

Jeremiah

Chapter 50

Judgment on Babylon

The word that the LORD spoke concerning Babylon, concerning the land of the Chaldeans, by Jeremiah the prophet: 2 “Declare among the nations and proclaim, set up a banner and proclaim, conceal it not, and say: ‘Babylon is taken, Bel is put to shame, Merodach is dismayed. Her images are put to shame, her idols are dismayed.’ 3 “For out of the north a nation has come up against her, which shall make her land a desolation, and none shall dwell in it; both man and beast shall flee away. 4 “In those days and in that time, declares the LORD, the people of Israel and the people of Judah shall come together, weeping as they come, and they shall seek the LORD their God. 5 They shall ask the way to Zion, with faces turned toward it, saying, ‘Come, let us join ourselves to the LORD in an everlasting covenant that will never be forgotten.’ 6 “My people have been lost sheep. Their shepherds have led them astray, turning them away on the mountains. From mountain to hill they have gone. They have forgotten their fold. 7 All who found them have devoured them, and their enemies have said, ‘We are not guilty, for they have sinned against the LORD, their habitation of righteousness, the LORD, the hope of their fathers.’ 8 “Flee from the midst of Babylon, and go out of the land of the Chaldeans, and be as male goats before the flock. 9 For behold, I am stirring up and bringing against Babylon a gathering of great nations, from the north country. And they shall array themselves against her. From there she shall be taken. Their arrows are like a skilled warrior who does not return empty-handed. 10 Chaldea shall be plundered; all who plunder her shall be sated, declares the LORD. 11 “Though you rejoice, though you exult, O plunderers of my heritage, though you frolic like a heifer in the pasture, and neigh like stallions, 12 your mother shall be utterly shamed, and she who bore you shall be disgraced. Behold, she shall be the last of the nations, a wilderness, a dry land, and a desert. 13 Because of the wrath of the LORD she shall not be inhabited but shall be an utter desolation; everyone who passes by Babylon shall be appalled, and hiss because of all her wounds. 14 Set yourselves in array against Babylon all around, all you who bend the bow; shoot at her, spare no arrows, for she has sinned against the LORD. 15 Raise a shout against her all around; she has surrendered; her bulwarks have fallen; her walls are thrown down. For this is the vengeance of the LORD: take vengeance on her; do to her as she has done. 16 Cut off from Babylon the sower, and the one who handles the sickle in time of harvest; because of the sword of the oppressor, every one shall turn to his own people, and every one shall flee to his own land. 17 “Israel is a hunted sheep driven away by lions. First the king of Assyria devoured him, and now at last Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has gnawed his bones. 18 Therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I am bringing punishment on the king of Babylon and his land, as I punished the king of Assyria. 19 I will restore Israel to his pasture, and he shall feed on Carmel and in Bashan, and his desire shall be satisfied on the hills of Ephraim and in Gilead. 20 In those days and in that time, declares the LORD, iniquity shall be sought in Israel, and there shall be none, and sin in Judah, and none shall be found, for I will pardon those whom I leave as a remnant. 21 “Go up against the land of Merathaim, and against the inhabitants of Pekod. Kill, and devote them to destruction, declares the LORD, and do all that I have commanded you. 22 The noise of battle is in the land, and great destruction! 23 How the hammer of the whole earth is cut down and broken! How Babylon has become a horror among the nations! 24 I set a snare for you and you were taken, O Babylon, and you did not know it; you were found and caught, because you opposed the LORD. 25 The LORD has opened his armory and brought out the weapons of his wrath, for the Lord GOD of hosts has a work to do in the land of the Chaldeans. 26 Come against her from every quarter; open her granaries; pile her up like heaps of grain, and devote her to destruction; let nothing be left of her. 27 Kill all her bulls; let them go down to the slaughter. Woe to them, for their day has come, the time of their punishment.

28 “A voice! They flee and escape from the land of Babylon, to declare in Zion the vengeance of the LORD our God, vengeance for his temple. 29 “Summon archers against Babylon, all those who bend the bow. Encamp around her; let no one escape. Repay her according to her deeds; do to her according to all that she has done. For she has proudly defied the LORD, the Holy One of Israel. 30 Therefore her young men shall fall in her squares, and all her soldiers shall be destroyed on that day, declares the LORD. 31 “Behold, I am against you, O proud one, declares the Lord GOD of hosts, for your day has come, the time when I will punish you. 32 The proud one shall stumble and fall, with none to raise him up, and I will kindle a fire in his cities, and it will devour all that is around him. 33 “Thus says the LORD of hosts: The people of Israel are oppressed, and the people of Judah with them. All who took them captive have held them fast; they refuse to let them go. 34 Their Redeemer is strong; the LORD of hosts is his name. He will surely plead their cause, that he may give rest to the earth, but unrest to the inhabitants of Babylon. 35 “A sword against the Chaldeans, declares the LORD, and against the inhabitants of Babylon, and against her officials and her wise men! 36 A sword against the diviners, that they may become fools! A sword against her warriors, that they may be destroyed! 37 A sword against her horses and against her chariots, and against all the foreign troops in her midst, that they may become women! A sword against all her treasures, that they may be plundered! 38 A drought against her waters, that they may be dried up! For it is a land of images, and they are mad over idols. 39 “Therefore wild beasts shall dwell with hyenas in Babylon, and ostriches shall dwell in her. She shall never again have people, nor be inhabited for all generations. 40 As when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighboring cities, declares the LORD, so no man shall dwell there, and no son of man shall sojourn in her. 41 “Behold, a people comes from the north; a mighty nation and many kings are stirring from the farthest parts of the earth. 42 They lay hold of bow and spear; they are cruel and have no mercy. The sound of them is like the roaring of the sea; they ride on horses, arrayed as a man for battle against you, O daughter of Babylon! 43 “The king of Babylon heard the report of them, and his hands fell helpless; anguish seized him, pain as of a woman in labor. 44 “Behold, like a lion coming up from the thicket of the Jordan against a perennial pasture, I will suddenly make them run away from her, and I will appoint over her whomever I choose. For who is like me? Who will summon me? What shepherd can stand before me? 45 Therefore hear the plan that the LORD has made against Babylon, and the purposes that he has formed against the land of the Chaldeans: Surely the little ones of their flock shall be dragged away; surely their fold shall be appalled at their fate. 46 At the sound of the capture of Babylon the earth shall tremble, and her cry shall be heard among the nations.”

50:1–51:64 See Isa 13:1–14:23; 21:1–9. Jeremiah’s prophecy concerning Babylon is by far the longest of his oracles against foreign nations (chs. 46–51) and expands on his earlier and briefer statements (see 25:12–14, 26). Its date, in whole or in part, is 593 B.C. The two chapters divide into three main sections (50:2–28; 50:29–51:26; 51:27–58), each of which begins with a summons concerning war against Babylon, Judah’s mortal enemy (see 50:2–3; 50:29–32; 51:27–32). (CSB)

Oracles spoken against the Babylonian Empire (50:1). Jeremiah draws concentric circles around a central topic: the destruction of Babylon—the necessary preliminary to the restoration of exiled Israel. Jeremiah announced the grim fate of the Babylonians five years before they captured Jerusalem (cf 51:59). Jeremiah spoke in retrospect of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple as an event that happened in the past and was foretold by him in advance. In prophetic vision, he also looked far beyond current events to the founding of the messianic reign centuries later. (TLSB)

50:1 *word.* Or “message” (as in 46:13), comprising chs. 50–51. (CSB)

by. See 37:2. The message would eventually be sent by the prophet to Babylon itself (see 51:59–61). (CSB)

It seems that the various prophecies against Babylon were collected at this time, to be sent as one message, partly to pronounce the doom of the oppressor, chap. 25, 12, partly to console the captive Jews and to remind them of the eventual end of their captivity. (Kretzmann)

The Babylonian Empire was subject to God's eternal purpose. It emerged on the scene when He needed "a servant" (25:9; 27:6; 43:10) to punish His apostate people. It sank beneath the sands of time because it sinned against the Lord (50:14), pursuing its own selfish interest and thus opposing the coming of the kingdom of God. (TLSB)

50:2 *declare...proclaim*. This means to call the attention of all men to the importance and the significance of this announcement. (Kretzmann)

set up a banner. The Hebrew for this phrase is translated "raise the signal" in 4:6. (CSB)

Babylon is taken. Fulfilled in 539 B.C. (CSB)

Babylon's trust in false gods was in vain. (TLSB)

Merodach. Hbr spelling of the Babylonian Marduk; appears in the names Merodach-baladan and Evil-merodach (2Ki 20:12; 25:27). (TLSB)

put to shame. The repetition of each of these phrases emphasizes that the chief god of Babylon and his images and idols are alike doomed. (CSB)

Her. Babylon's. (CSB)

idols. Lit. "little pellets of dung." Derogatory references concerning idols and idolatry are common in the OT (see, e.g., Isa 44:9–20). (CSB)

50:3 *out of the north*. In Jeremiah, the foe from the north is almost always Babylon (see, e.g., 1:14–15). Here, however, the reference is probably to Persia. Babylon's nemesis is expanded to "an alliance of great nations" in v. 9, specified by name in 51:27–28. (CSB)

Babylon, the foe "from the north," was to become the victim of invaders coming from the same direction, the Medes (51:11, 28). (TLSB)

make her land a desolation – The city of Babylon, left intact by Cyrus the Mede at the time of its capture, was later reduced to desolation. (TLSB)

50:6 *lost sheep*. See Jesus' parable in Lk 15:3–7. (CSB)

The people wandered from safety, pushed by unfaithful leaders. (TLSB)

shepherds. Rulers. (CSB)

The very men who were entrusted with their care are guilty of this gross neglect. (Kretzmann)

mountain to hill. Places where pagan gods were worshiped. (CSB)

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50:7 *not guilty*. This claim of innocence is refuted in 2:3. (TLSB)

their habitation of righteousness. Mount Zion, their sheepfold, from which they strayed. (TLSB)

Their adversaries felt that they incurred no guilt, that they were, in fact, justified in taking advantage of the children of Israel. (Kretzmann)

50:8 *as male goats before the flock.* Judah would be among the first of the captive peoples to be released from exile in Babylon. (CSB)

50:9 *great nations.* Medes and Persians dwelt in the mountains north and east of Babylon. (TLSB)

not return empty-handed. None of them would fail to perform its deadly work. (Kretzmann)

50:10 *shall be sated* – They were getting all that their heart desired in the way of rich booty. In this sense the Lord now turns directly to Babylon in pronouncing sentence upon the Chaldean Empire. (Kretzmann)

50:11 *you.* Babylon. (CSB)

my heritage. God's land and people. (CSB)

The Chaldeans called so on account of the pillage committed by them in destroying Judah. (Kretzmann)

frolic like a heifer. See Mal 4:2. (CSB)

They were skipping like a threshing calf or heifer, with proud insolence. (Kretzmann)

stallions. Neigh as steeds," in overweening, challenging pride. (Kretzmann)

50:12 *mother.* Either (1) the city or, more likely, (2) the land (see Isa 50:1; Hos 2:5). (CSB)

last. As Amalek, "first among the nations" (Nu 24:20) to attack Israel, was destroyed, so Babylon, the last to attack Israel (up to Jeremiah's time), would be destroyed. (CSB)

50:13 *not be inhabited.* This was because His anger had caused the inhabitants to be driven away or slaughtered. (Kretzmann)

who passes by Babylon. Said of Jerusalem in 19:8 and of Edom in 49:17. (CSB)

hiss. Jeremiah earlier used the same expression to describe Jerusalem's doom (25:9). (TLSB)

This was in sneering derision. In order to carry out this judgment upon Babylon, the nations everywhere are now called upon to take the city. (Kretzmann)

50:14 *you who bend the bow.* Including the Medes (see Isa 13:17–18). (CSB)

The archers represent the entire army of the enemy. (Kretzmann)

50:15 *vengeance of the LORD.*† It was often carried out by his people at his specific command (see Nu 31:3). (CSB)

50:16 *cut off...sower* – Both sowers and reapers would be destroyed, and there could be no harvesting in the entire country. (Kretzmann)

every one ... shall flee to his own land. The Hebrew for this passage has a parallel in Isa 13:14. The captive peoples are warned to flee Babylon in order to avoid being cut down by her invaders. (CSB)

The strangers in the country are getting ready to preserve their lives before the threatening catastrophe comes. Over against this fate of Babylon is placed the deliverance of Judah from oppression and exile. (Kretzmann)

50:17 *hunted sheep.* Separated from the flock and therefore most vulnerable and subject to pursuit. *Nebuchadnezzar.* Cf 2Ki 24–25. (TLSB)

lions. Symbolic of Assyria and Babylon. (CSB)

The first ... was the king of Assyria. The Assyrians destroyed Israel (the northern kingdom) in 722–721 B.C. (CSB)

the last ... was Nebuchadnezzar. The Babylonians destroyed Judah (the southern kingdom) in 586 B.C. (CSB)

50:18 *I punished the king of Assyria.* Nineveh, the proud Assyrian capital, fell in 612 B.C., and Assyria herself was conquered by a coalition of Medes and Babylonians in 609. (CSB)

50:19 *Bashan.* Territories in Israel, famous for their fertility. (TLSB)

hills of Ephraim. The lush mountainsides of central Israel (see Eze 34:13–14). (CSB)

50:20 *In those days.* Time of the new covenant (cf 31:1, 31). (TLSB)

He grants them forgiveness and pardon by virtue of the Messiah's merits. If enemies of the Lord, whom He, for any reason whatever, has used as His instruments to carry out His plans, become overbearing and insolent as a consequence, He readily plunges them from the height of their pride to the depths of humiliation and confusion. (Kretzmann)

50:21 *Merathaim.* Means “double rebellion [against the Lord],” perhaps referring to vv. 24, 29. It is probably a pun on the Babylonian word *marratu*, which sometimes referred to a region in southern Babylonia that was characterized by briny waters. (CSB)

Pekod. See Eze 23:23; means “punishment [from the Lord],” a pun on *Puqudu*, the Babylonian name for an Aramean tribe living on the eastern bank of the lower Tigris River. (CSB)

Puns on the names of localities in Babylonia. (TLSB)

devote them to destruction. “The Hebrew term refers to the irrevocable giving over of things or persons to the Lord, often by totally destroying them, also in verse 26. (CSB)

50:23 *hammer of the whole earth.* A favorite metaphor for Jeremiah (23:29; 51:20). Babylon serves as God’s instrument of punishment. (TLSB)

Babylon is called on account of the fact that the Lord used it to strike and destroy many nations. (Kretzmann)

horror among the nations! The Hebrew for this sentence is repeated verbatim in 51:41. (CSB)

It is so bad that men stand aghast at the horror of her downfall. (Kretzmann)

50:24 *did not know it; you were found and caught.* The Persian attack in 539 B.C. would catch the city of Babylon completely by surprise (see 51:8; Isa 47:11). (CSB)

50:25 *weapons of his wrath.* The nations (see 51:27–28) that the Lord would use to conquer Babylon. (CSB)

50:26 *heaps of grain.* The Hebrew for this expression is used in Ne 4:2 to describe heaps of rubble that had been burned. (CSB)

let nothing be left of her. By burning (see note on v. 21; see also Jos 11:11–13). (CSB)

The city with all its possessions and treasures was to be burned with fire. (Kretzmann)

50:27 *bulls.* The people of Babylon, including especially her fighting men. (CSB)

go down to the slaughter – for war depicted as the slaughter of sacrificial animals.) (CSB)

time of punishment. This was their punishment at the hands of Jehovah. (Kretzmann)

50:28 *they flee and escape.* Jewish exiles who had fled the destruction overtaking Babylon. (CSB)

vengeance, vengeance for his temple. The conquest of Babylon was the Lord's response to Babylon's burning of the Jerusalem temple. (CSB)

Babylon's guilt was the arrogant claim that the destruction of the Jerusalem temple proved Marduk's superiority over Israel's God. (TLSB)

50:29 *Holy One of Israel.* A title of God found frequently in Isaiah, it occurs in Jeremiah only here and in 51:5. (CSB)

Their pride being the fundamental transgression and fault of Babylon, a form of blasphemy challenging the Lord's honor. (Kretzmann)

50:30 Repeated almost verbatim from 49:26. (CSB)

Jeremiah repeats words he spoke in announcing the doom of Damascus. (TLSB)

50:33 *refuse to let them go.* Reminiscent of Pharaoh's repeated refusals before the exodus (see, e.g., Ex 7:14; 8:2, 32; 9:2, 7). (CSB)

50:34 *plead their cause.* The Lord would take their part with all needed energy. (Kretzmann)

give rest. Judah would once more enjoy peace and security. (Kretzmann)

50:35 *sword.* Medes and Persians (cf v 9). (TLSB)

officials...wise – Chaldea was noted for its officials and wisemen. The sentence is really in the form of an exclamation, a call, bidding the sword do its work of slaughtering. (Kretzmann)

50:36 *diviners ... will become fools.* This would include the idle talkers, the astrologers of Babylon who would become fools with their empty and deceitful statements. (Kretzmann)

50:37 *against her horses...chariots.* These were her boast in warfare. (Kretzmann)

foreign troops. These were her mercenaries and allies. (Kretzmann)

may become women. See Na 3:13. (CSB)

This meant that they would become weak and utterly unable for effective resistance. (Kretzmann)

may be plundered – They would lose the wealth which they had accumulated in the course of their campaigns. (Kretzmann)

50:38 *idols.* Babylon's idols are no match for almighty God. (TLSB)

are mad. Literally, "their objects of horror or terror," for the images which are usually found in heathen sanctuaries are really more likely to frighten than to attract. They have indulged in gross and revolting idolatry and must therefore bear their iniquity. (Kretzmann)

50:41–43 Repeated almost verbatim from 6:22–24. The earlier oracle, referring to Jerusalem, is here applied to Babylon. (CSB)

Applies to the Babylonians the threat of doom previously addressed to Judah. (TLSB)

50:44–46 Repeated almost verbatim from 49:19–21 (see notes there). The oracle against Edom is here applied to Babylon. (CSB)

Similar words are uttered against Edom. (TLSB)

When that cry, "Babylon is taken," goes forth, the earth trembles, **and the cry is heard among the nations.** Cp. chap. 49, 19-21. In the history of nations, as well as in that of individual people, it is true that God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble. (Kretzmann)

Ch 50 God holds Babylon responsible for the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of its citizens. During the process of Babylon's destruction, the Israelites will come together to seek the Lord to make an everlasting covenant (vv 4–5). God's heart aches when the people He loves turn away from Him. Like the father of the prodigal (Lk 15:21–24), He yearns to forgive those who return to Him with repentant hearts.
• Father, lead us by Your Holy Spirit to repentance, and forgive us through Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen. (TLSB)