the exile has become their advocate, their defense attorney, who in verse 34, now even found to “*plead their cause.*” Our teeter-totter, this time applied not just to Israel, but to all nations, as we were told that the LORD was pleading the legal case, so that He can “*...give rest to the earth, but unrest to the inhabitants of Babylon.*”

How will God plead that legal case? With a sword! From verse 35-39, the LORD brandished a sword. It began in verse 35, “*A sword against the Chaldeans, declares the LORD, and against the inhabitants of Babylon...*”

What follows we could call an ode to a sword! The phrase kept getting repeated, “*a sword against...*” showing God's power. The sword has no verbs, no context, no nation, no army, nor any human weapon. It was a supernatural sword.

In verses 35, 36, and 37, God called for His sword to attack those in charge of the previously unassailable empire, “*...her officials...her wise men...the diviners, her warriors, and even the foreign troops in her midst.*”

Then, in verses 37 and 38, the sword of The LORD will attack the army's horses, chariots, the nation's financial treasures and water supply, all for a valid spiritual reason - because "*it is a land of images, and they are mad over idols.*"

The result was in verse 39, God inverted the mighty and wealthy Babylon - famous for its Hanging Gardens - into a wilderness. Babylon became a haunt only of despicable scavengers, such as hyenas and ostriches.

The sword against Babylon was meant to remind us of the plagues against Egypt. Both the plagues in Egypt and the sword in Babylon were attacks by The LORD God of Israel that were large in scale, supernatural in type, unstoppable, and applied to the enemy while protecting God's own oppressed people nearby! Both the previous plagues against Egypt and now the supernatural sword against Babylon were applied until God's people were let go.

3. God the Destroyer will demolish severely (like Sodom and Gomorrah all over again!) (v.40-46)

Following on the closings statement of verse 39, that Babylon will only have desert creatures living in it, such as hyenas, we read "*She shall never again have people, nor be inhabited for all generations.*" Of what does that remind you? Sodom! In verse 40, God named another place, famous for coming under God's judgment and being rendered not just a wilderness, but a particularly desolate wilderness, and permanently so. Genesis chapters 18 and 19 tell us that Sodom and Gomorrah were prosperous cities whose sin had become very grave. Then Abraham famously interceded for Sodom. But the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire. Meanwhile, God made out of Abraham a great nation!

This is the third time in the book of Jeremiah that the comparison is made to Sodom, plus 4 times in Isaiah, 6 times in Ezekiel, 2 times in other prophets, 2 times in Deuteronomy, and 9 times in the New Testament. Consider this statement from Jesus in Matthew 11:24, speaking to cities in which Jesus preached, but did not repent, "*I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you.*"

In verses 41-46, there is a vision of an event as if it is unfolding before Jeremiah's eyes.

Verse 41 – a people from the north, which used to be Babylon, but were now a coalition of armies, led by the King of Persia, attacking Babylon from the North.

Verse 42 – their Cavalry, with many horses sounded like the sea.

Verse 43 – The king of Babylon became helpless with fear. Over in the Book of Daniel, chapter 5, we have this confirmed. The reaction of the king of Babylon on the eve of the Persian attack of the city. Remember how the king saw the writing on the wall – mene mene teqel parsin? The king fell into extreme distress, and his stomach was tied in knots until the LORD untied the knots and he lost control of his kingdom at the same moment that he lost control of his most

basic bodily functions. Remember what he had been drinking out of? Goblets from the temple of the LORD, taken from Jerusalem in the attacks and deportations! Again, the emphasis was God taking action in Vengeance for His Temple.

Verses 44-46, were a repeat of the imagery of the lion that we saw in chapter 49:19-21, of God the lion coming up out of the thickets of the Jordan River to attack Edom, and here to attack Babylon. God was the wild lion who would chase the inhabitants of civilization out in a flash. No leader or shepherd of sheep could resist the LORD. Back when Edom fell, the sound of their cry was to be heard at the Red Sea. However, when Babylon fell, we read here in verse 46, “...*her cry shall be heard among the nations.*” All nations of the earth must take note and get the message that since such a great nation as Babylon has not been able to defend itself against the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, neither will any other nation be able to stand up under God’s Vengeance for His Temple.

Our teeter totter was prophetic of the cross. The sword fell on Jesus. The one place that we most clearly see simultaneously both the punishment of evil, and the salvation of God’s people at the same time, is the cross of Jesus Christ.

Just as God redeemed His people “*out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery,*” the picture of slavery to their sins, so also God redeemed His people from oppression in Babylon caused by their own sins. Both actions of our Redeemer are pointers to the redemption in Christ. Colossians 1:13-14, Christ “...*has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*” The downfall of evil is part of God’s plan for the whole world, and especially His church.

Conclusion:

1. Be thankful for Christ’s control of the teeter-totter!

This means be thankful for Christ’s 2 roles as a) Judge of the nations and b) His other role as Head over His Church, the Temple of God.

Remember how in verse 7 of Jeremiah chapter 50, the attacking army was told by the LORD to do “*all that I have commanded you*” in attacking Babylon? Well, what does the LORD Jesus Christ, the Head of His church, do with all the authority given to him in heaven and on earth? He commands us to go make disciples of all nations, and teach them to obey “*all that I have commanded you.*” The same phrase! The Greatest commandment to the church is given by the same LORD who commanded the overthrow and judgment of our enemies. Whenever we read or think about the judgment of God, let’s be thankful for the leadership of Christ over His church. He has commanded us what to believe, how to live. He has commanded our victory over sin, the devil, and the world. He has commanded that His gospel have victory in all the nations. Those who resist and oppose the Lord Jesus Christ will always lose and always pay. Let us show our thankfulness by our

obedience to all that Christ has commanded us. Let us be thankful for Christ's vengeance for His temple, Christ's passion for His temple. The application to us is to be thankful that Our Redeemer is strong. Stronger than all the nations over which He has all authority in heaven and on earth. We are so thankful!

2. Be at rest in the LORD our Redeemer, because of His reversal.

Verse 34, our LORD God is giving rest to the earth, and unrest to His enemies. We are on the good end of the teeter-totter. We are down now, but we are going up to heaven.

God's plans for His judgment against sin at the cross is the same place that we see God's plans for salvation of us. Consider Acts 4:27-28, "*...truly in this city (Jerusalem!) there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, to do whatever YOUR hand and YOUR PLAN had predestined to take place.*" What did God's plan predestine to take place when Jesus was crucified at Jerusalem? Vengeance for His temple, His people, being filled with sin, and that sin being transferred to Jesus and then punished on the cross. Also, salvation for His people, His temple, when Jesus rose again and sent His Holy Spirit to live within His people, His temple. This was God's plan. This was God's reversal.

This same LORD God will vigorously defend us, for we are His temple!

Be at rest in the LORD our Redeemer, because of His reversal, when His covenant was fulfilled at the cross and the empty tomb.

Just as the LORD has purpose against Babylon here in verse 45, God has purpose for us, and in our favor. This is stated in a well-known verse in Jeremiah, in chapter 29:11, "*I know the plans I have for you, declares The LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.*"

Beware, O nations, how you treat the church of the LORD Jesus Christ. Be encouraged, O Church, no matter how evil the treatment you receive from any nation, Your God is watching, and He will redeem you while He also brings an end to all evil.