

**Jer 50-51, The Oracles Against Babylon**

**Jer 50:21-46**

**July 27-August 4, 1991**

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**A. Overview**

1. Four oracles, three in ch. 50 and one long one in ch. 51. All are odd chiasms, and it is fruitful to compare their centers, the focal points, with respect to repeated features.

	Previous Study	This Study	Next Study
	50:11-13	25	38-40
a) Babylon desolate	X		X
b) The Lord's agency	X	X	X
c) Her sin against people	X		X
d) Her idolatry		X	X

2. There is a progression between the two in this chapter: first the sin and the Lord's initiative against her, then the consequences of his judgment.

**B. 21-32, Babylon's Pride against the Lord**

The first part of the chapter emphasized Babylon's abuse of Israel. This oracle doesn't mention that at all, but concentrates on her pride, and the Lord's personal agency in bringing the adversary against her. ABC-D-ABAC, where

1. A is the mustering of the foe against Babylon;
2. B is a "voice" describing Babylon's destruction;
3. C gives the reason for Babylon's fall, as the Lord addresses her directly;
4. D is at the focus.

1. D, Start at the focus, 25. The Lord prepares his attack. Note the emphasis on his agency: "this is the work of the Lord God of hosts." Don't ascribe this activity to a agent.

2. A, 21, 26-27a, 29a. Strings of imperatives to God's instruments in the attack. 21 is singular ("thee"), 26-27 and 29 are plural (29 "ye"). Also, 21 is more strategic, while the latter verses are more tactical. Apparently in 21 the command is to the leader of the troops as he sets his campaign in order, while after the center the Lord gives specific instructions to the individual attacking troops.

The two proper names are Babylonian terms for Babylon or parts of it, that have punning meanings in Hebrew. "Merathaim" means "double rebellion"--note the emphasis of this oracle on Babylon's pride. "Pekod" means "visitation" or "punishment."

3. B, 22-23, 27b-28, a "voice" describing Babylon's destruction.

- a) First, "a voice of battle," noting how the nation who once ruled the world has now been reduced to nothing.

*Application:* It can happen to the US.

- b) Then, "the voice of them that flee." This time, the quote comes before the reference to the voice, not after it. As the refugees flee, they declare Babylon's woe.
- 4. C, 24, 29b-32, the reason for Babylon's fall, as the Lord addresses her directly.
  - a) 24, Address followed by reason. God has taken Babylon because she strove with him.

*Application:* when we deal with God's people, we are dealing with him. We must be extremely careful.

- 1) Exo 16:8, the people thought they were complaining to Moses and Aaron, but they were murmuring against the Lord.
  - 2) Num 16:11, Korah thought he was rebelling against the authoritarianism of Moses and Aaron, but he was rebelling against the Lord.
  - 3) 1 Sam. 8:7, the people didn't reject Samuel in asking for a king; they rejected the Lord.
  - 4) Acts 5:4, Ananias and Sapphira thought they were lying to men about their gift, but they were lying to God.
  - 5) Summary of the principle, Luke 10:16, the Lord's instruction to the 70: "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.
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- b) 29b-32, this time the reason comes before the direct address. Three times her pride (*zdn*, arrogance) is called to our attention. The essence of pride is living as though there were no God, refusing to recognize that we must answer to him. Everything else wrong that Babylon does stems from this, and thus this is emphasized as the reason that God himself opens his armoury against her.

*Thus we see the root sin of the nation, and the Lord's initiative against her. The next oracle shows the outcome of this engagement.*

#### C. 33-46, Babylon's Desolation

Now the central focus (38-40) is on Babylon's everlasting desolation because of her idolatry. The Lord's agency, so prominent in the previous oracle, is only at the outer edges of this one. ABCBA, where

- 1. A introduces a lawsuit at the beginning, and gives its resolution at the end.
  - 2. B describes the attack on Babylon and its near-term effect.
  - 3. C gives the reason (Babylon's idolatry) and the ultimate result (desolation) of this attack.
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- 1. 33-34, Because Israel has been abused, the Lord takes her case in court.
    - a) God arises to "plead their cause" (*riyb yariyb yet-riybam*),

the same legal verb that was in focus in ch. 3, where God took Israel to court!).

- b) God is described as their "redeemer." In Israelite law, the family member with responsibility to avenge the death of someone who has been murdered, or redeem an impoverished relative from slavery. Key ideas: a family member relieving the oppressed by dealing with the adversary.

*Application:* The Lord Jesus is our redeemer; to carry out this function he had to become our family member. Thus the incarnation! Heb. 2:14,15 makes this explicit.

- c) God's lawsuit has a twofold purpose (34): give rest to the land, and disquiet Babylon. Both purposes will be satisfied in the concluding section.

2. 35-38a The attack and its effect: the XEREB-XOREB judgments.

- a) In general, this is an alternation between attack and effect. Each element in which Babylon might have hope is rendered empty.
- b) 38 "drought" is a pun: *xoreb* instead of *xereb* "sword in the previous verses. Like Egypt with the Nile, Babylon had a dependable water supply in the Tigris and Euphrates, but God can bring even this to a stop.

3. 38b-40, the center. Because they worshipped idols, Babylon will be deserted forever. This has yet to be fulfilled. Babylon has never been completely deserted like this--but one day she shall be.

4. 41-44 The Attack and its effect. Instead of the alternation between cause and effect in the first panel, here the effect is described between two descriptions of the attack, and the second description develops the Lord's sovereignty behind the human armies as preparation for the sequel.

- a) 41-42, 44, Description of the approaching enemy (plural in 41-42, singular in 44).
- b) 43, the effect concentrates on the King.

5. 45-46 Sequel. Recall from v.34 that God's lawsuit has a twofold purpose: give rest to the land, and disquiet Babylon. Both purposes are satisfied here.

- a) 45, Babylon falls.
- b) 46, the rest of the earth learns of this, and thus no longer fears.

**Summary**

1. The root sin is pride and arrogance against the Lord. He takes personally any sin against his people.

2. He himself is the ultimate agent of judgment, though he may use human instruments.
3. When his judgment does fall, it is unprecedented in its fierceness and severity. We must flee from God's wrath and trust in Christ alone.

**Psalm:** 51:1-9, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned."

#### **Analysis**

Heavily indebted to Aitken's analysis in *Tyndale Bulletin* 35 (1984).

#### **Part I: The Oracles**

50:1 HA/D.FBFR ) :A\$ER D.IB.ER Y:HWFH )EL-B.FBEL )EL-)EREK  
K.A&:D.IYM B.:/YAD YIR:M:YFHW. HA/N.FBIY)

- A. 2-20, ABCBA chiasm. Babylon abused Israel, so God will destroy her and restore Israel. Center, 11-13, Babylon will be destroyed.  
See previous study.
- B. 21-32, ABC-D-ABAC. Deemphasizes Babylon's opposition to Israel, and focuses on her pride against the Lord and his agency in opposing her. Center, 25, God is the ultimate agent in judging Babylon. (No description of her sin)  
Amplification p

#### 1. ampl

- a) 21 command to attackers of Babylon
  - 1) 50:21 (AL-HF/)FREC M:RFTAYIM (:AL"H (FLEY/HF W:/)EL-YOW\$:B"Y P.:QOWD
  - 2) X:AROB W:/HAX:AR"M )AX:AR"Y/HEM N:)UM-Y:HWFH
  - 3) WA/(:A&"H K.:/KOL ):A\$ER CIW.IYTIY/KF S
- b) 22-23 lament over Babylon, "voice of war"
  - 1) 50:22 QOWL MIL:XFMFH B.F/)FREC W:/\$EBER G.FDOWL
  - 2) 50:23 )"YK: NIG:D.A( WA/Y.I\$.FB"R P.A+.IY\$ K.FL-HF/)FREC
  - 3) )"YK: HFY:TFH L:/\$AM.FH B.FBEL B.A/G.OWYIM
- c) 24 Address to Babylon: God has taken her because she strove with him. reason p
  - 1) text:
    - a> 50:24 YFQO\$:T.IY L/FK:
    - b> W:/GAM-NIL:K.AD:T.: B.FBEL
    - c> W:/)AT.: LO) YFDF(AT.:
    - d> NIM:C")T
    - e> W:/GAM-NIT:P.A&:T.:
  - 2) reason: K.IY BA/YHWFH HIT:G.FRIYT
- 2. text: 25 The Lord prepares his attack
  - a) 50:25 P.FTAX Y:HWFH )ET-)OWCFR/OW
  - b) WA/Y.OWC") )ET-K.:L"Y ZA(:M/OW
  - c) K.IY-M:LF)KFH HIY) LA/ )DONFY Y:HWIH C:BF)OWT B.:/)EREK  
K.A&:D.IYM

3. ampl

- a) 26-27a command to attackers
  - 1) 50:26 B.O)W.-L/FH. MI/Q. "C
  - 2) P.IT:XW. MA):ABUSEY/HF
  - 3) SFL.W./HF K:MOW-( :AR"MIYM
  - 4) W:/HAX:ARIYMW./HF
  - 5) )AL-T.:HIY-L/FH. \$:) "RIYT
  - 6) 50:27 XIR:BW. K.FL-P.FREY/HF
  - 7) Y"R:DW. LA/+\_.FBAX
- b) 27b-28 lament over Babylon, "voice of refugees": Israel's cry against Babylon: quote f
  - 1) quote:
    - a> HOWY (:AL"Y/HEM
    - b> K.IY-BF) YOWMFM ("T P.:QUD.FT/FM S
  - 2) quote f:
    - 50:28 QOWL NFSIYM W./P:L"+IYM M"/)ERE B.FBEL L:/HAG.IYD B.:/CIY.OWN )ET-NIQ:MAT Y:HWFH ):ELOH"Y/NW. NIQ:MAT H"YKFL/OW
- c) 29a command to attackers:
  - 1) 50:29 HA\$:MIY(W. )EL-B.FBEL RAB.IYM K.FL-D.OR:K"Y QE\$ET
  - 2) X:ANW. (FLEY/HF SFBBIYB
  - 3) )AL-Y:HIY-{ZZ} [L/FH.] P.:L"+FH
  - 4) \$AL.:MW.-L/FH. K.:/PF(:FL/FH.
  - 5) K.:/KOL ):A\$ER (F&:TFH (:A&W.-L/FH.
- d) 29b-32 disaster because Babylon is proud against the Lord  
The theme of pride ties these pps together; they correspond to the two members of v.24.
  - 1) 29b-30 reason-result p
    - a> reason: K.IY )EL-Y:HWFH ZFDFH )EL-Q:DOW\$ YI&:RF) "L
    - b> result: therefore her forces fail 50:30 LF/K"N
      - 1> YIP.:LW. BAXW.REY/HF B.I/R:XOBOTEY/HF
      - 2> W:/KFL-)AN:\$"Y MIL:XAM:T./FH. YID.AM.W. B.A/Y.OWM HA/HW.) N:)UM-Y:HWFH S
  - 2) 31-32 address to Babylon
    - a> 50:31 HIN/:NIY )"LEY/KF ZFDOWN N:)UM- ):ADONFY Y:HWIH C:BF)OWT
    - b> K.IY B.F) YOWM/:KF ("T P.:QAD:T.IY/KF
    - c> 50:32 W:/KF\$AL ZFDOWN
    - d> W:/NFPAL
    - e> W:/ )"YN L/OW M"QIYM
    - f> W:/HIC.AT.IY )"\$ B.:/(FRFY/W cf. Amos
    - g> W:/ )FK:LFH K.FL-S:BIYBOTFY/W S

C. 33-46, ABCBA Now the central focus is on Babylon's idolatry, 38-40, everlasting desolation because of her idolatry. (None of God's agency in center)  
50:33 K.OH )FMAR Y:HWFH C:BF)OWT

1. Setting: God arises to represent Israel in court (p.c. ch. 3).

The twofold purpose declared in v.34 is achieved in 45-46.

a) Israel's predicament

- 1) (:A\$W.QIYM B.:N"Y-YI&:RF)"L W./B:N"Y-Y:HW.DFH YAX:D.FW
- 2) W:/KFL-\$OB"Y/HEM HEX:EZIYQW. BFM
- 3) M") :ANW. \$AL.:X/FM

b) The Lord takes her part

- 1) 50:34 G.O):AL/FM XFZQ
- 2) Y:HWFH C:BF)OWT \$:M/OW
- 3) purpose p
  - a> text: RIYB YFRIYB )ET-RIYB/FM
  - b> purpose: L:MA(AN
  - 1> HIR:G.IY(A )ET-HF/ )FREC
  - 2> W:/HIR:G.IYZ L:/YO\$:B"Y BFBEL

2. 35-38a The attack and its effect: the XEREB-XOREB judgments  
In general, this is an alternation between attack and effect. In  
the correspondent, 41-44, it will be a chiasm.

- a) 50:35 XEREB (AL-K.A&:D.IYM N:)UM-Y:HWFH W:/)EL-YO\$:B"Y BFBEL  
W:/)EL-&FREY/HF W:/)EL-X:AKFMEY/HF
- b) 50:36 XEREB )EL-HA/B.AD.IYM W:/NO)FLW.
- c) XEREB )EL-G.IB.OWREY/HF WF/XFT.W.
- d) 50:37 XEREB )EL-SW.SFY/W W:/)EL-RIK:B./OW  
W:/)EL-K.FL-HF/(ERE ):A\$ER B.:/TOWK/FH. W:/HFYW. L:/NF\$IYM
- e) XEREB )EL-)OWC:ROTEY/HF W./BUZ.FZW.
- f) 50:38 XOREB )EL-M"YMEY/HF W:/YFB"\$W.

3. 38b-40 Because they worshipped idols, Babylon will be deserted  
forever. reason-purpose p:

- a) reason: K.IY )EREC P.:SILIYM HIY) W./BF/) "YMIYM YIT:HOLFLW.
- b) purpose: 50:39 LF/K"N
  - 1) Y":\$:BW. CIY.IYM )ET-)IY.IYM
  - 2) W:/YF\$:BW. B/FH. B.:NOWT YA(:ANFH
  - 3) W:/LO)-T"\$B (OWD LF/NECAX
  - 4) W:/LO) TI\$:K.OWN (AD-D.OWR WF/DOWR
  - 5) manner p
    - a> manner: 50:40 K.:/MAH:P."KAT ):ELOHIYM )ET-S:DOM  
W:/)ET-(:AMORFH W:/)ET-\$:K"NEY/HF N:)UM-Y:HWFH
    - b> text:
      - 1> LO)-Y"\$B \$FM )IY\$
      - 2> W:/LO)-YFGW.R B./FH. B.EN-)FDFM

4. 41-44 The Attack and its effect. Here the response is between two  
descriptions of the attack, and the second description develops  
the Lord's sovereignty behind the human armies as preparation for  
the sequel.

a) 41-42 Description of the approaching enemy

- 1) 50:41 HIN."H (AM B.F) MI/C.FPWN W:/GOWY G.FDOWL
- 2) W./M:LFKIYM RAB.IYM Y"(ORW. MI/Y.AR:K.:T"Y-)FREC
- 3) 50:42 QE\$ET W:/KIYDON YAX:AZIYQW.
- 4) )AK:ZFRIY H"M.FH
- 5) W:/LO) Y:RAX"MW.
- 6) QOWL/FM K.A/Y.FM YEH:EMEH

- 7) W:/ (AL-SW.SIYM YIR:K.FBW.  
 8) (FRW.K: K.:/)IY\$ LA/M.IL:XFMFH (FLAY/IK: B.AT-B.FBEL
- b) 43 Reaction of the King of Babylon
- 1) 50:43 \$FMA( MELEK:-B.FBEL )ET-\$IM:( FM
  - 2) W:/RFPW. YFDFY/W
  - 3) CFRFH HEX:EZIYQAT/:HW. XIYL K.A/Y.OWL"DFH
- c) 44 Announcement of the approaching enemy
- 1) 50:44 (cf. 49:19) HIN."H K.:/)AR:Y"H YA(:ALEH MI/G.:)OWN HA/Y.AR:D."N )EL-N:W"H )"YTFN
  - 2) K.IY-)AR:G.I(FH {}):ARW.C."/M} []:ARIYC" M] M"/(FLEY/HF
  - 3) W./MIY BFXW.R )"LEY/HF )EP:QOD
  - 4) K.IY MIY KFMOW/NIY
  - 5) W./MIY YOW(ID/EN.IY
  - 6) W./MIY-ZEH RO(EH ):A\$ER YA(:AMOD L:/PFNFY
5. 45-46 Sequel: the Lord achieves his objective from v.34.
- a) His oath to disinherit Babylon: quote p
- 1) quote f: 50:45 LF/K"N \$IM:(W. (:ACAT-Y:HWFH ):A\$ER YF(AC )EL-B.FBEL W./MAX:\$:BOWTFY/W ):A\$ER XF\$AB )EL-)EREK K.A&:D.IYM
  - 2) quote:  
a> )IM-LO) YIS:XFBW./M C:(IYR"Y HA/C.O)N  
b> )IM-LO) YA\$.IYM (:AL"Y/HEM NFWEH
- b) The report of her fall among the nations
- 1) 50:46 MI/Q.OWL NIT:P.:&FH BFBEL NIR:( :A\$FH HF/ )FREC
  - 2) W./Z:(FQFH B.A/G.OWYIM NI\$:MF( S
- D. ch. 51, X ABCBA X. Between summary oracles (X), both introduced by "Thus saith the Lord," the Lord conducts extensive conversations with the refugees (A), and directly addresses the attacker (B) and Babylon (C, 25-26).
- See next study.

**Part II, 51:59-63a: The Delivery Mechanism: quote p**  
 See next study.

**Colophon, 51:63b**  
 (AD-H"N.FH D.IB:R"Y YIR:M:YFHW. S