

Will Literal Babylon Rise Again?

Lesson #33 Sept. 16, 2020

Study the OT prophets > you discover 3 strands of truth weave their messages together:

- Past Sin The nation has disobeyed God's law.
- Present Responsibility The people must repent or God will send judgment.
- Future Hope The Lord will come one day and establish His glorious kingdom.

The Lord gave Jeremiah a tragic message of judgment for the nation of Israel. Jeremiah encouraged the people of Judah to surrender and not fight because God had purposed to deliver them into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. So dangerous was this message that people hearing it called Jeremiah a traitor. He was accused of weakening the morale of the soldiers and he was placed in prison. He would be misunderstood, persecuted, arrested, and imprisoned—and more than once, his life was in danger.

The nation did not want to hear the truth, but Jeremiah told them plainly:

- They were defying the Lord, disobeying the law, and destined for judgment.

Nebuchadnezzar had shown great favor to Jeremiah because Jeremiah had prophesied that Nebuchadnezzar would conquer Judah. "When you conquer them, treat Jeremiah well. Give him... Tell him if he wants to come to Babylon, we'll set him up there. Or if he wants to stay, let him do whatever he wants and give him enough to live on."

But Jeremiah is true to God. Now he must prophesy a horrible destruction that is coming against Babylon, thinking, "Wow, Nebuchadnezzar would get angry with me for this one."

Yet Jeremiah is honest before God. When the scroll is finished, he will send it to Babylon to have it read to the captives. He is faithful to the Word that God has given to him. No matter...

Consider: Christians who are immersed in the culture are reluctant to speak TRUTH because they do not want to offend anyone. Many are content to affirm people living in their sin.

Max Stirner: We don't call it sin today. We call it self-expression.

Prayer: May I be faithful to the Word of God. Though TRUTH may hurt, speak it forth.

God gave Jeremiah 3 promises to prepare him. Two of the promises were in a vision.

1. The Almond Tree: God's Word Will Be Fulfilled. Jer. 1:11-12

I see the branch of a ready [shaqed] tree...You have seen well for I am ready [shaqad] to perform My Word. [Hebrew rendering]

The almond tree announces the coming of spring. When we see it, we know for certain spring is coming. We can also be assured that the Word of God will be fulfilled.

2. The Boiling Pot: God's Wrath Is Coming. Jer. 1:13-16

I said, I see a seething pot; and the face thereof is toward the north.

Note: The pot was tilted from the north. It would spill the boiling content to the south over the land of Judah. Babylon's army came from the east of Judah. They needed to go to the north following the Euphrates River to avoid the desert. They would attack Israel from the north.

People in Judah had 2 options before the threat: Keep On Sinning Or Repent. Depending on their decision, Jeremiah's message would either "destroy and throw down," or "build and plant." The Lord was preparing Babylon in the north to be His servant to chasten His people. When Jeremiah began his ministry, Assyria, not Babylon, was the dominant power in the Near East. No doubt many of the political experts thought Jeremiah foolish to worry about Babylon in the north. But the people of Judah lived to see Assyria defeated and Egypt crippled as Babylon rose to power and Jeremiah's words came true.

God singled out Israel's sin of idolatry [Jer. 1:16—forsaking the true God and worshipping the gods they had made with their own hands.]

The false prophets flourished in a ministry that was shallow and popular because they promised peace and never called for repentance [Jer. 5:12-13; 8:11-12; 14:13-22].

When a nation turns from worshipping the true God, its people begin to exploit one another.

The rich oppressed the poor and the courts would not defend the rights of the oppressed.

[2:34-35; 5:26-31; 7:1-11]. Yet these evil rulers and judges went to the temple faithfully and pretended to be devoted to Jehovah! They made the temple "a den of robbers" [7:11].

God's judgement would fall due to the sin of idolatry.

3. The city, pillar, and wall: God will protect His servant [Jer. 1:17-19].

Ps. 34:7 The angel of the LORD encamps round about them that fear him and delivers them.

In order to run or work easily, men in that day had to tie their loose robes together with a belt [I Kings 18:46; II Kings 4:29]. "Gird up your loins" [Jer. 1:17] meant "Get ready for action!"

"Tighten your belt! Roll up your sleeves!" "Gird up the loins of your mind" [I Peter 1:13] means "Pull your mind together and have the right mental attitude in view of our Lord's return."

God told Jeremiah he must not be afraid of the people who would oppose him, because God would defend him. Surrounded by his enemies, the prophet would become a fortified city they couldn't subdue. Forced to stand alone, Jeremiah would become as strong as an iron pillar.

Attacked on all sides by kings, princes, priests, and people, he would be as unyielding as a bronze wall. "I am with you to deliver you" was God's reliable promise.

- ❖ In the battle for truth, one with God is a majority. It isn't easy to stand alone, to resist the crowd, and to be out of step with the philosophies and values of the times.

Jeremiah devoted 121 verses to the future of nine nations and 44 verses to the defeat and destruction of Jerusalem. However, he devoted 110 verses to the fall of Babylon.

Jeremiah's prophecies are notable because they were delivered at the peak of Babylon's power when it seemed most unlikely that the great nation would fall.

In Scripture, the city of Babylon [300x in Bible] is contrasted with the city of Jerusalem.

- The proud city of man versus the Holy City of God.

Babylon is a symbol of rebellion against God, the earthly city of human splendor opposing the heavenly city that glorifies God. All this culminates in the Babylon of Revelation 17:1— 18:24, "Babylon the Great" that symbolizes the anti-God system that controls the world in the end times and then is destroyed by the Lord.

Belief: God's prophetic Word declares the ancient city of Babylon [mentioned over 300x in the Bible] will be rebuilt as a great commercial center in modern day Iraq [Rev. 17-18]

Babylon, founded by the first world dictator, Nimrod, may well be destined to be the capital and headquarters of the final world dictator, the Antichrist.

Many scoff at the idea of Babylon being rebuilt. However, many well-respected Bible teachers held and taught this view long before Iraq became an independent nation in 1932.

[J.A. Seiss, 1823; George Pember, 1888; Clarence Larkin, 1919; Arthur Pink, 1923; William Newell, 1935] None of these men could possibly have dreamed that Iraq, the land of ancient Babylon, would move to the center of the world stage.

Yet they believed what they saw in the Scriptures.

We know Mesopotamia, the land between the rivers, is the "cradle of civilization" where it all began. The Bible tells us that man's history in this age will also end in this area.

When God created Adam, the Bible says God placed him in the Garden of Eden. [Gen. 2:8]

One of the fascinating features of this garden was it was watered by a river which divided into 4 other tributaries. [Gen. 2:10-11, 13-15]. Two of the divisions are the Tigris and Euphrates.

The Bible clearly places man's beginning in Mesopotamia, the land between the rivers.

After the Flood, man again returned to the Tigris-Euphrates valley. Man went back to Babel.

Nimrod and his followers started their rebellion against God there.

The Bible says man will do it again. However, God will come to destroy the city once and for all.

Babylon will rise again but it will ultimately fall never to rise again.

Babylon, the cradle, will become the grave.

The Scriptures speak of two Babylons: Ancient Babylon and Mystery Babylon. The ancient city of Babylon began shortly after the Flood, as a direct act of rebellion against God. The city of Babylon has sunk beneath the sands of time during the past 1700 years, but never has it been subject to catastrophic destruction. However, Jeremiah 50 and 51, and Revelation 17 and 18, both deal with the final and complete destruction of Babylon. Therefore, Babylon must be rebuilt on a grand scale so the prophecies can be fulfilled regarding its utter destruction.

No city in human history will ever have such a meteoric rise as "New" Babylon. The world will look on in awe as the city rises from the ashes of time to take her place on the world stage. She will shine as one of man's crowning achievements.

Warning: Do not confuse the FALL of Babylon in history with the DESTRUCTION of Babylon as prophesied in the Bible.

Remember: Many Bible prophecies have a NEAR and a FAR fulfillment.

Debate: Will the literal city of Babylon be rebuilt in modern day Iraq?

Prophecies: Babylon of Chaldea Will Rise Again

There are unfilled Biblical prophecies regarding a future Babylon. For them to be fulfilled, a literal Babylon must rise up again just as Israel rose up again to fulfill the prophecies of the Jewish return to the LAND in the last days.

Important: The final destruction of Babylon must fulfill these Biblical prophecies.

- IF these prophecies were fulfilled with the fall of ANCIENT Babylon, THEN Babylon will not rise again because Babylon was finished.
- But IF these prophecies were NOT fulfilled in the fall of ancient Babylon, THEN Babylon must rise again to fulfill these prophecies.

Jeremiah 50 is an incredible passage of Scripture that foretells the fall of Babylon, a nation that in Jeremiah's day was not only the most powerful the world had ever witnessed, but which seemed invincible in its day.

Judgment Of Babylon: Jeremiah 50-51

God speaks to and about Babylon; to the invading army; and He speaks to the exiles of Judah.

Three movements are in this declaration:

- ❖ God declares war on Babylon 50:1-28
- ❖ God assembles the armies against Babylon 50:29— 51:26
- ❖ God announces victory over Babylon 51: 27-58

Jeremiah's prophecy about Babylon has both a near and a far fulfillment.

Babylon will experience a FALL and will ultimately experience a FINAL DESTRUCTION.

Jer. 50:1-28 God Declares War on Babylon

50:1 Declare ye among the nations, and publish, and set up a standard; publish, and conceal not: Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, Merodach is broken in pieces; her idols are confounded, her images are broken in pieces.

The word translated "idols" means "wooden blocks," and the word translated "images" means "dung pellets." The Lord didn't think much of their gods! The invaders would come from the north just as Nebuchadnezzar came from the north to conquer Judah [1:11-15].

Jer. 50:4-10 God speaks to and about the Jews.

He saw them as lost sheep without a shepherd, a flock greatly abused both by their leaders and their captors. While the immediate application is to the return of the exiles from Babylon, the ultimate reference includes the gathering of the Jews in the latter days.

God warned the people to flee from Babylon so as not to be caught in the judgment that would fall. [Isa. 48:20; Rev. 18:4]

Jer. 50:11-13 God speaks to Babylon: Why God will destroy this great empire.

- The Babylonians were glad they could devastate and subjugate Judah.
- Yes, Babylon was God's tool to chasten His sinful people, but the Babylonians went too far and enjoyed it too much.

Jer. 50:14-16 God speaks to the invading armies.

Just as Babylon had been God's tool to chasten Judah, so the invaders [Cyrus, Medes/Persians and later Alexander with his Greek army] would be God's weapon to defeat Babylon.

God commanded the invading armies to get their weapons ready and shout for victory, because they would win the battle. This was no ordinary war; this was the "vengeance of the Lord."

Jer. 50:17-20 God speaks about the Jews

- The lions [Assyria had ravaged Israel, the northern kingdom, and Babylon had ravaged Judah, the southern kingdom, and scattered God's flock.
- The Kings of Assyria and Babylon were punished. [Jer. 50:9-16]
- The shepherds of Israel were punished. [Ezek. 34:17-22; Acts 20:28-29]

Note: Those acting as agents of the Devil are described as "lions."

Satan is described as a lion seeking someone to devour. [I Pet. 5:8]

- Although lions scatter the flock of God, He will execute judgment against those lions and restore His flock.

The prophet then looked down to the latter days when God will wipe away the nation's sins and establish His new covenant with them. We see the "two horizons" of prophecy again.

Jer. 50:20 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. [His remnant]

Jer. 50:21-27 God speaks to the invaders.

The Lord was in command of the invasion, and His orders were to be carried out explicitly.

Babylon the rod [Isa. 10:5] was itself shattered. Babylon was caught in God's trap and couldn't escape God's weapons. Their fine young men would be slaughtered like cattle, for the day of judgment for Babylon had come.

Jer. 50:28 The Jewish remnant speaks. They are the exiles who had fled Babylon and arrived in Judah to report the fall of Babylon.

Jer. 50:29 - 51:26 God Gathers the Armies against Babylon

The command: "Call together the archers!"

God ordered the armies of the Medes and Persians to shoot to kill and allow no one to escape.

Prophecy #1 From Jeremiah: Sudden & Violent Fall; It Will Be Final & Complete

Jer. 50:35, 39-40 A sword is upon the Chaldeans, saith the LORD, and upon the inhabitants of Babylon, and upon her princes, and upon her wise men. 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.

As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbor cities thereof, saith the LORD; so shall no man abide there [Babylon], neither shall any son of man dwell therein.

Isa. 13:19 And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.

Gen. 19:24-25 Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven; ²⁵ And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.

Gen. 19:27-28 And Abraham got up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the LORD: ²⁸ And he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace.

Clarence Larkin: "The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was not protracted through many centuries. Their glory disappeared in a few hours. As Ancient Babylon was not thus destroyed, the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah cannot be fulfilled unless there is to be a future Babylon that shall be thus destroyed."

Jer. 51:24-26 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.

²⁵ Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the LORD, which destroyest all the earth: and I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain.

²⁶ 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.

Jer. 50:26; 51:8-11 Jeremiah says that judgment will "utterly destroy her; let nothing be left of her." "Suddenly Babylon has fallen...Because His purpose is against Babylon to destroy it." HOWEVER, according to Daniel, this did not happen to ancient Babylon.

Daniel 5: The city was taken during a drunken feast hosted by king Belshazzar who seems to have been the only casualty. This night was NOT the final destruction of the city.

Interesting: There is a record inscribed by the Persian king Cyrus whose deputy Darius the Mede was the first to enter Babylon after the conquest in 539 BC by the Persians.

Cyrus entered the city shortly after as the conquering king. His record of the fall of Babylon is inscribed on the Cyrus Cylinder. [recovered by archaeology.]

Recall: Jeremiah's prophecy: Babylon's FINAL destruction will be sudden, violent and permanent.

Cyrus' Cylinder: "I entered Babylon in a peaceful manner. I took up my lordly abode in the royal palace amidst rejoicing and happiness...My vast army marched into Babylon in peace.

I did not permit anyone to frighten the people. I sought the welfare of the city."

Greek Historian Herodotus: Oct. 12, 539 BC Persian troops entered Babylon without a battle.

They diverted the Euphrates River into a canal upriver so the water level dropped "to the height of the middle of a man's thigh," which thus rendered the flood defenses useless and enabled the invaders to march through the river bed by night. ...The Persians came upon them [Babylon] by surprise and so took the city. Owing to the vast size of the place, the inhabitants of the central parts [as the residents at Babylon declare] long after the outer portions of the town were taken, knew nothing of what had happened, but as they were engaged in a festival, continued dancing and reveling until they learned of the capture with certainty."

When the Medes and Persians conquered the city, they came suddenly and gained immediate control, but they did not destroy the city. God used King Cyrus.

Ezra 1:2 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Cyrus issued a decree that the Jews could return to their land [Ezra 1:1-4], which many of them did in three stages: in 538 [Ezra 1—6], 458 [Ezra 7—10], and 444 [Nehemiah]. Cyrus the Mede beautified the city of Babylon in 540 B.C. Hundreds of years later many Jews still lived at Babylon and a Jewish Talmud originated from there. In the twelfth century A.D. Babylon had grown and several mosques had been erected. Later a city by the name of Hillah was built there. In 1900 it had a population of ten thousand. Since Babylon symbolizes the anti-God world system, the ultimate fulfillment of destruction is recorded in Revelation 17—18. Remember, the prophets often looked at “two horizons,” one near and one far, as they spoke and wrote about the future.

Prophecy #2: No Inhabitants Forever

God ordered the armies of the Medes and Persians to shoot to kill and allow no one to escape. Jer. 51:29 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.

- At the FINAL FALL, DESTRUCTION, there will never again be people living on its site.

Overview Of the History Of Babylon

Date	Event
539 BC	The Persians under King Cyrus Conquered Babylon in 539 BC, but the city wasn't destroyed. The Persians simply captured the city.
450 BC	Herodotus, father of History, visited Babylon. He described it in grand terms. He said the inner walls were 85' thick and 340' high, with 100 gates. Babylon was still a flourishing city of unbelievable grandeur.
323 BC	Alexander the Great visited the city and died there.
312 BC	After Alexander's death, his empire was divided among his 4 generals. One of them, Seleucus, seized Babylon in 312 BC.
25 BC	Strabo, famous geographer, visited Babylon. He described the Hanging Gardens as one of the Seven Wonders of the World.
35 AD	On the day of Pentecost there were Jews in Jerusalem from Babylon. Acts 2:8-10
64 AD	The apostle Peter wrote his first epistle from Babylon. I Pet. 5:13
95 AD	Babylon was still a viable city when the apostle John wrote Revelation. He mentions it in Rev. 17-18
500 AD	The Babylonian Talmud, a commentary on the Jewish law, was published from Babylon.

- A historical tracer points to continual habitation of some extent throughout history.
 - 539BC - 636 AD - Alexander the Great wanted Babylon to become the capital of his new empire. There was a Greek-Macedonian presence in Babylon, a well-preserved theatre in the area as well as a gymnasium and an agora.
 - Records show there were inhabitants in Babylon from the time of its fall in 539 BC until Alexander the Great took it from the Persians in 331 BC and from that point on until 636 AD.
 - 40 AD: Jewish historian Josephus: "Jewish high priest Hyrcanus was taken captive by the king of Parthia, who later "set him free from his bonds and gave him a habitation at Babylon, where there were Jews in great numbers."
 - 500-1300 AD The Jewish production and preservation of the Talmud in Babylon was active from the 6th century AD until the Middle Ages [8 centuries]
 - 1912 AD: Arabs were said to have inhabited Babylon for centuries.
 - 1979 to NOW: The Iraqi Antiquities Dept. began a major excavation and restoration project in Babylon.

Jer. 51:62 Then shalt thou 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 forever.

Both Isaiah and Jeremiah prophesy that Babylon will be so completely destroyed that the city will never be dwelt in again. NOTHING like this has ever happened.

People continued to live in the city for over a millennium after their prophecies.

Conclusion: Babylon must rise again to fulfill the prophecy that its destruction would be sudden, violent, final and complete.

Babylon must rise again to fulfill this prophecy of No Inhabitants Forever!

Jer. 50:31-51:4 God speaks to Babylon

- 50:32-32 He told them He was against them because of their pride
- 50:33 Because of the way they had made the Jews suffer unnecessarily

The exiles couldn't free themselves, but their Strong Redeemer would free them.

Plead their Cause: Court Case

- Jehovah was defense attorney, judge, and jury, and He found Babylon guilty.

God warned the nations, Israel's "Redeemer is strong; the LORD of hosts is his name: He shall thoroughly plead [the cause of His people] and in that day the "inhabitants of Babylon" will be terrified [Jer. 50:34).

Ps. 33:11 The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.

Prov. 19:21 Many are the plans [devices] in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.