

Jeremiah Chapter 51

Verses 1-4

“The day of trouble”:

The coming of the northern invader is in view.

Jeremiah 51:1 "Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will raise up against Babylon, and against them that dwell in the midst of them that rise up against me, a destroying wind;"

The phrase “in the midst of them that rise up against me” is usually taken to be a cryptogram for Chaldea (i.e., Babylon; see the note on verse 41).

This wind is a spiritual wind.

It comes from God.

The Holy Spirit is like a rushing mighty wind.

This destroying wind could also be the Persians, who swoop down like a wind and destroy them.

Jeremiah 51:2 "And will send unto Babylon fanners, that shall fan her, and shall empty her land: for in the day of trouble they shall be against her round about."

"Babylon fanners, that shall fan her":

Meaning the Medes and Persians, who should be like a strong wind upon the mountains.

Where grain, having been threshed, was fanned, and the chaff carried away by the wind.

And such would the Chaldeans be in the hand of the Persians.

Scattered and dispersed among the nations as chaff with the wind.

And their cities be emptied of inhabitants, and of their wealth and riches.

The Targum is, "I will send against Babylon spoilers that shall spoil and exhaust the land:"

"For in the day of trouble they shall be against her round about":

In the time of the siege they shall surround her on all sides, so that none might escape.

As Babylon had been a fanner of the LORD's people, now she should be fanned herself, and stripped of all she had (see Jer. 15:7).

Both of the Scriptures above are spiritual.

They are speaking of a fire and the wind keeps the fire fanned up and going.

God wants this fire to be very hot and not to go out until it completely destroys.

Jeremiah 51:3 "Against [him that] bendeth let the archer bend his bow, and against [him that] lifteth himself up in his brigandine: and spare ye not her young men; destroy ye utterly all her host."

These are either the words of the LORD to the Medes and Persians, to the archers among them, to bend their bows and level their arrows against the Chaldeans, who had bent their bows and shot their arrows against others.

Or of the Medes and Persians stirring up one another to draw their bows, and fight manfully against the enemy.

"And against him that lifteth up himself in his brigandine":

Or coat of mail.

That swaggers about in it, proud of it, and putting his confidence in it, as if out of all danger.

The sense is, that they should direct their arrows both against those that were more lightly or more heavily armed.

Since by them they might do execution among the one and the other.

"And spare ye not her young men":

Because of their youth, beauty, and strength.

"Destroy ye utterly all her host":

Her whole army, whether officers or common soldiers.

Or let them be equipped in what manner they will.

The Targum is, "consume all her substance."

This is speaking of the battle being against the army of Babylon.

The young men are in the service and they are to die.

It matters not whether they are officers or enlisted men.

Jeremiah 51:4 "Thus the slain shall fall in the land of the Chaldeans, and [they that are] thrust through in her streets."

By the sword, or by the arrows and darts of the Medes and Persians.

"And they that are thrust through in her streets":

Either by the one or by the other, especially the latter, since they only are mentioned (see Jeremiah 50:30).

Verse 4 makes it very clear that this battle is not just in town, but throughout the land.

Many will be thrust through with a spear or sword and die on the spot they were struck.

Jeremiah 51:5 "For Israel [hath] not [been] forsaken, nor Judah of his God, of the LORD of hosts; though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel."

"Here is a reminder that God will not utterly forget or destroy His people (Compare Rom. 11:1-2, 29).

God still remembers the sin of Israel, but has forgiven that sin and restored her.

God did not let them go into captivity and forget them.

This battle is partially to free Israel to return to her homeland.

God is the LORD of hosts.

Jeremiah 51:6 "Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity; for this [is] the time of the LORD'S vengeance; he will render unto her a recompence."

This is said either to such as were there of other nations upon trade and business.

As Kimchi, to get out of it as fast as they could, that they might not be consumed.

Or to the Israelites, as Jarchi, the Jews that were captives there.

This is applied to the people of God in mystical Babylon (Rev. 18:4).

"And deliver every man his soul":

Or "life"; from the destruction coming on the city, and the inhabitants of it.

"Be not cut off in her iniquity":

Or, "that he be not cut off"; with her, in the punishment inflicted upon her for her iniquities.

Which is the same as partaking of her plagues (Rev. 18:4).

"For this is the time of the LORD's vengeance":

The time fixed by him to take vengeance on Babylon for her sins against him, and the wrongs done to his people.

"He will render unto her a recompence":

The just shortcoming of their sins.

A repayment or reward by way of punishment for them (see Rev. 18:6).

We see a warning here to all the Israelite captives in Babylon to flee before the war gets started, because they might get caught up in the war and die if they remain.

Jeremiah 51:7 "Babylon [hath been] a golden cup in the LORD'S hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad."

Either so called from the liquor in it, being of a yellow color.

Or pure as gold, as the Jewish commentators generally.

Or from the matter of it, being made of gold, denoting the grandeur, splendor, and riches of the Babylonian empire.

Which, for the same reason, is called the head of gold (Dan. 2:38).

This was in the hand of the LORD, under his direction, and at his disposal.

An instrument he makes use of to dispense the cup of his wrath and vengeance to other nations.

Or to inflict punishment on them for their sins (see Jer. 25:15).

Or else the sense is, that, by the permission of God, Babylon had by various misleading pretenses had drawn the nations of the earth into idolatry, and other sins.

Which were as poison in a golden cup, by which they had been deceived.

And this suits best with the use of the phrase in (Rev. 17:4).

"That made all the earth drunken":

Either disturbed them with wars, so that they were like a drunken man that reels to and fro.

And falls, as they did, into ruin and destruction.

Or made them drunk with the wine of her fornication.

With idolatry, so that they were intoxicated with it, as the whore of Rome, mystical Babylon, is said to do (Rev. 17:2).

"The nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad":

They drank of the wine of God's wrath by her means.

Being engaged in wars, which proved their ruin, and deprived misappropriation of their riches, strength, and substance, as mad men are of their reason.

Or they drank in her errors, and partook of her idolatry, and ran mad upon her idols, as she did (Jer. 50:38; see Rev. 18:3).

As we said in a previous lesson, there is a literal Babylon and there is a spirit of Babylon.

The physical is spoken of as being destroyed by the Persians.

Both Babylons are actually destroyed by the LORD.

Revelation 14:8 "And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."

Revelation 16:19 "And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath."

Both Babylons are evil and it is good advice to flee out of her, before the LORD's wrath is poured out on her.

Her cup is full of sin or fornication.

Jeremiah 51:8 "Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed: howl for her; take balm for her pain, if so be she may be healed."

"Suddenly fallen":

The focus was first on Babylon's sudden fall on one night (in 539 B.C.); Dan. 5:30).

The far view looks at the destruction of the final Babylon near the Second Advent when it will be absolutely sudden (Rev. Chapter 18).

The fate of both Babylons is to fall suddenly and be destroyed.

In both cases, those looking on howl for her.

Revelation 18:10-11 "Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come." "And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more:"

There is no medicine to heal this pain.

This is the wrath of God upon her.

Jeremiah 51:9 "We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed: forsake her, and let us go every one into his own country: for her judgment reacheth unto heaven, and is lifted up [even] to the skies."

The prophet here seemeth to personate the mercenary soldiers that should come to help the Chaldeans, as if they should say this, they would have helped Babylon.

But there was no healing for her.

And therefore, they call one to another to leave her to herself, and return each man to his own country.

For her punishment was very great, her case too sad for them to help.

The reaching of things to the heavens, and lifting them up to the skies, are phrases used to signify high and great measures and degrees of things.

So expressed (Gen. 11:4; 28:12; Deut. 1:28; 1 Sam. 5:12; 2 Chron. 28:9; Psalm 107:26).

"Her judgement reaching to heaven" says that God has judged Babylon and found her guilty.

There will be no healing of this land.

Jeremiah 51:10 "The LORD hath brought forth our righteousness: come, and let us declare in Zion the work of the LORD our God."

Hath made manifest the equity of our cause, revenged the wrongs we have suffered, and shown ours to be the true religion.

By bringing such remarkable judgments upon our enemies.

"Come, and let us declare in Zion":

Therefore let us give glory to him in the assemblies of his church, and in the most public manner imaginable.

This is spoken in the persons of the captive Jews.

“The work of the LORD our God”:

And in the times of the greatest fears and hopes, it is most needful to remember the LORD.

The feeling excited by Babylon's fall is the same with the New Testament Babylon (See Revelation 18:9, 19).

The ruin of all who support idolatry, infidelity, and superstition, is needful for the revival of true godliness.

And the threatening prophecies of Scripture yield comfort in this view.

This actually is the righteousness of God, which is a free gift to His people.

The least we or they can do is be thankful for that gift of righteousness.

Zion is the holy city or the church.

Notice this is His work and not ours.

Jeremiah 51:11 "Make bright the arrows; gather the shields: the LORD hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for his device [is] against Babylon, to destroy it; because it [is] the vengeance of the LORD, the vengeance of his temple."

“Kings of the Medes”:

The aggressor was specifically identified (compare verse 28), as the leader of the Medes, assisted by Persia (539 B.C.).

Making the arrows bright means they are shined, so they will not have any rough edges.

This is preparation for war.

The "Medes" here, is actually speaking of the Persians.

They will do the actual fighting against Babylon.

God uses whoever He wants to for carrying out His vengeance.

Jeremiah 51:12 "Set up the standard upon the walls of Babylon, make the watch strong, set up the watchmen, prepare the ambushes: for the LORD hath both devised and done that which he spake against the inhabitants of Babylon."

Some judge these words spoken to the Medes, declaring the will of God.

That they should use all probable means to conquer Babylon, or (as some would have it), display their banners upon the walls of it.

As signs of its being already conquered.

But certainly, it is more reasonable to conclude them the prophet's words to the Babylonians, rousing them out of their security.

For it appears they were strangely secure from (Daniel chapter 5).

Historians tell us that the city was fortified by walls fifty cubits high, and two hundred cubits broad, and by a very deep and large ditch.

Besides that on one side it had the river Euphrates.

Or at least quickening them to make all the preparation they could, though all would be to very little purpose.

For God had resolved upon what he would do upon Babylon, and it was already as good as done.

The "standard" is like a flag.

Armies carry a flag in the front lines to show their soldiers where to go.

The watchmen are to form a circle around the city to watch against help coming from another city.

The ambushes are the ones to go ahead and get into the city.

Jeremiah 51:13 "O thou that dwellest upon many waters, abundant in treasures, thine end is come, [and] the measure of thy covetousness."

Here Babylon is addressed, either by the LORD, or by the prophet, or the godly Jews.

Who is described by her situation, which was by the great Euphrates River.

Which being branched out into several canals or rivers, both ran through it, and encompassed it.

Hence mention is made of the rivers of Babylon (Psalm 137:1); and a fit emblem this city was of mystical Babylon.

Which is also said to sit on many waters, interpreted of people and nations (Rev. 17:1).

And which Kimchi here interprets of an affluence of good things, though he admits of the literal sense of the words.

"Abundant in treasures":

Of corn, and of the fruits of the earth.

And so in condition to hold out during a siege, as well as strongly fortified by art and nature, before described.

And of gold and silver, the sinews of war, which she had got together, partly by commerce, and partly by the spoil of other nations.

And yet neither her situation nor her affluence could secure her from ruin.

"Thine end is come, and the measure of thy covetousness":

This flourishing city was now near its end, and with it the whole Babylonish monarchy.

The time fixed by the LORD, for the duration of one and the other, was now come.

And whereas her covetousness was insatiable, and would have known no bounds.

For the enlargement of her dominions, and for the accumulation of more wealth and riches.

God set a limit to it, beyond which it should not go.

Which measure was now filled up, and the time for it expired.

The Targum is, "the day of thy destruction is come, and the time of the visitation of thy wickedness."

They were on the Euphrates River and there were canals everywhere.

We know also, that the city of Babylon had water surrounding it to keep back attackers.

This is the very way the enemy got into the inner wall.

Their covetousness is speaking of all the booty they recovered from the countries they had invaded.

Jeremiah 51:14 "The LORD of hosts hath sworn by himself, [saying], Surely I will fill thee with men, as with caterpillars; and they shall lift up a shout against thee."

Or, "by his soul" or "life"; which is himself, than which he cannot swear by a greater (See Hebrews 6:13).

And the certain performance of what he swears unto need not be doubted of.

And indeed the design of the oath is to assure of the truth of the thing, about which, after this, there ought to be no hesitation.

"Surely I fill thee with men, as with caterpillars":

Or "locusts"; March in vast numbers, and make sad desolation where they come.

And to which a numerous army may fitly be compared.

And which are here meant, even the army of Cyrus that should enter Babylon, and fill it, as it did.

So the Targum, "the LORD of hosts hath sworn by his word, if I fill them with armies of many people as locusts:"

"And they shall lift up a shout against thee":

As soldiers, when they make the onset in battle.

Or as besiegers, when they make their attack on a city.

Or as when grape gatherers bring in their vintage, or tread out their wine, to which the allusion is.

It signifies that her enemies should get an entire victory, and triumph over her.

The army that comes against them are so great in number, they are compared to caterpillars.

This shout of the great army will add to the frightening experience of the invasion.

The LORD swears by Himself because there is no greater to swear by.

Verses 15-16

Chapters 46-51, emphasize that God is both the Controller and Consummator of earth's history.

These verses (compare 10:12-16), reinforce the truth that He is also the Creator and Sustainer of the world.

Verses 15-19

"He hath made the earth by his power":

God's almighty power and wisdom in creation are evidences of His superiority to all idols (verses 17-18), who along with their worshipers will all be destroyed by His mighty power (verses 15-16, 19), as in Babylon's case.

Jeremiah 51:15 "He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heaven by his understanding."

The Targum prefaces the words thus, "these things saith he who hath made the earth, etc."

The verses (Jer. 51:16), are the same with (Jer. 10:12).

God is described by his sovereignty, power, and wisdom.

And the stupidity of men that trust in idols, and the vanity of them, are exposed, to convince the Babylonians that the LORD, who had determined on their destruction, would surely effect it.

And that it would not be in the power of their idols to prevent it (see Jer. 10:12).

This is not some of these helpless false gods they have been worshipping, but the God who created the earth and everything in it.

His power is in His Word.

He said, "Let there be" and the world was created and everything and everyone in it.

His understanding is so great that He put the planets in perfect order and they obey His voice to stay there.

Jeremiah 51:16 "When he uttereth [his] voice, [there is] a multitude of waters in the heavens; and he causeth the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth: he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures."

Repeated from (Jer. 10:12-16); except that "Israel" is not in the Hebrew of (Jer. 51:19).

Which ought, therefore, to be translated, "He is the Former of all things, and (therefore), of the rod of His inheritance" (that is, of the nation peculiarly His own).

In (Jer. 10:1-25), the contrast is between the idols and God.

Here it is between the power of populous Babylon and that of God.

"Thou dwellest upon many waters" (Jer. 51:13); but God can, by merely "uttering His voice," create "many waters" (Jer. 51:16).

The "earth" (in its material aspect), is the result of His "power".

The "world" (viewed in its orderly system), is the result of His "wisdom," etc. (Jer. 51:15).

Such an Almighty Being can be at no loss for resources to affect His purpose against Babylon.

This is a description of how He did the creation.

It also tells us that God alone is in charge of the lightning, rain and wind.

Jeremiah 51:17 "Every man is brutish by [his] knowledge; every founder is confounded by the graven image: for his molten image [is] falsehood, and [there is] no breath in them."

Every man is senseless by his knowledge.

Every goldsmith is confounded by the graven image.

For his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them.

Jeremiah 51:18 "They [are] vanity, the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish."

In the time of their judgment they shall perish, when God will execute his vengeance.

Man's earthly intelligence will not save him.

A man's so-called intelligence sometimes leads him to destruction.

To decide to worship a graven image or a false god, is certainly destructive.

The knowledge we should seek is the knowledge of God.

I believe these few Scriptures here are showing that unlike false gods, which have no power, God has the power to do what He says.

These false gods have no life, so they cannot give life.

When death comes to these Babylonians, their false gods will not be able to help them.

Jeremiah 51:19 "The portion of Jacob [is] not like them; for he [is] the former of all things: and [Israel is] the rod of his inheritance: the LORD of hosts [is] his name."

That is, the true God of Israel is not like these idols.

For he can help when all things are desperate.

We see from this that Jacob is God's chosen.

Jacob has a living God.

Jacob's name was changed to Israel when he encountered God.

God had promised Abraham to bless him and through him bless the nations.

Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac was the father of Jacob.

Israel belongs to God and God to Israel.

Even spiritual Israel (the Christians), belong to God, and God to us.

We are joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.

LORD, as we said before is Jehovah.

The extended meaning of Jesus is Jehovah Savior.

Verses 20-23

“Thou art my battle axe”:

Cyrus of Persia was God’s battle axe Ten times the phrase “with thee” hits with the force of a hammer.

Jeremiah 51:20 "Thou [art] my battle axe [and] weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms;"

This is said by the LORD, either to Cyrus, as some, to which our version prefers, whom God made use of as an instrument to subdue nations and kingdoms, and destroy them (see Isa. 45:1).

Or rather Babylon, and the king of it, who had been the hammer of the earth (Jer. 50:23); as it may be rendered here, "thou art my battle axe".

Or, "hast been"; an instrument in his hands, of beating the nations to pieces, as stones by a hammer, and of destroying them, as by weapons of war.

This, and what follows, are observed to show, that though Babylon had been used by the LORD for the destruction of others, it should not be secure from it itself, but should share the same fate.

Unless this is to be understood of the church of God, and kingdom of Christ, which in the latter day will break in pieces all the kingdoms of the earth (Dan. 2:44).

Which sense seems to have some countenance and confirmation from (Jer. 51:24), "in your sight".

The Targum is, "thou art a scatterer before me, a city in which are warlike arms;" which seems to refer to Babylon.

"For with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms":

Or, "with thee I have broken in pieces, and have destroyed"; the future instead of the past.

As the nations and kingdoms of Judea, Egypt, Edom, Moab, Ammon, and others.

Or, "that I may break in pieces, etc. and so it expresses the end for which he was a hammer, as well as the use he had been or would be.

God's family on the earth, are His weapons.

We fight the battles, even though He has already won the war.

In this particular instance, God is using another worldly people to attack Babylon.

God is their Creator.

He can use them if He wants to.

They may not recognize Him as their God, but He is their Creator.

They are but putty in His hands.

Actually, it is God who makes war against Babylon.

He just uses Persia.

Jeremiah 51:21 "And with thee will I break in pieces the horse and his rider; and with thee will I break in pieces the chariot and his rider;"

Or, "have broken".

Meaning the cavalry of an army, wherein lies its chief strength.

"And with thee will I break in pieces the chariot and his rider":

Which were also used in war.

Jeremiah 51:22 "With thee also will I break in pieces man and woman; and with thee will I break in pieces old and young; and with thee will I break in pieces the young man and the maid;"

Or, "have broken"; having no respect to any sex, and to the propagation of posterity.

"And with thee will I break in pieces old and young":

Not sparing men of any age, however useful they might be, the one for their wisdom, the other for their strength.

"And with thee will I break in pieces the young man and the maid":

Who by procreation of children might fill and strengthen commonwealths.

Jeremiah 51:23 "I will also break in pieces with thee the shepherd and his flock; and with thee will I break in pieces the husbandman and his yoke of oxen; and with thee will I break in pieces captains and rulers."

Or, "have broken"; which Abarbanel thinks respects the Arabians particularly, who were shepherds, and dwelt in tents.

But it rather signifies shepherds and their flocks in general.

Who were killed or scattered wherever his armies came, which spared none, even the most innocent and useful, and though unarmed.

"And with thee will I break in pieces the husbandman and his yoke of oxen":

With which he ploughed his ground.

Signifying by this, as well as the former that those were not spared, by which kingdoms were supported and maintained, as shepherds and husbandmen.

"And with thee will I break in pieces captains and rulers":

By whom kingdoms and states are governed and protected.

Notice "I" will.

God is causing the attack.

One of the reasons, of course, is to deliver Judah.

All of the things and people mentioned above that He will break, are the power of their strength.

They are the things that made Babylon strong.

Jeremiah 51:24 "And I will render unto Babylon and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea all their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight, saith the LORD."

Or, "but I will render", etc.

Though I have made this use of Babylon, she shall not be spared, but receive her just recompense of reward.

Not the city of Babylon only, but the whole land of Chaldea, and all the inhabitants of it.

"All their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight, saith the LORD":

The sense is, that for all the evil the Chaldeans had done in Judea; the ravages they had made there, the blood they had shed, and the desolation they had made.

And particularly for what they had done in Jerusalem, and especially in the temple, burning, spoiling, and profaning that God would now righteously punish them, and retaliate all this evil on them.

And which should be done publicly, before all the nations of the world, and particularly in the sight of God's own people.

For this phrase, "in your sight", does not refer to the evils done in Zion, but to the recompense that should be made for them.

The very things that Babylon did to Jerusalem will be done to them here.

They will receive the same cruelty that they gave.

Jeremiah 51:25 "Behold, I [am] against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the LORD, which destroyest all the earth: and I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain."

"Destroying mountain":

Though Babylon existed on a plain, this phrase was meant as a portrayal of Babylon's looming greatness and power in devastating nations (compare also 50:23, and see note there).

"A burnt mountain":

Babylon will be like a volcano that is extinct, never to be rebuilt (verse 26).

The mountain could be speaking of a volcano.

The burnt mountain with rolling rock down the side is a description of a volcano erupting.

Whether this is a literal volcano or is speaking of the terribleness of this battle, I cannot say.

The volcano did not destroy, it had been Babylon that destroyed.

This could possibly mean that the power of Babylon is burned and removed.

Jeremiah 51:26 "And they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations; but thou shalt be desolate for ever, saith the LORD."

Signifying that it should be so utterly consumed by fire, that there should not be a stone left fit to be put into any new building.

Especially to be a corner or a foundation stone.

The Targum understands it figuratively, "and they shall not take of thee a king for a kingdom, and a ruler for government:"

"But thou shalt be desolate for ever, saith the LORD" (see Jer. 50:39).

Babylon is a city and a country as well as a system of evil.

In this I believe it is speaking of the city, which has never been restored.

Jeremiah 51:27 "Set ye up a standard in the land, blow the trumpet among the nations, prepare the nations against her, call together against her the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and Ashchenaz; appoint a captain against her; cause the horses to come up as the rough caterpillars."

Here are listed the people north of Babylon who were conquered by the Medes early in the sixth century B.C.

They assisted the Medes against Babylon.

"Ararat" is possibly speaking of Armenia.

The Persian Empire was made up of many nations.

The "horses as caterpillars" just speaks of the large number of horses in the battle.

Jeremiah 51:28 "Prepare against her the nations with the kings of the Medes, the captains thereof, and all the rulers thereof, and all the land of his dominion."

At the head of them, Darius and Cyrus.

The Syriac version has it in the singular number, the king of the Medes.

"The captains thereof, and all the rulers thereof, and all the land of his dominion":

That is, the inhabitants of it, the common people, with their princes, nobles, and governors.

As captains of them, under Cyrus, their generalissimo.

This again is speaking of the Persians, when it says the Medes.

This just speaks of the many nations that are led by Cyrus.

Jeremiah 51:29 "And the land shall tremble and sorrow: for every purpose of the LORD shall be performed against Babylon, to make the land of Babylon a desolation without an inhabitant."

The land of Chaldea, the inhabitants of it, should tremble, when they heard of this powerful army invading their land, and besieging their metropolis.

And should sorrow and be in pain as a woman in travail, as the word signifies.

"For every purpose of the LORD shall be performed against Babylon":

Or, "shall stand"; be certainly fulfilled. For his purposes are firm and not to be frustrated.

"To make the land of Babylon a desolation without an inhabitant":

This the LORD purposed, and threatened to do (see Jer. 50:39).

This is speaking of the vast destruction that the army of the Persians do.

We must keep in mind however, this is actually the judgement of God on these people.

Jeremiah 51:30 "The mighty men of Babylon have forborne to fight, they have remained in [their] holds: their might hath failed; they became as women: they have burned her dwelling places; her bars are broken."

Or, "ceased from fighting" for it seems, upon Cyrus's first coming, the king of Babylon and his army gave him battle.

But being overthrown, they retired to the city, and dared never fight more.

"They have remained in their holds":

In the towers and fortresses of Babylon, never daring to charge out of the city, or appear in the field of battle any more.

Even though Cyrus sent the king of Babylon a personal challenge, to end the quarrel by a single combat.

"Their might hath failed":

Their courage sunk and was gone.

They had no heart to face their enemy.

"They became as women":

As weak as they.

As the Targum; timorous and fearful, having no courage left in them, and behaved more like women than men.

"They have burned her dwelling places":

That is, the enemy burnt their houses, when they entered into the city, to inject terror into them.

"Her bars are broken":

The bars of the gates of the city, or of the palaces of the king and nobles.

And of the houses of the people, by the soldiers, to get the plunder (see Isa. 45:1).

The word "forborne" means to refrain from doing something.

In fear, these brave Babylonians have run to hide.

They fear this great army that has come against them.

Their fear is well grounded because their land is being burned and ravaged.

Jeremiah 51:31 "One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to show the king of Babylon that his city is taken at [one] end,"

"To show the king of Babylon":

Couriers brought the report of the city's fall.

Since Belshazzar was slain in the city on the night of the fall (Dan. 5:30).

A reference may be to runners speeding the news to his co-ruler Nabonidus, who was away from Babylon or possibly to Daniel, the third ruler in the kingdom (Dan. 5:29).

This just shows that the battle is coming from several places at once.

The "post" refers to runners who carried messages in those days.

Jeremiah 51:32 "And that the passages are stopped, and the reeds they have burned with fire, and the men of war are affrighted."

The method of capturing the city was to block off the Euphrates River and dry up the river bed under the city wall, then march in.

The "fire" was set to frighten and it did.

There is no way of escape.

Their brave soldiers are frightened, because they know they have lost the war.

Jeremiah 51:33 "For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; The daughter of Babylon [is] like a threshing floor, [it is] time to thresh her: yet a little while, and the time of her harvest shall come."

"The LORD of hosts", the LORD God omnipotent, and can do all things.

"The God of Israel":

And therefore, will plead their cause, and take vengeance on Babylon.

"The daughter of Babylon is like a threshing floor":

On which the nations of the earth had been threshed, or punished and destroyed.

And now she was like a threshing floor, unto which should be gathered, and on which should be laid, her king, princes, and the people of the land, and be there beat and crushed to pieces.

The Targum renders it the congregation of Babylon.

And the Septuagint the houses of the king of Babylon.

So the Arabic version.

"It is time to thresh her":

Not the floor, but the sheaves on it.

Or, "it is the time to tread her"; as corn was trodden out by the oxen.

Or rather as threshing floors, being new laid with earth, were trodden, and so made hard and even, and by that means prepared for threshing against the harvest.

When the corn would be ripe, cut down, and gathered in, and laid up, as follows.

"Yet a little while, and the time of her harvest shall come":

When she would be ripe for ruin, and God would, by his instruments, put in the sickle of his wrath, and cut her down.

Her king, her princes, her cities, and her people (see Rev. 14:15).

The Targum is, "and yet a very little while, and spoilers shall come to her."

Babylon had grown at the expense of others.

Now judgement time has come.

Harvest time and time of God's judgement are the same.

Jeremiah Chapter 51 Questions

1. In verse 1, God raises up what against Babylon?
2. What do fanners do?
3. What will happen to Babylon's young men?
4. What is this battle partially for?
5. What are the Israelites being warned of in verse 6?
6. What is the fate of both Babylons?
7. Who will mourn for Babylon?
8. Who judged Babylon?
9. What is the righteousness in verse 10?
10. Who are the "Medes"?
11. What is the "standard" like?
12. What river was Babylon on?

13. Who did the LORD of hosts swear by?
14. God made the earth by His _____.
15. He has established the world by His _____.
16. He stretched out the heaven by His _____.
17. What is verse 16?
18. What does "brutish" mean?
19. _____ is God's chosen.
20. God has the power to do what He _____.
21. Who are the Christians joint-heirs with?
22. What are some of the things God breaks in pieces?
23. What is the mountain in verse 25?
24. What is "Ararat" speaking of?
25. Who are leading the nations against Babylon?
26. What does the word "forborne" mean?
27. Who are the "post"?
28. The daughter of Babylon is compared to what in verse 33?