

Jeremiah 51

Read Jeremiah 51:1-3: Last week we described how Jeremiah recorded God's judgement on the nations affecting Israel. Chapters 50 and 51 were about Babylon. There were specifics about Babylon described elsewhere in the bible. We talked about how Babylon was God's *hammer to the nations*. Nebuchadnezzar began to believe that he was great on his own. God humbled Nebuchadnezzar to the point of becoming like a wild beast for seven years; when he began to think that this empire was built by his own power.

The king spoke, saying, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my might power and for the honor of my majesty?" ³¹ While the word was still in the king's mouth, a voice fell from heaven: "King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you! ³² And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses." ³³ That very hour the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar; he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws. (Daniel 4)

That lesson did not carry on to his grandson Belteshazzar. Belteshazzar began to mock God at a party.

Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and drank wine in the presence of the thousand. ² While he tasted the wine, Belshazzar gave the command to bring the gold and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple which had been in Jerusalem, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. ³ Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken from the temple of the house of God which had been in Jerusalem; and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. ⁴ They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone. ⁵ In the same hour the fingers of a man's hand appeared and wrote opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. ⁶ Then the king's countenance changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his hips were loosened and his knees knocked against each other..... This is the interpretation of each word. MENE: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; ²⁷ TEKEL: You

have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; ²⁸ PERES: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. (Daniel 5)

Man just cannot handle unchecked power. The word Chaldean (Leb Kamai) means ‘*the ones who rise up against me*’. We also talked about how Babylon was like Satan’s headquarters on earth, for multiple reasons.

Today, we will begin describing specifically how Babylon fell to the Medo Persians. Not only does God prophetically describe the fall of the most-powerful empire on earth well in advance. He also includes incredible details.

The first few verses describe the fall of Babylon like the process of how wheat is threshed (beaten and winnowed). Only the grain ‘berries’ are useful. The chaff is the inedible outer husk that must be removed and burned. God is now describing the now-useless Babylon like chaff being blown away by a great incoming wind. Wind, of course, relates to spiritual activity. Babylon accompanied God’s people until it was not needed.

These verses describe how Babylon somehow would not even effectively mobilize against this storming invasion. Babylon was impenetrable. Their defeat was supernatural. The fall of Babylon was incredibly more prophetic in specific ways than some may realize. For starters, Isaiah wrote about a man named Cyrus the Great who would be born 150 years later. He would combine his Persian army with the Medes. Cyrus the Persian would defeat Babylon, and free the Jews to rebuild Jerusalem.

Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, And He who formed you from the womb: “I am the LORD, who makes all things, Who stretches out the heavens all alone, Who spreads abroad the earth by Myself; ²⁵ Who frustrates the signs of the babblers, And drives diviners mad; Who turns wise men backward, And makes their knowledge foolishness; ²⁶ Who confirms the word of His servant, And performs the counsel of His messengers; Who says to Jerusalem, ‘You shall be inhabited,’ To the cities of Judah, ‘You shall be built,’ And I will raise up her waste places; ²⁷ Who says to the deep, ‘Be dry! And I will dry up your rivers’; ²⁸ Who says of Cyrus, ‘He is My shepherd, And he shall perform all My pleasure, Saying to Jerusalem, “You shall be built,” And to the temple, “Your foundation shall be laid.”’” (Isaiah 44)

Beyond his predicted name and his exploits, God even told us how Cyrus would penetrate the impenetrable wall around Babylon. He had to cross a deep river. Additionally, the massive double-leaved gates would be left wide open!

"Thus says the LORD to His anointed, To Cyrus, whose right hand I have held—
To subdue nations before him And loose the armor of kings, To open before him
the double doors, So that the gates will not be shut: ² 'I will go before you And
make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze And
cut the bars of iron. ³ I will give you the treasures of darkness And hidden riches
of secret places, That you may know that I, the LORD, Who call you by your
name, Am the God of Israel. ⁴ For Jacob My servant's sake, And Israel My elect,
I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not
known Me. ⁵ I am the LORD, and there is no other; There is no God besides Me. I
will gird you, though you have not known Me, (Isaiah 45)

Babylon was conquered in 539 BC. The first phase of the fall of Babylon began with The Battle of Opis. This was where the Medo Persians met and defeated the Babylonian army in a suburb outside of the city of Babylon. Next, Cyrus dug canals flowing away from the Diyala River, just before it connected to the Tigris River (upstream from Babylon). He was able to siphon down the 30'-deep river to a 2-3' deep minimal flow. This river acted like a moat around Babylon, protecting the city fortress.

"A drought is upon her waters, and they will be dried up. (Jeremiah 50)

The King of Babylon had a private prophecy that freaked him out the night before. He was essentially in the middle of mocking God. The leaders of Babylon were so disconnected and confident that they were throwing a party while all of this was going on. Cyrus was able to capture the king (Belshazzar/Nabonidus) escaping and abandoning his people.

As the Medo Persian force approached the great walled city, the river was nearly empty, and the Ishtar Gate was left wide open, just like the prophecy said it would be.



Shockingly, the Babylonians inside of the walled city knew nothing about how the surrounding suburbs had already fallen to Cyrus. They also did not know about their king escaping for his life earlier that day. This chapter describes the total surprise attack, that could have been easily repelled for a long time with this city fortress. Presumably, only Daniel knew what was going to happen.

The entry through the unlocked Ishtar Gate was amazing. It was symbolic of God walking through the Babylonian deity hall of fame. The **Ishtar Gate** was the eighth gate to the inner city of Babylon on the north side of the city. It was part of a grand walled processional way leading into the city. It was considered to be a wonder to the ancient world.

The original structure was a double gate with a smaller frontal gate and a larger and more grandiose secondary posterior section.^[2] The walls were finished in glazed bricks mostly in blue,

with animals and deities (also made up of colored bricks) in low relief at intervals. The gate was 15 meters high, and the original foundations extended another 14 meters underground

King Nebuchadnezzar II ordered the construction of the gate and dedicated it to the Babylonian goddess Ishtar. The gate was constructed using glazed brick with alternating rows of bas-relief *mušḫuššu* (dragons), aurochs (bulls), and lions, symbolizing the gods Marduk, Adad, and Ishtar respectively.



Read Jeremiah 51:4-63: God is basically saying that the fall of the greatest world empire of all times is a byproduct of God's disciplining Israel and Judah. The reconciliation of God to his people will bring severe retribution to any who threaten. Babylon's army will be destroyed. Babylon will be emptied.

God told his people to expect somebody named Cyrus to come along and free them and help them rebuild. Now he's telling them to get out of town quickly. There will not be many survivors.

God allows whomever wants to drink from the tempting golden cup of wickedness who wants to. Men and women lost hope in God, and they envied the rich and powerful Chaldeans. They sold their soul to be included in the gigantic colossus. Now the circus tent is coming down, and the clowns are not going to survive.

God is specifying that the Medes will take down Babylon. He goes on to provide a lot of details here and elsewhere. The scriptures are jam packed with more fulfilled prophecy than people realize.