

September 21

Scriptures: Read Jeremiah 51

Key Verse: “Flee from the midst of Babylon, and every one save his life!...” (Jeremiah 51:6)

Overview

Jeremiah’s pronouncement of Babylon’s coming judgment is continued in chapter 51. It is called “the time of the Lord’s vengeance” (51:6), for although Babylon was used by God to make the nations, including His own people, drink the cup of His wrath (51:7; cf. 25:15-18, 27; 49:12), she had done so with undue enthusiasm, cruelty, violence, and covetousness (51:13, 24). Like a monster, Babylon devoured Jerusalem (51:34-35) and plundered the Lord’s Temple, utterly destroying it. They were prompted by their pride and desire to show that their gods could conquer the God of Israel. This proclamation of Jeremiah, however, written about seven years before the Temple’s destruction, was to prove that God would permit it to happen and that there is no god mightier than He.

Now the Lord declares that Babylon must drink the cup of His fury, until they are drunk and fallen (51:39, 57). He would accomplish this in His own timing, which would be “the vengeance for His temple” (51:11b). The “God of recompense” (51:56), whom Jeremiah declares to be the all-powerful eternal Creator (51:15-16, 19), would bring judgment upon all the man-made gods of the Babylonians; this would include their chief god Bel Merodach, to whom they had offered the vessels from the Lord’s Temple. The Lord, however, would show His greatness by bringing out of the heathen temples everything that had been plundered (51:44; cf. Ezra 1:7). Every idol and every idolatrous worshipper would be put to shame (51:17-18, 44, 47, 52).

God purposed to bring about His judgment to repay Babylon for the evil they had done by the gathering of several nations in rebellion against their oppressive suzerain. The Lord called upon the Medes and other nations, along with the Persians under Cyrus to prepare themselves for the ambush (51:11-12). Jeremiah was so certain of the fulfillment of this that he wrote as though the plans that the Lord devised against Babylon had already happened (51:12b, 41). To demonstrate this certainty, Jeremiah had Seraiah, the brother of Baruch, his friend and secretary, carry the scroll of this prophecy against Babylon to the exiles and encourage them by reading it to them. Afterwards, he was to make the scroll sink to the bottom of the Euphrates River as an illustration of what God would do to Babylon; she too would sink out of sight, never to rise again (51:59-64). The Lord would accomplish this by empowering the nations to do His will against Babylon (51:20-24).

The people of God, who were in the midst of the Babylonian empire, are urged here to “flee from the midst of Babylon” lest they too “be cut off in her iniquity” and bring upon themselves “the fierce anger of the Lord” (51:6, 45; 50:8). In the book of Revelation, we read of many similar expressions concerning a future Babylon, which symbolically represents a wicked society opposed to God in the end times. The Lord’s people are again urged to “come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues” (Rev. 18:4; cf. Zech. 2:7). To remain in Babylon and be a part of the wicked society which the Lord has condemned is, in effect, to participate in her sin, as well as run the risk of sharing in her punishment. The Apostle

Paul exhorts: “Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity” (2 Tim. 2:19b). We, who are called by His name, are not to be conformed to the world but transformed by the Holy Spirit, that we might do the will of God (Rom. 12:2; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 Cor. 6:14-18).

The faithful remnant in the Exile were not only told to leave Babylon but were urgently instructed where to go; they were to run quickly to the Lord’s presence in Jerusalem and draw near to Him in His holy habitation (51:50). Likewise today, believers who have left the sins of this world behind are to enter into His presence with worship and praise, for wherever two or three are gathered in His Name, He will be present in their midst (Matt. 18:20; Zech. 2:10-13).

Prayer

Thank You, Lord, that through Jesus You have provided a way to escape the wages of our sin. We ask that You would open the hearts of people everywhere to the glorious message of the cross, that they may receive the forgiveness of sins and Your gift of eternal life.