

## Jeremiah Chapter 50 John Karmelich

1. Let me give my title first, "Killing Babylon". At the time I wrote this there's a popular book series by Bill O'Reilly about "Killing Lincoln, Killing Jesus, etc." The books are about historical events. I believe he wrote them to set the record straight in his opinion. My lesson title "Killing Babylon" is a past, present and a future event. Before I explain, realize we got 46 verses here in Chapter 50 as well as another 64 in the Chapter 51 on Babylon. (I need two lessons to get through it.) Realize he wrote as much on Babylon as all the other nations combined. OK we'll bite, why?
  - a) I've joked for years that one of my favorite nicknames for the bible is, "A tale of two cities" which is the title of a famous Dickens novel. That's because the bible as a whole spends a lot of time talking about the birth, life and destiny of both Babylon and Jerusalem. Here are two chapters about its death. Realize scholars debate about whether a future death of Babylon is literal or figurative. That's a classical debate I'll discuss in these two lessons.
  - b) If you want to decide for yourself, there are six chapters in the bible that specifically focus on the death of Babylon. Jeremiah 50-51, Isaiah 13-14 and Revelation 17-18. Yes, I studied all of them in preparation for this lesson. I'm not here to solve that debate. I also watched videos on literal Babylon, which essentially today is a ghost town visited by Iraqi's since it is historically famous. Realize the concept of "Babylon" is bigger than just that ancient city. It's about the concept of open rebellion against God. To understand remember that in the bible the "Tower of Babel" was the first organized open rebellion against God. That's close to the bible opening. A few chapters from the bible closing, Revelation 17-18, describe the last organized rebellion against God that He crushes. Therefore one can read all of this as both figurative, as well as literal. Until the "end" happens, the literalness will be debated.
  - c) Time for my "why should I care" lecture. I always assume people reading this already did commit their lives to Jesus so whatever is going on won't affect us. Yes people who won't accept Jesus go to hell. We get that. What about those who openly rebel against His plan for the world? The important idea is to realize that all acts of rebellion against God fail in the end. Since "God wins" that makes sense. Yes we'll suffer in the meantime, but still it's assuring to know that all efforts to rebel against God eventually go down!
  - d) So if the Babylonians were God's instrument to punish Israel and other nations in the area why make them suffer? Why were they only given 70 years to rule? To explain I'll have to give a quick lecture about ancient Babylon. It ties well to the text so let's begin.
2. Before the rise of the Babylonian Empire the "big boys on the block" was the Assyrian Empire. It was falling apart shorter before Jeremiah was on the scene. Babylon grew rich by taking valuable things when they conquered. The city of Babylon was estimated to be about 15 miles in size. I've read that the guard towers rose 40 stories above the ground. The walls were thick enough to have chariot races where six chariots raced at one time. The Euphrates River bent around the city so it had natural protection too. The city itself lasted long after the empire died. The Persians used it, Alexander the Great was going to make it one of his headquarters before he died. At the time of Jesus, it was small but still a city. Today it's an empty tourist attraction. Saddam Hussein made an effort to preserve it but today it's still essentially empty. It's about 50 miles from Bagdad.
  - a) How the empire died is famous and partially told in Daniel Chapter 5. Nebuchadnezzar's grandson ruled when it happened. Nebuchadnezzar publicly proclaimed that the Israelite God was the "true God" in the book of Daniel. By the time his grandson Belshazzar ruled, he could care less about that and brought in the Israelite "stuff" essentially to make fun of it. God held him responsible for his lack of respect for Him even though he knew better.
  - b) Anyway, a large army comprised of two nations (think parts of Iran today), organized the great rebellion against Babylon. They dammed up the river upstream, and had men enter the city under the gate. Babylon fell without a battle, and the 70 years were up.

- c) Bottom line God punished Babylon because the "grandson" knew all that happened to his grandfather and still turned to idolatry. Plus God wanted to show He's God, deal with it!
  - d) So why did the whole empire have to suffer? Why not just strike the grandson dead? It is to show that God's in charge. When "grandpa" was around the city turned to God. By the time "grandson" ruled they turned back to idolatry and thus the suffering. Yes it's also the issue of making them suffer for all the damage they've done, but the main issue is that city had knowledge of God and didn't act on it.
  - e) OK that's that. Time to discuss these two particular chapters.
3. The two chapters are not "clean". It's not like these 10 verses focus on this, then the next ten focus on that. It's more like God gives some illustrations of how Babylon will fall. Then it focuses on the return of the Israelites, then back to "bad news for Babylon". Some of the details are amazing how well they line up well with history. This section alone validates Jeremiah as a true prophet. I will give some details on that as we go along.
- a) So let me ask the logical question: Why so many verses on this? Why not just say that the Babylonians are "going down for the count" and their land will become a wasteland? Why have over 100 verses in two chapters? Yes it's to describe the accuracy of it. Yes it's telling us "God's God" and if He wants His people to return to Israel, well, so be it. It also tells us that God knows "The end from the beginning" (see Isaiah 46:10) and tells us in advance of how history unfolds for His people!
  - b) OK John we get that. What does any of this have to do with my problems of the moment? It's to remind ourselves not to sweat the "small stuff". Yes we'll suffer in this lifetime. That is something Paul promised will happen to all Christians (2 Timothy 3:12 as an example.) I am just saying that when life is at it's worse, realize that God's still in charge, He still has a plan and still wants to use us for His glory. So when we deal with a "Babylonian Army" wanting to destroy us, realize God's still in charge, He'll win in the end and we'll win with Him. That's the underlying application to all of this.
  - c) It's amazing to consider that Jeremiah who described Babylon's conquest in such detail in this book also was told of Babylon's own fall years before Jerusalem fell. It reminds us that God's going to win even when things are at their worst.
  - d) Hopefully now that we're in a better mood, I've got way too many verses to cover. Please fasten your seat belt and I promise it'll be a bumpy but interesting ride. Let's begin:
4. Chapter 50, Verse 1: This is the word the LORD spoke through Jeremiah the prophet concerning Babylon and the land of the Babylonians:
- a) Keep in mind this is a big track of land. Picture everything east of Greece that touches the Mediterranean down to and including Egypt. It includes what we know as Syria, most of Turkey, Iran, and southeast to the Persian Gulf. The point here is God told Jeremiah what is to become of both the city and the empire in these two chapters. The end of this section will tell us that Jeremiah got this vision a number of years before Jerusalem went down.
5. Verse 2: "Announce and proclaim among the nations, lift up a banner and proclaim it; keep nothing back, but say, `Babylon will be captured; Bel will be put to shame, Marduk filled with terror. Her images will be put to shame and her idols filled with terror.'
- a) Stop and think what I said in the introduction about this city. It covered about 15 square miles. It had walls so thick they had chariot races on top of them. Very high towers for a guard to watch. A river surrounded much of the city. Now here is Jeremiah proclaiming, "Babylon will be captured". I'm guessing if he knew anything about the city, he had to be thinking, "God are you sure about this?"
  - b) As to "Bel" and "Marduk", let's just say it's the names of their gods. The point here is their "gods" won't be able to help them as their city falls and effectively the empires falls.
  - c) As I like to say, "it would be interesting if I lived in the Middle East 2,500 years ago". What we must remember is when things are at their worst and we're dealing with issues that do seem to big to handle, God can make solutions when we don't see them!

6. Verse 3: A nation from the north will attack her and lay waste her land. No one will live in it; both men and animals will flee away.
- To begin a lot of people make a big deal about the fact that "Persia", that's a short version of the "Medo-Persian" Empire was essentially east of Babylon. Some scholars think this is some sort of reference to the fact that Israel was attacked from the north and Babylon will get a similar attack. Again, the way the city was conquered (with no battle) was the river was dammed up and the army came in under the gate. The legend is most of the city did not know it was taken over until long after it happened.
  - My point is the "end time people" think this refers to another battle with a new Babylon as the point of destruction. Others just think it's where the army stopped the river, so that is why it says "to the north". Now you know!
  - The other strange thing is Babylon stayed populated for a good five hundred years later. I recently watched a video of the city of Babylon today. It's essentially empty. They'll have tourist visiting, but for all intents and purposes it's been uninhabited for 2,000 years. That means this verse is technically correct but it took 500 years to accomplish that. It adds to a speculation about whether this verse is a future to us prediction or literal about the past.
7. Verse 4: "In those days, at that time," declares the LORD, "the people of Israel and the people of Judah together will go in tears to seek the LORD their God. <sup>5</sup> They will ask the way to Zion and turn their faces toward it. They will come and bind themselves to the LORD in an everlasting covenant that will not be forgotten.
- As I stated in the introduction, Jeremiah is going to jump back and forth through the two chapters about "what's going to happen to Babylon" versus what's going to happen to His people. The reason for the "jump back and forth" is for the Israelites to "connect the dots" that their stay in Babylon won't be permanent and they'll be Israelites returning.
  - Keep in mind nobody in history has every "done that", so it had to be a shocking thought!
  - Also keep in mind only a small percentage of them actually returned. Most stayed as that land became part of the Persian Empire, Greeks, Romans, etc. The term, "Persian Jews" is based on the many who stayed in that area since the Babylonian captivity.
  - As to those who return, the books of Nehemiah and Ezra cover that. (For what it's worth, I plan to write my commentary on those books once I finish Jeremiah's writings.) Anyway we got God's first message to those returning to the land after Babylon's conquered here.
  - Here's also where the classic debate comes in about whether this is talking past tense or if it is future or both. A classical view on bible prophesy is it's often in "patterns". That just means there's often a double fulfillment. One is the past tense "short term" to validate the speaker as a prophet of God plus a long-term fulfillment. This may be one of those cases. I say that here because obviously not all who returned became devout God worshippers. Some tie this idea to Jesus return and the Israelites returning there in that day when He's ruling the world from Israel. Now that I've made that point we can move on.
8. Verse 6: "My people have been lost sheep; their shepherds have led them astray and caused them to roam on the mountains. They wandered over mountain and hill and forgot their own resting place.
- How have the Israelites been like lost sheep? The implication is they turned from God to worship other deities. The main reason God allowed the North and South Israel kingdom to die was essentially they turned from Him and "God did what He had to do to get their attention. (Yes that's a clue how far He'd go with us!)
  - The reason this is here is before God "pounds on Babylon's head" for much of the text over the next two chapters, God (through Jeremiah wants to explain why they're in Babylon to begin with.
  - Keep in mind what Babylon represents: Open rebellion against God. He wanted Israelites (and us) to realize what life without God is like to draw them back to Him.

9. Verse 7: Whoever found them devoured them; their enemies said, 'We are not guilty, for they sinned against the LORD, their true pasture, the LORD, the hope of their fathers.'
- a) Here the Babylonians could argue, "We are not guilty of anything, God is punishing His people and we were just the instrument of His judgment". We'll read why God did hold them accountable all through this lesson. The short version is He needs to prove that He is God and not any of the deities worshipped in the Babylon Empire.
10. Verse 8: "Flee out of Babylon; leave the land of the Babylonians, and be like the goats that lead the flock.
- a) Here's the call for the Israelites to leave Babylon. When one studies the books written after the Babylon captivity (Ezra and Nehemiah) only a small percentage obeyed Jeremiah as to leave. Most Israelites got comfortable in the Babylonian Empire and chose to stay.
  - b) Anyway, Jeremiah's pleading with the Israelites a long time before that city went down to leave. We should care because? The idea for us is for us to not "live" (be a part of a world) where God is ignored. To give my first Revelation 18 quote of the lesson that chapter says, "Get out of her (Babylon) my people". (Revelation 18:4). In effect it's the same warning we see Jeremiah gives here in this verse. My point is it's not just an "Old Testament thing!"
11. Verse 9: For I will stir up and bring against Babylon an alliance of great nations from the land of the north. They will take up their positions against her, and from the north she will be captured. Their arrows will be like skilled warriors who do not return empty-handed.
- a) Those who argue that Jeremiah is speaking future (to us) state the fact that the Persians as well as the other nations in their alliance that attacked Babylon were to the east. Maybe it was a metaphor as Israel was attacked from the north. Maybe it's referring to the fact the Euphrates River was "clogged up" to the north. I don't know if it's a big deal, but those are two possible explanations for those who argue it's just past tense (to us) end of issue.
  - b) Time for my first weird deviation of the lesson. The traditional view that the "Babylon" in Revelation 18 is a literal city. Some argue it refers to Rome (coded as to not anger them as they were in charge when Revelation was written). Some argue it refers to New York as it is the top city in the world today for commerce. Some argue Babylon will be rebuilt in the future. I do not know which is right. Revelation 18 definitely refers to Babylon as a city so whatever the correct answer is, it is a city that'll be the center of where the Antichrist rules when all the "bad Revelation stuff" occurs.
  - c) So what does all of this have to do with these verses? The argument is when Babylon gets destroyed Jeremiah's also prophesizing about the future day when "that" one's wiped out. Could I be totally wrong and it only refers to "past" Babylon? Of course. I'm just giving a bunch of different views of a classically debated topic about "Babylon".
  - d) Bottom line is "Babylon is going down" and it involves arrows being shot. As I stated, that city went down without a battle. It could refer to the killing of the top officials as Persians went into that city. Anyway, you get the idea, we can move on.
12. Verse 10: So Babylonia will be plundered; all who plunder her will have their fill," declares the LORD. <sup>11</sup> "Because you rejoice and are glad, you who pillage my inheritance, because you frolic like a heifer threshing grain and neigh like stallions, <sup>12</sup> your mother will be greatly ashamed; she who gave you birth will be disgraced. She will be the least of the nations-- a wilderness, a dry land, a desert.
- a) Here we get a bunch of verses about Babylon's downfall. Again history taught that it was a number of centuries later before Babylon became a ghost town. Still the prediction is an accurate one. Here was a great and powerful city that ruled the world at that time. Yet it is being described here as a ghost town after it's pillaged. Yes the language is colorful, but the text describes that way about it's fall.
  - b) For those who think our cities or countries will live forever, consider the power as well as the resources that Babylon had and consider the fact it's a ghost town today.

- c) If nothing else it shows that God's in charge and He decides how long cities will exist. Yes it also hints of the ultimate fall of Babylon that we read of near the end of the bible. In that sense Jeremiah is prophesying to us again to not be a part of any world that ignores God.
13. Verse 13: Because of the LORD's anger she will not be inhabited but will be completely desolate. All who pass Babylon will be horrified and scoff because of all her wounds. <sup>14</sup> "Take up your positions around Babylon, all you who draw the bow. Shoot at her! Spare no arrows, for she has sinned against the LORD. <sup>15</sup> Shout against her on every side! She surrenders, her towers fall, her walls are torn down. Since this is the vengeance of the LORD, take vengeance on her; do to her as she has done to others. <sup>16</sup> Cut off from Babylon the sower, and the reaper with his sickle at harvest. Because of the sword of the oppressor let everyone return to his own people, let everyone flee to his own land.
- a) Here we get vivid descriptions about the fall of this city. Let me ask a different question: Why is the bible so obsessed with the fall of this city? Let's face it far more bible verses do explain the fall of Babylon than any other city in the bible. There are many places that are destroyed in the bible, but not with the "blow by blow" detail we get of Babylon's fall. The big question is why all the details? If I had to speculate it's God's way of saying how bad it is to be a part of any Godless system, and ultimately it will be destroyed.
- i) For example, the Babylon of Revelation 18, be it literal or figurative offers anything a person could want in this life other than God. It's very materialistic. He's saying in effect having everything you want in this life without God isn't enough. We are made with a desire to worship something. If we ignore God, lots of idols exist then as it does today. My point here is as we read all these horrid details of the Babylon fall, it's not here as a history lesson. It's here to remind us of the ultimate fate if we try to live for anything other than God Himself.
- b) As to the historical Babylon as I stated in the introduction, it was a large city protected by a series of high walls and even higher towers. Yet these verses describe it's ultimate fall as if "it's no big deal". Yes it's colorful and yes there were literal aspects to how it fell that tie to these verses, but hopefully you get the idea that the important thing is for us to avoid a world (in the sense we don't become part of it) where God is ignored.
14. Verse 17: "Israel is a scattered flock that lions have chased away. The first to devour him was the king of Assyria; the last to crush his bones was Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon." <sup>18</sup> Therefore this is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "I will punish the king of Babylon and his land as I punished the king of Assyria.
- a) Yes God used the Babylonians just as He used the Assyrians to punish the nation of Israel due their idolatry. Still, God needs to prove to the world that He's God and it wasn't due to say the great ability of their armies to defeat Israel or their local gods. That's why God had to punish these nations. Again, the Israelites are "His people" and he want to prove that point. Yes the city of Babylon existed for a long time after it fell, but the empire died 70 years from the time they first attacked Jerusalem. My point is they didn't last long. The Assyrian Empire which lasted for seven centuries essentially died about 100 years after it conquered the Northern Israel kingdom.
- b) The point for you and me is the Israelites are still God's chosen people. Do I think modern Israel is perfect? Of course not. Still, they're God's people and I wouldn't mess with them!
15. Verse 19: But I will bring Israel back to his own pasture and he will graze on Carmel and Bashan; his appetite will be satisfied on the hills of Ephraim and Gilead.
- a) Keep in mind when Jeremiah wrote it no nation in history was ever conquered, scattered, emptied, and then came back to be a nation. It was probably shocking to Jeremiah that he had to preach this, but if "God says so, who are we to argue?"
- b) As the post Babylon bible books teach us (again Ezra and Nehemiah) that some Israelites did return to that land. A few of Israel's locations are listed. It is noteworthy that some of these locations include the long dead "North" Israel, to show the whole land will be back.

16. Verse 20: In those days, at that time," declares the LORD, "search will be made for Israel's guilt, but there will be none, and for the sins of Judah, but none will be found, for I will forgive the remnant I spare.
- a) Does this verse mean the Israelites were perfect when they returned? No, I suspect it is a reference to the fact God forgave them of their idolatry collective. Others argue that it is a "millennial" (future) reference to when Jesus returns.
  - b) By the way, if you haven't noticed by now, much of this is a "double prophecy". There is a lot of short-term fulfillment in what happened with Babylon was overthrown. I'd argue it is also future as it refers to whatever the ultimate destruction of Babylon is about, which is the main topic of Revelation 18. OK then, back to Jeremiah.
17. Verse 21: Attack the land of Merathaim and those who live in Pekod. Pursue, kill and completely destroy them," declares the LORD. "Do everything I have commanded you. <sup>22</sup> The noise of battle is in the land, the noise of great destruction! <sup>23</sup> How broken and shattered is the hammer of the whole earth! How desolate is Babylon among the nations!
- a) Don't let "Merathaim" and "Pekod" bother you. Think if it as names of the general area as opposed to Babylon, which is a specific city. These verses describe Babylon's destruction.
  - b) Again, I suspect this is a "double reference" as the city still stood for centuries after it was conquered. Yet, Babylon in Revelation 18 speaks of the city's ultimate destruction. So do I believe the future Babylon is literal or figurative? Could be either. Personally, I'd rather take the bible too literal versus not literal enough. I figure I'll be in less trouble when I am facing His judgment if I accidentally took it too literal!
  - c) I mentioned in the introduction how Isaiah 13-14 also spoke about Babylon's fall. I bring it up here as Isaiah 13:20 also predicts Babylon will never be inhabited again.
  - d) Remember that Babylon was the first great empire that took over a large area. That's why I suspect Jeremiah refers to Babylon as the "hammer of the whole earth". When we get to the "end times" the city of Babylon (again literal or some other place) will be the center of a worldwide empire. OK enough of that, back to the text.
18. Verse 24: I set a trap for you, O Babylon, and you were caught before you knew it; you were found and captured because you opposed the LORD. <sup>25</sup> The LORD has opened his arsenal and brought out the weapons of his wrath, for the Sovereign LORD Almighty has work to do in the land of the Babylonians. <sup>26</sup> Come against her from afar. Break open her granaries; pile her up like heaps of grain. Completely destroy her and leave her no remnant. <sup>27</sup> Kill all her young bulls; let them go down to the slaughter! Woe to them! For their day has come, the time for them to be punished.
- a) Verse 24 mentions a trap? I suspect it was how the river was lowered so that the Persian army could get in under the gate and take over the city. Yes the Persians did damage to show they're now in charge when they conquered. Still the city still existed after that. I suspect we're reading some actual accurate predictions about how the city was "sacked" along with some predictions about it's ultimate downfall.
  - b) Let me ask the question, why is it so important to emphasize it's complete destruction as we read here and in Isaiah and Revelation? Short version is it represents all this live has to offer outside of God. It's enjoyable for a season, but eventually it's worthless. That is why God is going to kill it completely one day as the bible warns here.
19. Verse 28: Listen to the fugitives and refugees from Babylon declaring in Zion how the LORD our God has taken vengeance, vengeance for his temple.
- a) Notice in this verse that not everyone died when Babylon was overthrown. Some did get out which obviously includes some Jewish people. The point here is those Jewish people did give God the credit as the Babylonians did destroy His temple.
  - b) I was thinking, who's Jeremiah telling to do the listening? Since this is directed to Babylon the idea is God wants them to know He's in charge and that's why they're going down!

20. Verse 29: "Summon archers against Babylon, all those who draw the bow. Encamp all around her; let no one escape. Repay her for her deeds; do to her as she has done. For she has defied the LORD, the Holy One of Israel. <sup>30</sup> Therefore, her young men will fall in the streets; all her soldiers will be silenced in that day," declares the LORD. <sup>31</sup> "See, I am against you, O arrogant one," declares the Lord, the LORD Almighty, "for your day has come, the time for you to be punished. <sup>32</sup> The arrogant one will stumble and fall and no one will help her up; I will kindle a fire in her towns that will consume all who are around her."
- One of the themes we see in this text is archery used to kill the Babylonian soldiers. That has to be "past tense" as I doubt it'd be a millennial issue. What I suspect occurred is after the soldiers entered the city, some of the Persian army used archery to wipe out the men guarding the city.
  - Why all these details? Why not just say Babylon's going down and that's that? By giving all these specific details it validates Jeremiah as a prophet. It shows the world that God is the God of the world and proves it through His prophetic word. That's why 30 percent of the bible is predictions about the future.
  - Anyway, the specifics here is about the fall of Babylon. Enough said there.
21. Verse 33: This is what the LORD Almighty says: "The people of Israel are oppressed, and the people of Judah as well. All their captors hold them fast, refusing to let them go. <sup>34</sup> Yet their Redeemer is strong; the LORD Almighty is his name. He will vigorously defend their cause so that he may bring rest to their land, but unrest to those who live in Babylon.
- Keep in mind that Jeremiah wrote this before Jerusalem went down for the count. He also realized that the small Israelite nation was "nothing" compared to the Babylonian Empire. Jeremiah also grasped that the "end was near" for the Israelites.
  - The point is "When the chips are down" we need to remember we have a redeemer who's strong and can and will do for us what we can't do for ourselves. That's what having faith is so important. It's not just about being resurrected, but about the fact that when we seek Him and commit ourselves to do His Will, He will guide us for His glory. It doesn't mean everything will go well all the time. It means He will guide us through all things!
  - That thought leads me back to Jeremiah in this situation. He realizes because God's still in charge, Jeremiah knew that God has to resurrect Israel as a nation because He promised to do so unconditionally. If Jesus is going to rule the world, well there has to be an Israel for Him to rule it from, to keep it simple! As to Babylon, it's based on both a false religious as well as a "money is everything" system. Therefore, even if Jeremiah wasn't told about the 70-year prediction about when Israel would return (made earlier in the book if you're new here), he still had faith that God is God, so both nations had to be dealt with based on His standard of right and wrong. Bottom line, Jeremiah knew that God's going to win in the end, so he boldly states inspired by the Holy Spirit that Babylon's going down while Israel will be resurrected one day for His glory.
22. Verse 35: "A sword against the Babylonians!" declares the LORD-- "against those who live in Babylon and against her officials and wise men! <sup>36</sup> A sword against her false prophets! They will become fools. A sword against her warriors! They will be filled with terror. <sup>37</sup> A sword against her horses and chariots and all the foreigners in her ranks! They will become women. A sword against her treasures! They will be plundered.
- It's time for Jeremiah to get "specific". It's one thing to proclaim Babylon's going down for the count! It's another get specific of who's going down.
  - He lists the leaders of the city, those who give advice to the leaders, false prophets who do give advice to the people there, the soldiers, the chariots and even the foreigners.
  - OK, why not just say "Everyone's going to suffer". Why get so melodramatic here? It's so that the reader understands that Jeremiah isn't being figurative! Realize an empire as big as this one doesn't just "go down in a flash", but that's what's being predicted here.

- d) The essential idea is Babylon's going down and there's nothing anyone can do to prevent it. It's God's will that Babylon suffer because any organized effort to rebel against God is doomed to fail. But John, Babylon was "just another nation" with it's own gods, issues as well as life. Why single them out this way? Because God's people were amongst them! It is a matter of saying, "I (God) called these specific people to be a witness for Me. They will be a witness even though they're not united in one spot. I'm wiping out this empire so the world will know I'm God and that's that!"
  - e) As I love to state, if there is no next life, this one is very unfair. However, if there is a God, and He judges all people fairly based on what knowledge they had or could have known, about Him, then the length of our lives isn't as important as what we did with the time He has given us. That's an underlying idea throughout all of the bible.
  - f) OK, off my soapbox. Time to get back to Jeremiah!
23. Verse 38: A drought on her waters! They will dry up. For it is a land of idols, idols that will go mad with terror.
- a) Did Jeremiah realize that about 50 years after he wrote this, Persians were going to find a way to damn up the Euphrates River. If you think about it, that's no small trick. It meant finding a place to form a big pool of water so it wouldn't flow past the city. Then it had to be timed so their army could storm in under the bridge when there was no river.
  - b) I bring that up here because we're reading Jeremiah predict a "drought on her waters". It's an amazing thing to consider for that fact alone.
  - c) Also keep in mind that Babylon was a place with statues to idols all over the land. One of the things they did was when they conquered a place, was to bring the statues back there. So between their "trophy room" and idols to their gods all over the place, Babylon had the idol states all over the place. One of the reasons God allowed them to take over the Jewish population was so that the Israelites would be sick of seeing idols. As I've stated before, it is the one good thing that came out of this captivity, it "cured" the Israelites to worship the statues of false gods.
  - d) Gee John, this would be interesting if I lived 2,500 years ago. I should care because? If God is willing to go to this much trouble to draw the Israelites back to Him, don't you think He would apply that same pressure on us? In a sense all of this is God's "incentive plan" as to be a draw to drive people back to Him. Hopefully we'll see that from studying our bible a realization God cares about a relationship with us so much He'll do whatever it takes as to draw us closer to Him. That's an underlying message here.
24. Verse 39: "So desert creatures and hyenas will live there, and there the owl will dwell. It will never again be inhabited or lived in from generation to generation.
- a) One of the things I mentioned in my introduction is I watched some videos of Babylon as it exists today. Other than being used for concerts and ceremonies, I'm positive the desert creatures, hyenas and owls dwell there today. Imagine predicting all of this when the city was essentially the center of the world!
  - b) That leads me back to the classic debate about whether or not there'll be an ultimate death of Babylon. That'll be a key topic in the next lesson. Again good bible scholars debate so I would say there's no definite answer. Personally, I hold the view that as a bible teacher I'll be in less trouble on judgment day if I'm "too literal" versus not literal enough. Therefore I do lean toward the city being active and rebuilt again one day. I'll discuss that idea when I work on my Chapter 51 lesson for next time.
  - c) While the city wasn't dead immediately after the Babylonians fell, it did die and became a bunch of ruins until some archeological work began there in the 19th century.
  - d) So Babylon is a ghost town and may be rebuilt again one day. Why I should care about all of that when I have my own problems to deal with? The answer's to consider what it does represent: Life without God. Literal or not, "death" will come to all rebellion against Him.



- e) The reason we Christians should care is what I jokingly call the "Carrot and the stick" idea when it comes to our relationship with God. When we are tempted to turn from God He's not above "applying the stick" to our lives as He did to the Jewish nation. Even us veteran Christians know how easy it is to turn from God. Think of all this as a reminder of what is the ultimate price to pay for the time we waste turning from Him with our lives.
  - f) Now that I've scared us half to death, we got seven more verses to cover in this lesson.
25. Verse 40: As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah along with their neighboring towns," declares the LORD, "so no one will live there; no man will dwell in it.
- a) Those who argue this is "done and done" argue the fact that Babylon hasn't been rebuilt in the last 2,000 years is pretty good proof it won't ever again. The scholars who argue it will be part of the "end times" with the Antichrist making it His world headquarters argue this is a "future" thing. As I always say, much of bible prophecy is "double fulfillment". All we can do in that sense is watch and wait to see what the future holds.
  - b) To those of you "bored to death" by all this, just keep in mind that God has, is and will kill any organized rebellion against Him. So how do you explain other religions today? What about for example the Muslim effort to expel Christians from their countries? One reason is it's literally demonic even though they won't admit it. If people are so confident in what they believe, why do they try to excommunicate Christians from their land?
  - c) What it comes down to is the simple idea that some people are saved and some are not. I don't know who is and neither do you, so God calls us to be a witness to all people. Still it is a matter of realizing that places that turn from the living God will get wiped out as He's God and we must live and work on His timing, not ours. That's the best I can explain it!
  - d) Anyway, just as Sodom and Gomorrah went down for the count, so did Babylon and so is anyplace in the world that ignores God. It's a death sentence whether people realize it or not. Until then all we can do is pray for people and be witnesses to them.
  - e) OK then, back to Jeremiah.
26. Verse 41: "Look! An army is coming from the north; a great nation and many kings are being stirred up from the ends of the earth.
- a) I have to admit, I don't know why Jeremiah is obsessed with saying they're coming from the north when the Medo-Persians are east of Babylon. It probably has to do with where the attack on them came from. Because the river was dammed up "upstream" that had to be north of there. Maybe "north" is where the armies were organized to fight Babylon.
  - b) Keep in mind the bible isn't just for you and me. Jeremiah also wanted the Israelites who were living in that empire to know exactly how it's going down and what's the future of it as compared to the ultimate future of the land of Israel. Little details like this verified that Jeremiah was a prophet of God.
  - c) For those who argue that there is a future destruction of a literal Babylon maybe this will be a significant detail. Again not all predictions are "present tense".
27. Verse 42: They are armed with bows and spears; they are cruel and without mercy. They sound like the roaring sea as they ride on their horses; they come like men in battle formation to attack you, O Daughter of Babylon.
- a) Speaking of battle details, we get more here. Bottom line is their forces overwhelmed the city of Babylon and down they went. But John, didn't you say it got conquered without a battle? Again, we're back to the classic debate about whether Jeremiah was strictly telling us "past tense" or hints of future tense too! I'm sure there was some battles but basically it is a matter of historical record (that the Persian king recorded) that he captured that place without a battle. I'm sure that if Persian soldiers got inside the city there has to be people to defend the city so I'm positive it wasn't a complete non-battle.
  - b) The truth is for the most part, Babylon fell without a major "kill everyone in site" type of battle. The text simple says there were people to attack the city, notice that.

28. Verse 43: The king of Babylon has heard reports about them, and his hands hang limp. Anguish has gripped him, pain like that of a woman in labor.
- a) It's time to return to "Daniel Chapter 5". In that chapter a hand not attached to a body did write a message on a wall. The Babylonian wise men couldn't interpret the message. That is when the king's grandma said in effect, "There was a guy named Daniel who could read that stuff when my late husband Nebuchadnezzar ruled. He's still alive go fetch him as he could probably figure it out.
  - b) My favorite line comes from when the king saw the hand writing a message all by itself. I like the King James Version that reads, " Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another." I I love reading that line and it ties pretty well to this verse here in Jeremiah about how the king reacted. Bottom line is the king "went limp" when there was Persian soldiers in the room with him and he knew the "jig was up"!
    - i) Oh, that quote's from Daniel 5:6, King James Version.
29. Verse 44: Like a lion coming up from Jordan's thickets to a rich pastureland, I will chase Babylon from its land in an instant. Who is the chosen one I will appoint for this? Who is like me and who can challenge me? And what shepherd can stand against me?"
- a) There's a classic joke that goes if a bear is chasing two of us, how fast must I run? All I got to do is run faster than you! I thought of that as I was reading this. Now picture a lion as it is approaching you with no fence between you. I don't know about you, but I'd start my sprint pace really fast. The point here Babylon went down quickly. How fast, as fast as a lion can chase a pray it's trying to catch. As I said the Persians snuck in the city as it fell in "an instant" without much of a battle. In that sense, Jeremiah is very accurate.
30. Verse 45: Therefore, hear what the LORD has planned against Babylon, what he has purposed against the land of the Babylonians: The young of the flock will be dragged away; he will completely destroy their pasture because of them.
- a) Keep in mind Jeremiah wrote this many years before Babylon went down. At the end of the next chapter, Jeremiah asks someone to read this in Babylon while the Israelite king is there on business. So why warn them? The same reason God tells His people to get out of Babylon in Revelation 18:4. The idea is Babylon both literally and figuratively represents the world of idols (be it statues, the pursuit of stuff, fame, or whatever). Living for things other than God is always a waste of what He created (us). The idea is before it goes down for the count, God's warning them the same way He's warning the world through most of Revelation that "doom is near, repent and turn to Me". In that sense it's the same idea as a solid preaching of the Gospel message. That is, "Repent and believe the Gospel".
  - b) So does God get joy out of destroying a place? Hardly. The reason He created all of us in the first place is He wants a relationship with us. Obviously many choose to reject that. I don't know who's saved and who isn't. I just know God wanted somebody to express His love upon and He choose people. Because Babylon represent rejecting that love, we've got a two chapter section here describing it's destruction.
  - c) So why is there a chapter break between 50 and 51? The next chapter will have a lot of the same, but it also has some focus on Babylon's ultimate destruction. However, that's a topic for the next lesson. Here we're reading of the fall of Babylon, both past tense plus a hint or two of it's future fall. My point is Chapter 50 isn't "perfectly" about Babylon's fall as it did occur about 2,500 years ago, and Chapter 51 is not "perfectly" about it's future fall.
  - d) Before I leave these verses, I'm pretty positive God's not talking about livestock here. This is a reference to people being wiped out due to it's fall.
31. Verse 46: At the sound of Babylon's capture the earth will tremble; its cry will resound among the nations.
- a) So why is the earth trembling at Babylon's fall (this is the last verse here by the way!)

- b) Let's start by remembering that they controlled the Middle East at that time. If there was one big government controlling the whole world and it fell to others, yes the whole earth would "tremble". By the way, that's one reason why I'm not a "globalist" and I do believe in nation states. There is a future day where the whole world will be under one rule, and that's who we call the Antichrist. This has nothing to do with wanting to speed up the end of the world. I think that local governments work best as if you don't like living here, then we can choose to move elsewhere.
  - c) Wow, I wandered off topic there! Bottom line is it affected a large area when Babylon did go down for the count. When God smashes the future Babylon of Revelation 17-18, let us just say it'll affect the economy of the world.
  - d) I'll wait until next time to discuss more theories on literal versus figurative aspects I think is the future what Babylon means. I'll save that for next time.
32. If you recall I titled this lesson "Killing Babylon". I'm sure that if you read this far, you get that by now. The important thing for us to realize is that Babylon represents all life has to offer without a significant influence of the true God ruling over that world. In the end, it's an empty life and that is why God does a "mercy killing" of it near the end of the bible.
- a) So what do we as Christians do in the meantime? Tell people to avoid that ghost town? I don't think that's the issue. The Babylon to avoid is a life only lived for fortune, fame or power. In the end it's a waste of a life. What God called us to do is be a witness to Him to a lost and dying world. We study His Word not to learn ancient history, but to learn how it is He wants us to be a witness for Him. Hopefully it helped you grow a little as you've read all of these details.
  - b) Until next time with the final Babylon lesson, let's close in prayer.
33. Father, we thank You that You've separated us from "Babylon" as well as the world itself so we can be a witness for You. May Your Spirit guide us as to how it is You specifically desire we use our lives as a witness for You. Give us wisdom as we help others to see the waste of time that the world offers without God. Lead us so that we can and do make a difference for You in the world around us. Guide us and make it obvious to us what it is You desire of us at this moment. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.