

Jer 50-51, The Oracles Against Babylon
Jer 51:59-64
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Overview

This section gives the historical setting of the previous 2 chapters, the four oracles against Babylon.

1. Review the content of these chapters:
 - a) *Babylon* will be punished for her twofold sin: opposition to God's people, and more fundamentally, pride against the Lord.
 - b) *The human enemy* that destroys Babylon is only an instrument of the Lord. He is really the one in control.
 - c) In order to escape this coming judgment, *Israel* should take every opportunity to abandon Babylon and return to Zion. The temptation to linger too close to the world is subtle and strong; we need to keep clearly in our mind and in the minds of the unbelievers around us that our citizenship is in heaven, and our loyalties to heaven's God.
2. Historical setting of 51:59-64 (fourth year of Zed = 594 BC; trip to Babylon)
 - a) Neb's hegemony over the levant began in 605 with his defeat of Egypt at the Battle of Carchemish. Mentioned in Jer. 46:2.
 - b) Judah under Jehoiakim became his vassal within a year or two (2 Kings 24:1). This is when Daniel and his friends went to Babylon, the first of the three deportations. Followed by Jehoiachin (Jeconiah), who only lasted three months before he was deported in 597 and replaced with Zedekiah.
 - c) Dec 595-Jan 594, there was an attempted coup in Babylon against Nebuchadnezzar. After the events of the last week, we all know what happens in a coup: just as the palestinians, Qaddafi, and Hussein supported the soviet committee of eight against Gorbachev, so Neb's enemies (including Judah) had their hopes raised. Modes of this:
 - 1) Jer. 28:1-4 (notice Zed's fourth year), opportunistic prophets began predicting the fall of Neb's government and the return of the first two waves of captives.
 - 2) Jer. 27:2-11, other nations gathered with Jerusalem to plot rebellion against Neb.
 - d) Throughout all of this, Jer steadfastly maintained that Neb would remain in power, and ultimately defeat Jerusalem.
 - e) As last week, so in 594, the coup failed, and Neb remained in

power. Obvious consequences:

- 1) Some of the prophets already in exile were foolish enough to foretell the fall of Neb; he slew these (29:20-21).
 - 2) Our text tells that Zed himself went to see Neb, probably to assure him of his loyalty. (Perhaps Neb even ordered him to report?)
- f) Jer continues to stand against the wind. Now he sends a copy of his prophecies against Babylon directly to Babylon.
3. Jer is not contradicting himself. His prophecies before and during the coup concern events to come to pass within ten years. Those after the coup concern events that have not yet been completely fulfilled. But in both cases he is certainly contradicting the wisdom of those around him, and therein lies the lesson of this passage.

A. 59-60, The Setting

1. The Time: fourth year of Zed, 594 BC
2. The Occasion: Zed going to Babylon. Our reconstruction suggests that this is to try to explain his clumsy attempt at rebellion during the coup, as recorded in ch. 27.
3. The Messenger: Seraiah the son of Neriah the son of Maaseiah
 - a) a brother of Baruch, Jer's scribe (cf. 32:12)
 - b) his role on the trip: "quiet prince" or "prince of the restingplace" probably indicates that he is the royal official responsible for the king's personal bivouac during travels. No Holiday Inns; he has to set up the king's camp each evening and pack it up the next morning. Very important official.
4. The Message: "all these words that are written against Babylon," the preceding two chapters. Not exactly the kind of stuff you'd want to fall into the hands of a tyrant recently recovered from a coup.

What is Seraiah to do with this book when he gets to Babylon?

B. 61-64, The Instructions

He is to see to it that he understands the book himself, then illustrate it by a graphic demonstration.

1. 61-62, Appropriate the Book
The time phrase probably extends only through the arrival to Babylon. When he gets there, he is to do three things:
 - a) "See." Take note of the city: its splendor, its military might, the signs of Neb's wrath against the conspirators of the coup.

Application: God's people are not to be ignorant of the world in which they live. In recognizing the authority of God's Word we do not check our brains at the door.

b) "Read." It's one thing to read these prophecies in the comfort of an armchair, when "Babylon" is just a dusty old word in a history book. But in the center of Babylonian power, this must have been quite an experience for Seraiah.

NB: Reading at this period was always done aloud. Think of Seraiah's apprehension: "What if someone hears me reading such things?" Just wait, Seraiah, until you hear what comes next!

c) "Pray." Tell the Lord what you have read. Acknowledge that you have received his message.

d) *Application:* These three commands give a very reasonable pattern for Bible study. We need not just to read the word of God, but to observe the world carefully so that we can correlate what we read with real life; and then speak with the Lord about what we have read.

2. 63-64, Perform an Illustration

Given the subject matter and the circumstances, Seraiah would probably prefer to keep his devotions private. But he is to go to the river, a public place, and there cast the book, while uttering a final prophecy of Babylon's doom. Neb must learn that he no less than his victims is subject to the rule of the God of heaven, and will one day have to answer to that God. Thus the very envoy that brings Neb news that Judah is submitting to him, also confronts him with the warning that one day he will submit to Judah's God.

C. Summary

Those who bear the name of Christ are subject to two sorts of fears, one toward others who claim to believe, the other toward declared unbelievers. Jer's actions in the fourth year of Zedekiah, in connection with the attempted coup in Babylon, exemplify godly courage.

1. When human wisdom said that Neb was about to fall, Jer insisted to God's people that God's prophecies of judgment against Judah would come true. The "believers" said he was irrelevant and negligent of "obvious" truths about the world, but he held true to the Word of the Lord that he had received.

2. Now, when Neb is restored to power and everyone is eager to say nice things about him, Jer boldly sends a warning about his ultimate destruction right into the capitol.

3. *Application:* Clearly, being faithful to the Lord is not a calling for sissies. It demands a willingness to believe his word and stand by it, a position that will sometimes bring us into conflict both with unbelievers and with compromising believers. But if we have made the decision to stand with him, we can trust

in him, by his Spirit, to uphold us just as he upheld Jeremiah and his friends.

Hymn: "My Soul, Be On Thy Guard" or "Christian, Doest Thou See Them?"

Analysis

Part I: The Oracles See previous studies

Part II: The Delivery Mechanism: quote p

- A. quote f: summary p
1. text: circumstantial p
 - a) text: 51:59 HA/D.FBFR):AŞER-CIW.FH YIR:M:YFHW. HA/N.FBIY))ET-&:RFYFH BEN-N"RIY.FH B.EN-MAX:S"YFH
 - b) circumstance: B.:/LEK:T./OW)ET-CID:QIY.FHW. MELEK:-Y:HW.DFH B.FBEL B.I/\$:NAT HF/R:BI(IYT L:/MFL:K/OW
 - c) comment: W./&:RFYFH &AR M:NW.XFH
 - d) 51:60 WA/Y.IK:T.OB YIR:M:YFHW.)"T K.FL-HF/RF(FH):AŞER-T.FBOW))EL-B.FBEL)EL-S"PER)EXFD)"T K.FL-HA/D.:BFRIYM HF/)"L.EH HA/K.:TUBIYM)EL-B.FBEL
 2. summary: 51:61 WA/Y.O)MER YIR:M:YFHW.)EL-&:RFYFH
- B. quote: coordinate p
1. temporal p: Proclaim the book
 - a) time: K.:/BO)/:AKF BFBEL
See notes on temporal clauses: WR)T is apodosis, not continuation of protasis.
 - b) text:
 - 1) W:/RF)IYTF
 - 2) W:/QFRF)TF)"T K.FL-HA/D.:BFRIYM HF/)"L.EH
 - 3) quote p
 - a> quote f: 51:62 W:/)FMAR:T.F
 - b> quote: quote p
 - 1> quote f: Y:HWFH)AT.FH DIB.AR:T.F)EL-HA/M.FQOWM HA/Z.EH
 - 2> quote: purpose p
 - a: text: L:/HAK:RIYT/OW
 - b: purpose: contrast p
 - 1: L:/BIL:T.IY H:EYOWT-B./OW YOW\$"B L:/M"/)FDFM W:/(AD-B.:H"MFH
 - 2: K.IY-\$IM:MOWT (OWLFM T.IH:YEH
 2. temporal p: Perform an Illustration
 - a) time: 51:63 W:/HFYFH K.:/KAL.OT/:KF LI/Q:RO))ET-HA/S."PER HA/Z.EH
 - b) text:
 - 1) T.IQ:\$OR (FLFY/W)EBEN
 - 2) W:/HIŞ:LAK:T./OW)EL-T.OWK: P.:RFT
 - 3) quote p
 - a> quote f: 51:64 W:/)FMAR:T.F
 - b> quote: coordinate p
 - 1> reason p
 - a: text: contrast p

1: K.FKFH T.I\$:QA(B.FBEL
2: W:/LO)-TFQW.M
b: reason: MI/P.:N"Y HF/RF(FH):A\$ER)FNOKIY M"BIY)
(FLEY/HF
2> W:/YF("PW. (repeated from v.58; final capstone of the
prophecy)

Colophon

(AD-H"N.FH D.IB:R"Y YIR:M:YFHW. S