

## Jeremiah Chapter 51 John Karmelich

1. My title for this lesson is "The End". If you grew up a fan of music from the 1960's, a famous song by the Doors had that title, and it was about the end of one's life. "The End" of this chapter has to deal with the end of the city of Babylon and its empire, as it existed 2,500 years ago. What's more important, it deals with end of all rebellion against God's will for our lives.
2. Let me start with an important question: If God hates sin so much why did He create us with the ability to sin in the first place? Why didn't He just make us with no desire to say kill, steal, cheat on our spouses? The answer is God wants us to choose Him based on "free will", and that means we have to see what the alternatives are as well as the outcomes of bad decisions.
  - a) Believe it or not, that leads well back to this lesson. Babylon isn't just about an empire that existed 2,500 years ago. It's about having whatever you want without God ruling over us. It's sort of the "ultimate" in wealth, power, idol worship etc. Babylon (tower of Babel) was the first organized rebellion against God. Therefore, over and above being a major empire that existed long ago, It has come to symbolize all one can desire in rebellion against God.
  - b) That's why the destruction of Babylon is such a big deal. As I stated in the last lesson, six chapters in the bible are dedicated to this topic. Jeremiah 50-51 are the two longest ones of that group. I need two lessons to get through them. Much of it is past tense to us, but I'm positive we also get hints of a future Babylon destruction. Is the future a literal Babylon or is it symbolic for some other city? Don't know. Revelation 18 (one of the six chapters that also deal with the end of Babylon) definitely says it is a city. My point is the bible is "big" on the ultimate destruction of Babylon, whatever that is. So we'll take on 64 verses in this lesson on Babylon's destruction and we'll do it if it kills us!
  - c) Time for obvious question #1: Why does the bible just make it clear God's will is to wipe it out once and for all? Why all these details about its destruction? Some of them tie well to the destruction that occurred seventy years after they first attacked Israel. Some of them have to be future tense. For example, this chapter will talk about the walls coming down. Those walls are still standing today. This chapter also discusses the Babylonian leaders being in a drunk state and if you read Daniel Chapter 5, the leaders were getting drunk or were drunk, as the Persian army that conquered Babylon met those leaders.
    - i) Bottom line, this chapter is both past tense and future tense in that not all the stuff it predicts happened roughly 2,500 years ago.
3. All of this leads to the second obvious question: Why should we care? We get the idea the bible predicts the ultimate destruction of Babylon. We get the idea we get lots of verses (64 verses just in this chapter alone) on this topic. What about other things on our agenda. Again, why should we care? It's not to learn history in advance. It's for us to realize that anything we live for other than God will be destroyed. Does that mean we can't have any hobbies? Of course not. To quote a mentor, "Going shopping? Take Jesus with you." The idea is Jesus should always be part of our lives no matter what we are doing.
  - a) That leads me back to "Babylon". If all you get is the historical details, you miss the reason to study this section. The reason we get so many verses on Babylon's destruction is so we grasp how literal this is. One thing I've accepted a long time ago, is when I'm facing God's judgment, I figured I'd be on much safer ground being "too literal" versus not taking bible text literal enough. God doesn't want us to study stuff so we'll be an expert on how it got destructed thousands of years ago. He wants us to study all this so we get the concept of how Babylon as a concept is going down for the count.
  - b) It doesn't mean we should "enjoy the world without God" as much as we can before it will go down. It is teaching us that life without God is essentially a waste of time and yes, it is "going down for the count" so get away from it!

- c) One of the things I'm fascinated by is Revelation 18:4 tells God's people to "get out of her". The "her" is Babylon. When John the apostle wrote Revelation, Babylon as a city wasn't an issue on the world scene. That's why some think it was "code" for Rome. Yet, Rome never got destroyed in a dramatic way. Again Revelation 18:17-18 describes Babylon as a city so I'd argue it's not a reference to Rome or its empire. Whatever Babylon does represent God wants us "out of it" and out of it now!
  - d) OK John, now that you've scared us half to death, what is Babylon and how do we get out of it? Yes when all the bad "Revelation stuff" happens it will be a literal city. Will that city itself be resurrected? Possibly. More importantly it represents living for things other than God Himself! It's the idea of trying to get joy from anything or everything where God isn't part of the picture. It's the idea of trying to live life where God isn't the center of it. That's to me, what "getting out of Babylon" is all about!
4. With that speech out of my system, let me end all of this by quickly describing these verses. There isn't a pattern, per se. Jeremiah spends most of the chapter continuing to give us the details of just how Babylon goes down. Keep in mind he wrote this long before it occurred. If you have doubts just remember he spent most of this book giving us details of what life was like in Israel before its conquering took place. It was almost a half century later when Babylon itself was conquered by a different empire. Yet Jeremiah gives us the details as if he's there.
- a) The chapter ends with Jeremiah asking a person to read this section at Babylon. Then that reader is to throw the scroll in the Euphrates River. The act is symbolic of the city's demise just as that scroll sunk when it was tied to a rock! I'm convinced God communicated all of this to Jeremiah long before it occurred. Daniel lived in Babylon and read from Jeremiah. (Daniel 9:2). Whether you believe it or not, I'm convinced Jeremiah wrote in great detail about Babylon's destruction long before it occurred.
5. With that said, there's a lot to this chapter and we have a lot of verses to get through. I also need to say, I'm sort of "bittersweet" as I write this. No I'm not pro-Babylon in terms of lifestyle. But I have written detailed lessons on every other bible chapter on this topic and I wrap it up with this one, so I'm bittersweet that way. Anyway, we got a long way to go, and it's best if we start, as we got a lot of ground to cover. A lot of stuff to share, so if interested, please join me as I go through the details. Thanks and let's begin:
6. Chapter 51, Verse 1: This is what the LORD says: "See, I will stir up the spirit of a destroyer against Babylon and the people of Leb Kamai.
- a) I want you to imagine standing on the outskirts of the capital city of a very large empire. I want you to imagine saying out loud that not only will the empire collapse, but the capital itself will be destroyed completely. The only similar thing I think in history is when there was the Assyrian Empire. It was destroyed by the Babylonians so completely, it was said that Alexander the Great marched right over it and didn't even realize that fact. My point is such utter destruction is a rare thing but has occurred a few times in history.
  - b) Still as stated in the introduction "Babylon" is more than that. It was the first place where an organized rebellion against God occurred and the bible ends with it being destroyed. I argue in this lesson it is both literal in the past tense sense and in a future tense some way. My point is as I go through this lesson, don't just see it as Jeremiah correctly predicting an event in history (the conquering of Babylon), but realize it's a prediction of what God will do in our lives, the avoidance of living for things other than God and the consequences of that lifestyle choice.
  - c) OK I got that speech out of my system, time to take on specific verses.
  - d) The "spirit of a destroyer" in this case is the Medo-Persian Empire. The point is just as God used the Babylonian Empire as His source of judgment, so He's using this other empire as a source of judgment against Babylon. We'll get to the why in a bit.
  - e) The reference to Leb Kamai is simply a nickname for the locals. It'd be like God saying He is wiping out New York City and all the Americans there. (As an illustration.)

7. Verse 2: I will send foreigners to Babylon to winnow her and to devastate her land; they will oppose her on every side in the day of her disaster.
- a) So why the reference to "foreigners"? Part of it is to show that God's not using the Israel as a source of judgment.
  - b) Let's get to the big question: If it was God's will for Babylon to destroy the land of Israel as well as other countries in the neighborhood, why is God punishing Babylon?
    - i) For starters, even though the king at the time of the conquering did honor the God over the local deities, by the time "grandson" was on the throne, it was back to the idols that dominated the Babylonian empire.
    - ii) Also keep in mind the Babylonians didn't just come into Jerusalem and say, "All of you get on the bus, you're out of here". They murdered and starved to death lots of people including a lot of innocent children and women.
    - iii) They also burned God's temple to the ground and this retribution is part of a plan to show that "God's God, deal with it!"
    - iv) Finally, it's a model for us to show what happens to any place or system that puts fame, fortune and power above God. Just as Babylon went down, so will the world that refuses to honor Him as God.
    - v) By the way, we'll get a lot more verses on why Babylon's going down in this text.
8. Verse 3: Let not the archer string his bow, nor let him put on his armor. Do not spare her young men; completely destroy her army. <sup>4</sup> They will fall down slain in Babylon, fatally wounded in her streets.
- a) So in Verse 3, who is the "archer not (note that word) using his bow and arrow or putting on their armor for warfare"? The Babylonians. It is famous for being conquered without a battle. As I explained in the last lesson, the key aspect of its conquering was the Persians diverting the Euphrates River and their soldiers went in under the gate. Again, remember Jeremiah predicted this long before it occurred. He wasn't alive at the "70 year" mark. God just told him the city won't be defended as it was being conquered. It's the key point here. Those soldiers on duty or guarding the king died fairly quickly as the Medo-Persian army came in that city.
  - b) So will the "final" Babylon be destroyed the same way? Revelation Chapter 18 implies it'll be wiped out, so I don't think there will be much defense of that as well!
9. Verse 5: For Israel and Judah have not been forsaken by their God, the LORD Almighty, though their land is full of guilt before the Holy One of Israel.
- a) For those of you who are fairly new to Jeremiah's studies, at that time, Israel was divided into two separate kingdoms. The northern one was called Israel. It was conquered about 100 years prior to Jeremiah. The now dead Assyrian Empire conquered it. They got beat by the Babylonians, so the Israelite survivors were scattered all over the Babylonian area when Jeremiah wrote this. At this point in history, the Southern Kingdom of Judah was still in existence (as we'll read near the end of the chapter), but it already has suffered lots of damage by the Babylonians. To put it simply, twice the Babylonians came to Judah as they put their own "puppets" in charge. By the time they got wiped out a few years after Jeremiah wrote this, Babylon got tired of the rebellion and wiped it out.
  - b) As I've also explained lots of times in these studies, no nation in the history of civilization has ever been conquered, scattered and came together again to be a country, except Israel which did it twice in history. The point is when Jeremiah wrote this it must have amazed him to think about what he was saying to predict that God hasn't forsaken the Israelites.
  - c) At the same time notice the text says "the land of Israel is full of sin" and in spite of this, it is still something God cherishes. God's rescuing Israel because He made an unconditional promise to give that land to Abraham's descendants and therefore Israel can't blow it even if they wanted to, but they can be in the penalty box, which is what we have here! Keep in mind the Israelites can't be in the penalty box forever, as Jesus will rule from Israel!

- d) Time for an important deviation. If God still remembers their sins does that mean He still remembers ours? If God is perfect, it means He can't learn or forget anything. In the New Testament book of Hebrews (8:12) God says He will remember their sins "no more". That prediction is also stated in Isaiah 43:25. The essential idea is Jesus died for all our sins, so God won't "throw them in our face" so to speak on judgment day if we're trusting in Jesus full payment for all our sins. Obviously that means it's not a free license to sin as He does desire us to be a good witness for Him. It does mean if we've confessed our sins and we desire to turn from them, He will remember them no more.
- i) That's the good news. The bad news is we still may suffer for them to teach us or as an example to others that sin "isn't to be messed with". That's why Israel got in effect, "thrown in the penalty box" and lots of people died to make the point of sin not being a thing to be taken lightly!
- ii) Enough of that. Back to Babylon!
10. Verse 6: "Flee from Babylon! Run for your lives! Do not be destroyed because of her sins. It is time for the LORD's vengeance; he will pay her what she deserves.
- a) Pause to consider Jeremiah's "chapter after chapter" judgment against Israel he also was given the privilege before Jerusalem's fall of knowing Babylon is doomed as well! He realizes this has to be future as obviously that nation wasn't conquered in his lifetime. He is making the point of God's people "getting out of her" (Babylon).
- b) I'm positive that applies to today as much as it did 2,500 years ago. I'm not saying that we can't visit the ruins if we're in the neighborhood. Babylon as a concept is about living for anything and everything other than God Himself. I know I beat that drum a lot, but let us be honest, it's so easy for any of us to turn from Him with our lives. Remember why God made us in the first place, to glorify Him with our lives. When we are living for anything other than God Himself we're wasting the most valuable thing He gave us, time itself. I'm not saying we have to spend 24/7 "passing out bible tracts". I'm saying our life has to be a living witness for Him in all that we do. Be it work, a hobby, time at home, etc. A life not used for His glory is in effect a life living in Babylon. That's why Babylon's destruction is such a big topic in the bible. Speaking of Babylon, let's move on.
11. Verse 7: Babylon was a gold cup in the LORD's hand; she made the whole earth drunk. The nations drank her wine; therefore they have now gone mad. <sup>8</sup> Babylon will suddenly fall and be broken. Wail over her! Get balm for her pain; perhaps she can be healed.
- a) So what does Verse 7 mean by "Babylon making the whole world drunk"? Past tense I'm suspecting it's about the fact that when it was the center of power, other places grew rich by trading with it and benefiting from it's source of power.
- b) Future wise, Revelation 17:6 speaks of a woman being drunk. Most likely that woman is representing a world wide (false) religious system at exists when "final Babylon" is ruling over the world. The point is think of absolute power. Think of fame or fortune. It's like a person being drunk in the sense of being out of control. Ultimate power is a stimulate, but ultimately it destroys if one thinks of themselves as having it all. Babylon past tense was at a peak of power when it was destroyed. Daniel 5 describes a drunk king at the moment it was conquered by the Persians. Anyway, you get the idea of "being mad with power" as being hinted at here. That's a story told many times in history.
- c) Verse 8 in effect is describing those who benefit from that power. The text mentions that city as being suddenly broken (as again it fell without a battle). The idea of "balm" if you don't know is an ointment for sores. The idea is those who benefited from the rise of that city won't be able to help it. A similar idea is taught in Revelation 18:17 that describes the people who grew rich by trading with Babylon.
- d) The underlying idea is not about us earning a living, it's about us "living for Babylon, and not living for God. That's why Jeremiah is going on and on about this. Speaking of going on and on, let's get back to Jeremiah on this topic.

12. Verse 9: "We would have healed Babylon, but she cannot be healed; let us leave her and each go to his own land, for her judgment reaches to the skies, it rises as high as the clouds.'
- So who's the "we" in Verse 9? Easy. It's those we discussed in Verse 8 who benefited from the Babylon system of them being the center of power. That's why some argue New York or Rome represents Babylon as both of those cities are or were the center of power. Again it's the idea of any place that's not God centered and those who benefit from that system.
  - So when the next Babylon judgment coming? The answer is God's timing is God's timing. Just as Rome fell as a center of power, so any city can be judged by God at any time. As to when the "Revelation show" gets going, that's not our job to move it along. Our job is to be a witness for Jesus that it's coming and it's a matter of "when, not if". It's now been about 2,000 years since Jesus walked the earth, how do I know it will happen? Consider all the accuracy of the bible predictions to date, including the Israelites being back in the land. It is a great argument that the Bible is the Word of God and if He says so, who am I to argue and say it won't happen! Again, it's not our job to worry about the when. We're called to be a witness for Jesus and lead people to Him.
13. Verse 10: "The LORD has vindicated us; come, let us tell in Zion what the LORD our God has done.'
- The "us" in Verse 10 is God's chosen. The verse is implying that despite all the sins that Israel has committed or we've committed, we're still His chosen. So that means our job is still to be a witness for Jesus as I've been pounding home in this lesson.
  - The word Zion is a nickname for Israel. Just as Jeremiah wanted the Israelites to still be a good witness there, so He wants us to be a good witness wherever we are!
14. Verse 11: "Sharpen the arrows, take up the shields! The LORD has stirred up the kings of the Medes, because his purpose is to destroy Babylon. The LORD will take vengeance, vengeance for his temple.
- Time to explain the "Medo-Persian" Empire fairly quickly. Think of it as a union between two different groups. The first leader that led the revolt against Babylon was "Darius the Mede". He was mentioned in Daniel 5:30-31. Now here is Jeremiah many years before it occurred saying "the kings of the Medes" overthrew Babylon. The reason it's plural is we also had another prominent leader called "Cyrus the Great". Good news, those names are not on the final exam. I just wanted you to know that when God made it clear to Jeremiah that the Medes were responsible for destroying Babylon, they were the dominant group of the "Mede-Persian" joint venture. The Persians became more prominent "down the road".
  - The other thing we get here is the reason for the destruction, "Vengeance for His temple". It appears a prominent reason why God wanted Babylon destroyed is vengeance for the destruction of His temple. Remember that God wanted the Babylonians to defeat Israel. Apparently it was not part of His plan to destroy the temple. Even if they didn't know it, a bigger point is God wanted to show that world that He's God and not any of Babylon's idols so that's why this is here.
  - As for the "double reference", keep in mind God's Temple will be rebuilt one day and the antichrist is going to "mess it up" to put it lightly. Therefore, I see that double reference as God's going to wipe out the world for among other reasons the desecration of His temple. The point is God's not to be messed with plain and simple.
15. Verse 12: You who live by many waters and are rich in treasures, your end has come, the time for you to be cut off.
- OK, time to get back to trashing Babylon! The city's located next to a bend in a major river (the Euphrates). Other waters could simply refer to the extent of the empire that covered a number of rivers and even bordered on some seas. That city got rich by conquering a lot of places. Anyway God "had enough" of that and Jeremiah is predicting it's death.
  - The important message is any organization, society or empire that doesn't have God as its center is doomed to die sooner or later. Babylon past and future are the ultimate example.

16. Verse 13: Lift up a banner against the walls of Babylon! Reinforce the guard, station the watchmen, prepare an ambush! The LORD will carry out his purpose, his decree against the people of Babylon.
- a) It's amazing to consider how well Jeremiah knew of the details of Babylon's fall. The last part of this chapter tell us this letter to them was delivered years before Jerusalem's fall. I am just saying the city was conquered by an ambush. Despite I'm sure were guards being on the walls of Babylon as they always were the city fell without a battle.
17. Verse 14: The LORD Almighty has sworn by himself: I will surely fill you with men, as with a swarm of locusts, and they will shout in triumph over you.
- a) As I mentioned in the introduction, the text jumps around discussing Babylonians, then it will go back to the conquerors then to the Israelites, etc. so get used to that pattern.
- b) This verse is in a sense focusing on the Medes and Persians who conquered Babylon. One of the famous historical writings by Darius is he said he defeated Babylon without a battle which is in effect what's being preached here. The Medo-Persian army came in under the drawbridge and their army immediately took over that city as the Babylon king got killed as also told in Daniel Chapter 5.
18. Verse 15: "He made the earth by his power; he founded the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding. <sup>16</sup> When he thunders, the waters in the heavens roar; he makes clouds rise from the ends of the earth. He sends lightning with the rain and brings out the wind from his storehouses.
- a) These verses focus on God Himself. Realize that Jeremiah wrote this message to Babylon. The message is in effect, "Don't you realize there's a god who created everything?" That's why Jeremiah is getting all "Genesis 1" in these verses. He's saying in effect, do you want evidence of a single god who created everything? Consider the weather or how was it the world was made in the first place. (The Babylonians believe in a multiple god system.)
- b) When I hear atheists argue it's all one big "accident", I teach about the fact the human eye is far more complex than any machine every created. The odds of the earth making itself is less likely than throwing stuff in a junkyard and a jet airliner being made by accident! I will stop there on evolution talk. We have too many verses to get through here.
19. Verse 17: "Every man is senseless and without knowledge; every goldsmith is shamed by his idols. His images are a fraud; they have no breath in them. <sup>18</sup> They are worthless, the objects of mockery; when their judgment comes, they will perish.
- a) Keep in mind that Babylon was knows as a "land of idols". One of the reasons God picked Babylon to conquer Israel is so they'd be sick of seeing idols. In that sense it "did the trick". After that time in history, Israel was never corporately guilty of idol worshipping.
- b) With that said, Jeremiah is preaching to a land full of idols. Here Jeremiah's preaching on just how worthless they are. Keep in mind the Babylonians trusted in those false gods as a means of protection.
- c) When the "Revelation 18" Babylon falls, so will its idols. There's a true principal that goes, that when people turn from God, they don't worship nothing, they find other things to be a substitute. God designed us with a need to worship something. Turning from Him just makes people turn to other things as the center of their lives.
- d) Keep in mind that if this doesn't apply to you, it can be used to preach against idols!
20. Verse 19: He who is the Portion of Jacob is not like these, for he is the Maker of all things, including the tribe of his inheritance-- the LORD Almighty is his name.
- a) After a few verses lecturing us about the "waste of time" of worshipping false gods, we've got Jeremiah driving the point home that the true God who created the world is also God of the Israelites ("Portion of Jacob" is a title as he was the common ancestor of the 12 tribes of Israel). The idea is that even though the Babylonians conquered Israel, it was only due to the fact God allowed it to occur. Which reminds me, I wouldn't want to be in the shoes of any nation today that goes against Israel. It's a steep price to pay to go there!

21. Verse 20: "You are my war club, my weapon for battle-- with you I shatter nations, with you I destroy kingdoms, <sup>21</sup> with you I shatter horse and rider, with you I shatter chariot and driver, <sup>22</sup> with you I shatter man and woman, with you I shatter old man and youth, with you I shatter young man and maiden, <sup>23</sup> with you I shatter shepherd and flock, with you I shatter farmer and oxen, with you I shatter governors and officials.
- a) I stated that Jeremiah likes to go back and forth between talking about the Babylonians, to talking about the Medo-Persian Empire and then back to Israel again. Jeremiah wants the Babylonians to make the connection that their fall wasn't due to the military might of the Medes, but because God allowed it to occur.
  - b) I read this section a few times and I kept wondering who is the "You" to start these verses? One has to go back to the previous verse to see it refers to the Israelites. Let's be honest, it wasn't them who defeated Babylon or any other great empire. One has to understand that it's about the "ideas" that they preached through the bible. The idea of God's existence and the fact He makes demands upon us on how to live. It's by those ideas that empires do fall through history. It was the rise of Christianity that in effect led to the fall of Rome. God's desire to preserve the Jewish nation in effect was the reason nations fell through history. I keep pointing out through my bible lessons how many nations and empires came and left yet Israel as a nation and a concept still stands. In that sense God did use the Israelites to be His "conqueror" of the world.
  - c) If I'm totally wrong here and it applies to the Medo-Persian Empire, it still fits! However I would say based on the verse before it and after it, the issue is still God and His chosen as the next verse also indicates.
22. Verse 24: "Before your eyes I will repay Babylon and all who live in Babylonia for all the wrong they have done in Zion," declares the LORD.
- a) As I asked earlier in the lesson if it was God's will for the Babylonians to conquer Israel, is it fair to blame them for destroying the place? As I said part of the issue is God wants the world to realize He's the God of the Israelites as well as the God of the world. Therefore to destroy the Jewish temple in Israel was a big part of the problem. As Jeremiah preaches to the Babylonians he wants them to grasp "God is God, deal with it!"
  - b) OK John this is getting boring. Why should we continue? If for no other reason because it gives us "ammunition" to use when we see others wasting their lives on things that won't matter for all of eternity. It isn't our job to convert people. It is our job to be a witness for Jesus and in effect preaching against what Babylon represents is doing just that.
23. Verse 25: "I am against you, O destroying mountain, you who destroy the whole earth," declares the LORD. "I will stretch out my hand against you, roll you off the cliffs, and make you a burned-out mountain.
- a) If you've ever done a geography study of Babylon it was pretty flat ground. So to call it a "destroying mountain" must be a metaphor and not a literal reference. Babylon formed a larger empire and conquered a lot of territory. The original tower of Babel worked to get people to ignore God (He commanded people to fill the earth and multiply and the tower was to keep people together). The final Babylon of Revelation 17-18 represents a system that does take over the world. It's a destroying mountain in the sense that future empire will dominate the whole world and will appeal to people's greed, desire for fame as well as the desire to worship something. The point of course is God will destroy it one day in the future just as easily as the historic Babylon did go down for the count.
24. Verse 26: No rock will be taken from you for a cornerstone, nor any stone for a foundation, for you will be desolate forever," declares the LORD.
- a) The point is the destruction of Babylon was and I'll argue will be so complete, no aspect of it will be used to form future buildings. It's sort of the opposite of Psalm 118:22 prediction that, "The stone the builder's rejected will be the cornerstone" as Jesus quoted in Matthew 21:42. The idea is when Babylon did and will go down, that's that!

25. Verse 27: "Lift up a banner in the land! Blow the trumpet among the nations! Prepare the nations for battle against her; summon against her these kingdoms: Ararat, Minni and Ashkenaz. Appoint a commander against her; send up horses like a swarm of locusts.
- Realize to take over an empire as large as the Babylonian Empire required a lot of people. Yes the city was conquered without a battle, but to take over an empire requires again lots of people. That's why the next empire was a joint venture between two groups, the Medes and the Persians (both of which are based out of what is Iran today). Some smaller groups were also part of that coalition and we see three of them mentioned in this verse.
  - No when we get to heaven God's not going to ask, "OK who are the groups that joined the revolt against Babylon? The only question I believe God will focus on is do you believe in Jesus payment for all of your sins and what did you do with that information?"
26. Verse 28: Prepare the nations for battle against her-- the kings of the Medes, their governors and all their officials, and all the countries they rule. <sup>29</sup> The land trembles and writhes, for the LORD's purposes against Babylon stand-- to lay waste the land of Babylon so that no one will live there.
- As you can tell, I'm "hell bound" to get through all 64 verses in this lesson so I'm keeping a pace to go through it the best I can. So why aren't the Persians mentioned? Because when the initial onslaught happened, it was mainly the Medes who did it. The Persians were in on that empire a little later, but it was mainly the Medes at this point.
  - As best I understand from history, the Medes occupied it and even the Greeks did when it was Alexander the Great's turn to conquer much of that area. Eventually Babylon became an abandoned city, so in that sense Jeremiah was right to the fact it died.
  - If Jeremiah is being parallel to the Revelation 18 destruction it will be complete. Today it's mostly a bunch of ruins. Much of the walls are still there. Saddam Hussein did rebuild it a little, but it wasn't that significant.
27. Verse 30: Babylon's warriors have stopped fighting; they remain in their strongholds. Their strength is exhausted; they have become like women. Her dwellings are set on fire; the bars of her gates are broken. <sup>31</sup> One courier follows another and messenger follows messenger to announce to the king of Babylon that his entire city is captured, <sup>32</sup> the river crossings seized, the marshes set on fire, and the soldiers terrified."
- As I stated, it's a matter of historical record that Babylon fell without a battle. Here we are being told that Babylon's warriors remained "in their strongholds" (think their stations). It is a way of saying the army wasn't aware of the attack and didn't help until it was too late.
  - Keep in mind the city of Babylon was considered "impenetrable". There were chariot races on the walls and six riders across could race. Yet here was a foreign army that plugged up the river and snuck in so quickly the defenders of the city lost badly.
  - In a sense all that could be reported to the king was the city was captured. Again I find all of this amazing that Jeremiah wrote about this way many years before it occurred.
  - OK John, we get the idea it's historically accurate and it's history written in advance. How does any of this affect our lives today? Yes we can point to bible accuracy. I'll also argue it is in a sense a reminder of how fast any system can fall that isn't God centered and we too have to be careful to never be a part of it.
28. Verse 33: This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "The Daughter of Babylon is like a threshing floor at the time it is trampled; the time to harvest her will soon come."
- Time for a quick education for us "city slickers" on a threshing floor. Israel's economy was based on growing wheat and barley. The crop required separating the good part from the waste. The way it was done is on a flat surface, the crop was thrown in the air. The heavy wheat fell down and the useless part (called chaff) blew away. With that understood, we get Jeremiah comparing Babylon at the time of it's destruction to a "threshing floor" (that's the area where the wheat was thrown). Jeremiah is using that image as a word picture for the fact that Babylon is "going down for the count". Again, the point for us has to do with the idea of any "Babylon" (living for non-godly things) is a waste of a life!

29. Verse 34: "Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has devoured us, he has thrown us into confusion, he has made us an empty jar. Like a serpent he has swallowed us and filled his stomach with our delicacies, and then has spewed us out. <sup>35</sup> May the violence done to our flesh be upon Babylon," say the inhabitants of Zion. "May our blood be on those who live in Babylonia," says Jerusalem.
- OK, time to describe this from Israel's perspective once again. Nebuchadnezzar led the army that attacked Jerusalem and was ultimately responsible for all that destruction and death that occurred there. The idea of "revenge" here is the fact that he destroyed God's temple and His land and God's "not to be messed with". That's why Babylon as a concept had to go down as it will again in the end times.
  - It's a little like the old joke, "Read the end of the bible, we win!" The losers is Babylon that represents all non-God centered choices people make in life and how ultimately it leads to their destruction. Yes I'm beating a dead horse here, so let's move on.
30. Verse 36: Therefore, this is what the LORD says: "See, I will defend your cause and avenge you; I will dry up her sea and make her springs dry. <sup>37</sup> Babylon will be a heap of ruins, a haunt of jackals, an object of horror and scorn, a place where no one lives. <sup>38</sup> Her people all roar like young lions, they growl like lion cubs.
- There's a classic truth in our dealing with God that He can do for us what we can't do for ourselves. If you think about all the miracles in the Gospels, none of them are things that we can do for ourselves. Maybe the stone that covered Jesus' grave could be moved by a bunch of men, but the idea is no one knew how it got moved. Still things like blind people seeing all of a sudden and mute people walking are beyond human explanation.
  - My point is God cares for His people. Since they were no match for a large army like the Babylonians, God's saying, "I'll do for you what you can't do for yourselves". Yes God did use the Babylonians as a source of judgment. Still they harmed "His people" so God must keep His word that the land of Israel will exist as an entity when the Messiah comes. That is why God essentially allowed the Israelites to return there.
  - Verse 36 says God will "dry up her sea". Obviously that city didn't border a sea. Yes it can refer to the Euphrates River. To state more obvious things, people can't live in a city if no water exists there. As I've stated a bunch of times, the Medo-Persian Empire conquered it by diverting that River. That's what Jeremiah is describing here. Yes it eventually became an abandoned city as it stands today in ruins and hasn't been used since Roman times.
  - The idea of "Her people roar" is about the fall of the city and "complaining about it".
31. Verse 39: But while they are aroused, I will set out a feast for them and make them drunk, so that they shout with laughter-- then sleep forever and not awake," declares the LORD.
- If you read Daniel Chapter 5, the king died at a big drinking party the king threw for all of the royal officials. It was the famous story of a hand writing on a wall. Jeremiah is telling us of that drunken party roughly a half century before it occurred. It was that night when the king and the royal officials died in a drunk state.
32. Verse 40: "I will bring them down like lambs to the slaughter, like rams and goats. <sup>41</sup> "How Sheshach will be captured, the boast of the whole earth seized! What a horror Babylon will be among the nations!
- We've got more "Babylon's going down for the count" here. These verses are sort of from God's perspective. The idea is they place will be destroyed so quickly it'll be like a bunch of farm animals being slaughtered. The word "Sheshach" is another reference to Babylon.
  - Keep in mind Babylon was the "center of the world" at that time. To predict its fall in the dramatic way it's being described here is an amazing prediction.
  - Let's remember again, why the bible goes into such great detail about its fall. I'm sure it's much more than the fall of that empire. Babylon represents an open rebellion against His desire for our lives. To study its fall is to remind us that any and all rebellion against Him will ultimately be a waste of time.
  - OK then, we're about two-thirds down now. Let's continue, we'll make it in no time!

33. Verse 42: The sea will rise over Babylon; its roaring waves will cover her.
- a) Again, I'm fascinated by the fact that Babylon is not a beach city. Maybe this is something end-time "ish". Maybe it's simply a metaphor for how Babylon will fall. One of the things I'm trying to get across is to think "bigger" than just ancient history here.
34. Verse 43: Her towns will be desolate, a dry and desert land, a land where no one lives, through which no man travels.
- a) I've beaten to death by now the fact that Babylon was pretty much desolate from Roman times to when Saddam spent a little money rebuilding parts of it. It's empty today as it is only used as a tourist attraction. One of the reasons I'm so convinced that this prophecy is also future is the "ultimate destruction" aspects laced through this chapter.
35. Verse 44: I will punish Bel in Babylon and make him spew out what he has swallowed. The nations will no longer stream to him. And the wall of Babylon will fall.
- a) Bel is the main false god of Babylon. He "swallowed" the countries Babylon conquered. I am also positive it's a reference to the fact the Israelites were allowed to go return to their land after the city was conquered.
  - b) As to the wall of Babylon, it's pretty much still there today. Obviously parts of it fell, but it still stands pretty much today. This is one of those double fulfillment predictions as it tells us that the city fell a long time ago but still has a future "fallen" destiny to occur one day. (Just my opinion on that!)
36. Verse 45: "Come out of her, my people! Run for your lives! Run from the fierce anger of the LORD.
- a) As I stated in the last lesson, this line is quoted in Revelation 18:4. I mentioned it earlier in this lesson as well. As the book of Ezra tells us, only a small percentage of Israelites chose to return home. Most of them got comfortable in those Empires so only a small percentage returned. I'm convinced it is a double prophesy and the idea is for us to not be involved in any lifestyle where God isn't the center of it. Does that mean we can't work for any secular company? Of course not. The idea is about our lifestyle choices. It is about making other stuff more important than God as the center of our lives. However, I'm beating that point to death by now, so let's move on.
37. Verse 46: Do not lose heart or be afraid when rumors are heard in the land; one rumor comes this year, another the next, rumors of violence in the land and of ruler against ruler. <sup>47</sup> For the time will surely come when I will punish the idols of Babylon; her whole land will be disgraced and her slain will all lie fallen within her.
- a) Remember that Jeremiah in effect gave this speech decades before Babylon's fall. So he's telling people in Babylon in effect "Rumors will come and go, but Babylon is going down on God's timing deal with it!"
  - b) Now think of that in terms of "double prophesy". The world's focus on fame, fortune and wealth has a lot of appeal. However one day it's going down as well. That's why the bible effectively ends the "bad stuff" with Babylon's fall before dealing with the rewards we will get as believers for eternity. OK, let's keep going.
38. Verse 48: Then heaven and earth and all that is in them will shout for joy over Babylon, for out of the north destroyers will attack her," declares the LORD. <sup>49</sup> "Babylon must fall because of Israel's slain, just as the slain in all the earth have fallen because of Babylon.
- a) So who's joyful over Babylon's fall? Heaven itself. That's because the "end of Babylon" is also the beginning of God's rule being enforced on the earth. Yes the nations Babylon did destroy will also be joyful over the first fall. Yes Babylon did fall for wiping out Israel as I have been preaching this whole lesson. Bottom line, it's their destiny to fall, so that should be our encouragement to not get "mixed up" in a world that only lives for fortune, fame or financial gain. I'm not saying those things are to be avoided. The point is if we just live for them, then ultimately it's a waste of a life. Such things only leave one feeling empty in the end as many a poet and the bible teaches.

39. Verse 50: You who have escaped the sword, leave and do not linger! Remember the LORD in a distant land, and think on Jerusalem." <sup>51</sup> "We are disgraced, for we have been insulted and shame covers our faces, because foreigners have entered the holy places of the LORD's house."
- Remember the verse about get out of Babylon. Well Verse 50 takes it one step further as it says, "not to linger". The problem is "when we play with fire we get burned". As a pastor I study puts it, "Don't go down that road, it's greased and hard to get back!" That's the idea behind not lingering. Thinking about Jerusalem is essentially the idea of getting our focus back on God. (You probably thought this was just endless verses about a historical event!)
  - Way back in Leviticus God gave specific instructions about who could enter His temple. It is in effect an insult to God that "anyone" entered it and that's a reason for it's destruction.
  - Think of it as a "heaven" entrance comment. It's the idea of not just anyone can come into heaven. One has to come based on God's unconditional forgiveness of our sins! OK, I am preaching to the choir again. Let's move on.
40. Verse 52: "But days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will punish her idols, and throughout her land the wounded will groan. <sup>53</sup> Even if Babylon reaches the sky and fortifies her lofty stronghold, I will send destroyers against her," declares the LORD. <sup>54</sup> "The sound of a cry comes from Babylon, the sound of great destruction from the land of the Babylonians. <sup>55</sup> The LORD will destroy Babylon; he will silence her noisy din. Waves of enemies will rage like great waters; the roar of their voices will resound.
- Again consider the "double fulfillment" of this entire section. It's definitely past tense to us and I'm equally convinced it's also future tense. It's also literal referring to the Babylonian people. It's also an example of what will come when He destroys all that rebel against His desire for how He calls us to live. With that idea in mind, we got verses about the literal destruction of that city.
  - Notice the comparison to invading to armies to "great waters". It's not literal. It's the idea that the destruction will be so overwhelming, it's like a giant wave overtaking something.
41. Verse 56: A destroyer will come against Babylon; her warriors will be captured, and their bows will be broken. For the LORD is a God of retribution; he will repay in full.
- OK we get the idea of Babylon going down hard. Jeremiah is pounding that point hard at this point. Why does it emphasize God is a "God of retribution". Yes they did horrid stuff by conquering other lands, but so have many other empires. Why single them out? Again part of it is the fact they destroyed God's temple. A bigger issue is the strong reminder for us Christians that God is a "God of Justice" just as much as He's a God of love.
  - Let me put it this way: Why's a person sent to hell eternally for rejecting Jesus? If a person never commits murder and was a "pretty good Joe", why isn't say 1,000 years punishment enough? First if one is aware or could have been aware that God was giving us a "get out of jail free card" by accepting His son's full payment and rejecting that, one is rejecting His free gift to us. The real idea is that our natural sinful state is so bad, there's no eternal way to forgive us. Hell is choosing to reject God's rule over our lives. It continues that way for all of eternity. That's the essential idea. I bring all that up here as Babylon's destruction is a perfect example of God's judgment being executed for rejecting His eternal purposes.
  - Let me put it another way: God's in charge therefore He makes the rules. Whether we like it or not He's in charge. If He says eternal punishment for going against His rules, He's got the right to make it his rules. OK then, back to Jeremiah.
42. Verse 57: I will make her officials and wise men drunk, her governors, officers and warriors as well; they will sleep forever and not awake," declares the King, whose name is the LORD Almighty.
- Again, Daniel 5 tells us the top Babylonian officials and the king were getting drunk when their fate went down. Therefore Jeremiah was writing decades in advance exactly the way that Babylon went down. So why tell them in advance? To warn them destruction will be a fact of life and hopefully have people turn to God before it's too late.

43. Verse 58: This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Babylon's thick wall will be leveled and her high gates set on fire; the peoples exhaust themselves for nothing, the nations' labor is only fuel for the flames."
- As I stated earlier, much of the Babylon wall remains to this day. I'm sure parts of it were leveled as he predicted. My simple point is that city did go down as Jeremiah predicts. As I have been stating much of the ruins remains to this day, but that just proves to the world that Babylon really did exist and the bible "isn't just making this up.
  - With all that said, it's time for the chapter epilogue: How this message got delivered.
44. Verse 59: This is the message Jeremiah gave to the staff officer Seraiah son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah, when he went to Babylon with Zedekiah king of Judah in the fourth year of his reign.
- Here is where we get the "time stamp" of the message. It was the fourth year of the reign of the last king of Israel. Roughly it was a decade before Israel's final fall. For those who have not heard enough the Babylon attack of Israel enough, there were three attacks on it. The first two did damage and the Babylonians decided who would be in charge. The third and final one was Babylon saying "We've had enough rebellion, we're leveling this place!"
  - Anyway, in the fourth year of the last Jewish king, a man named Seraiah traveled with the king to Babylon. Most likely this visit was for the Jewish king to pay tribute to them. The man named Seraiah was most likely the "travel agent" in charge of arranging the trip. It is about 1,675 miles from Jerusalem to Babylon (yes I googled that!) The point is Seraiah had to arrange transportation of who had to go. Apparently he was friendly enough to deliver Jeremiah's message. Let's be honest, preaching Babylon's fall in Babylon had to be a scary thing to do! I don't know who heard him preach it but if were me, I'd be timid to give it in a setting where say city guards could hear it. Give him credit for doing that.
45. Verse 60: Jeremiah had written on a scroll about all the disasters that would come upon Babylon—all that had been recorded concerning Babylon. <sup>61</sup> He said to Seraiah, "When you get to Babylon, see that you read all these words aloud. <sup>62</sup> Then say, 'O LORD, you have said you will destroy this place, so that neither man nor animal will live in it; it will be desolate forever.'
- It still amazes me that God told Jeremiah prior to Jerusalem's fall how Babylon would also fall one day. That had to give Jeremiah some comfort through all the tough things he had to preach for all the decades of his life. Grant it, Jeremiah himself didn't deliver it. For all we know it may have been one of those times where he was locked up for preaching that Jerusalem would fall to the Babylonians. I suspect we'll meet Seariah in heaven as he had the bravery to read Jeremiah's rules at Babylon itself. We don't know what did happen to him after he delivered it, just that he did do it! He read Jeremiah's verses about Babylon's fall so give him some credit for it. He even states how Babylon will forever be desolate so again, I give him credit for bravery.
  - Time for the kicker:
46. Verse 63: When you finish reading this scroll, tie a stone to it and throw it into the Euphrates. <sup>64</sup> Then say, 'So will Babylon sink to rise no more because of the disaster I will bring upon her. And her people will fall.' "
- After reading it he didn't bring it back to Jeremiah as a historical document. He tied it to a rock and tossed it in the Euphrates River. The word picture is just as the rock sunk to the bottom of the river so "Babylon is going down never to be rebuilt again". After all of this, I am convinced of the double-reference to past and future tense.
47. Final sentence: Verse 64b; The words of Jeremiah end here.
- There is a Chapter 52, but it's an epilogue that I'll cover next time. Right now let me pause to take it all in. Yes we made it through 64 verses in 12 pages. Yes I'm going to relax for a bit before working on the last chapter. Yes I'm amazed we got through all of this. Yes I do get this is tough sledding. It's necessary not to learn history, but to learn of "The end" of a great rebellion against God past tense as well as a great rebellion present and future tense. All we can do is be grateful it won't be a part of our future. Speaking of prayer:

48. Father, first we thank You that You have separated us from the world so that we can live our life as a witness for You. To live for "Babylon" is always a temptation away. Help; us to be pleasing to You in every aspect of our lives. "Bless it or block it" of the decisions we make that could affect our ability to be a good witnesses for You. Guide us and help us to be a good witness to those who are still "living for Bayblon" as we teach them and show them what a waste of a life it is to live for anything other than God's glory. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.