

CHAPTER 51

The prophet, in this chapter, goes on with the prediction of Babylon's fall, to which other prophets also bore witness. He is very copious and lively in describing the foresight God had given him of it, for the encouragement of the pious captives, whose deliverance depended upon it and was to be the result of it. Here is,

I. The record of Babylon's doom, with the particulars of it, intermixed with the grounds of God's controversy with her, many aggravations of her fall, and great encouragements given thence to the Israel of God, that suffered such hard things by her (v. 1-58).

II. The representation and ratification of this by the throwing of a copy of this prophecy into the river Euphrates (v. 59-64).

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THE JUDGMENT OF BABYLON

The particulars of this copious prophecy are dispersed and interwoven, and the same things left and returned to so often that it could not well be divided into parts, but we must endeavor to collect them under their proper heads. Let us then observe here,

I. An acknowledgment of the great pomp and power that Babylon had been in and the use that God in his providence had made of it (v. 7): *Babylon hath been a golden cup*, a rich and glorious empire, *a golden city* (<244> Isaiah 14:4), *a head of gold* (<208> Daniel 2:38), filled with all good things, as a cup with wine. Nay, she had been *a golden cup in the Lord's hand*; he had in a particular manner filled and favoured her with blessings; he had made the earth *drunk with this cup*; some were intoxicated with her pleasures and debauched by her, others intoxicated with her terrors and destroyed by her. In both senses the New-Testament Babylon is said to have made the kings of the earth drunk, <677> Revelation 17:2; 18:3. Babylon had also been God's *battle-axe*; it was so at this time, when Jeremiah prophesied, and was likely to be yet more so, v. 20. The forces of Babylon

were God's *weapons of war*, tools in his hand, with which he broke in pieces, and knocked down, *nations and kingdoms*, — *horses and chariots*, which are so much the strength of kingdoms (v. 21), — *man and woman, young and old*, with which kingdoms are replenished (v. 22), — *the shepherd and his flock, the husbandman and his oxen*, with which kingdoms are maintained and supplied, v. 23. Such havoc as this the Chaldeans had made when God employed them as instruments of his wrath for the chastising of the nations; and yet now Babylon itself must fall. Note, Those that have carried all before them a great while will yet at length meet with their match, and their day also will come to fall; the rod will itself be thrown into the fire at last. Nor can any think it will exempt them from God's judgments that they have been instrumental in executing his judgments on others.

II. A just complaint made of Babylon, and a charge drawn up against her by the Israel of God.

1. She is complained of for her incorrigible wickedness (v. 9): *We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed*. The people of God that were captives among the Babylonians endeavoured, according to the instructions given them (²⁴¹¹Jeremiah 10:11), to convince them of the folly of their idolatry, but they could not do it; still they doted as much as ever upon their graven images, and therefore the Israelites resolved to quit them and go to their own country. Yet some understand this as spoken by the forces they had hired for their assistance, declaring that they had done their best to save her from ruin, but that it was all to no purpose, and therefore they might as well go home to their respective countries; “*for her judgment reaches unto heaven, and it is in vain to withstand it or think to avert it.*”

2. She is complained of for her inveterate malice against Israel. Other nations had been hardly used by the Chaldeans, but Israel only complains to God of it, and with confidence appeals to him (v. 34, 35): “*The king of Babylon has devoured me, and crushed me, and never thought he could do enough ruin to me; he has emptied me of all that was valuable, has swallowed me up as a dragon, or whale, swallows up the little fish by shoals; he has filled his belly, filled his treasures, with my delicates, with all my pleasant things, and has cast me out, cast me away as a vessel in which there is no pleasure; and now let them be accountable for all this.*” *Zion and Jerusalem shall say, “Let the violence done to me and my*

children, that are *my own flesh*, and pieces of myself, and all the blood of my people, which they have shed like water, *be upon* them; let the guilt of it lie upon them, and let it be required at their hands.” Note, Ruin is not far off from those that lie under the guilt of wrong done to God's people.

III. Judgment given upon this appeal by the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, on behalf of Israel against Babylon. he *sits in the throne judging right*, is ready to receive complaints, and answers (v. 36): “*I will plead thy cause*. Leave it with me; I will in due time plead it effectually *and take vengeance for thee*, and every drop of Jerusalem's blood shall be accounted for with interest.” Israel and Judah seemed to have been neglected and forgotten, but God had an eye to them, v. 5. It is true *their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel*. They were a provoking people and their sins were a great offence to God, as a holy God, and as their God, their Holy One; and therefore he justly delivered them up into the hands of their enemies, and might justly have abandoned them and left them to perish in their hands; but God deals better with them than they deserve, and, notwithstanding their iniquities and his severities, *Israel is not forsaken*, is not cast off, though he be cast out, but is owned and looked after by his God, by the Lord of hosts. God is his God still, and will act for him as the Lord of hosts, a God of power. Note, Though God's people may have broken his laws and fallen under his rebukes, yet it does not therefore follow that they are thrown out of covenant; but God's care of them and love to them will *flourish again*, ^{<888>}Psalm 89:30-33. The Chaldeans thought they should never be called to an account for what they had done against God's Israel; but there is *a time fixed for vengeance*, v. 6. We cannot expect it should come sooner than the time fixed, but then it will come; he *will render unto Babylon a recompence*, for the avenging of Israel is *the vengeance of the Lord*, who espouses their cause; it is *the vengeance of his temple*, v. 11, as before, ^{<288>}Jeremiah 50:28. *The Lord God of recompences*, the *God to whom vengeance belongs*, will surely *requite* (v. 56), will pay them home; he *will render unto Babylon all the evil they have done in Zion* (v. 24); he will return it *in the sight* of his people. They shall have the satisfaction to see their cause pleaded with jealousy. They shall not only live to see those judgments brought upon Babylon, but they shall plainly see them to be the punishment of the wrong they have done to Zion; any man may see it, and say, *Verily there is a God that judges in the earth*; for just as *Babylon has caused the slain of Israel to fall*, has not only slain those that were found in arms, but all without

distinction, even *all the land* (almost all were put to the sword), so at *Babylon shall fall* the slain not only of the city, but of *all the country*, v. 49. Cyrus shall measure to the Chaldeans the same that they measured to the Jews, so that every observer may discern that God is recompensing them for what they did against his people; but Zion's children shall in a particular manner triumph in it (v. 10): *The Lord has brought forth our righteousness*; he has appeared in our behalf against those that dealt unjustly with us, and has given us redress; he has also made it to appear that he is reconciled to us and that we are yet in his eyes a *righteous nation*. Let it therefore be spoken of to his praise: *Come and let us declare in Zion the work of the Lord our God*, that others may be invited to join with us in praising him.

IV. A declaration of the greatness and sovereignty of that God who espouses Zion's cause and undertakes to reckon with this proud and potent enemy, v. 14. It is *the Lord of hosts* that has said it, that has *sworn it*, has *sworn it by himself* (for he could swear by no greater), that he will fill Babylon with vast and incredible numbers of the enemy's forces, will *fill it with men as with caterpillars*, that shall overpower it will multitudes, and need only to *lift up a shout* against it, for that shall be so terrible as to dispirit all the inhabitants and make them an easy prey to this numerous army. But who, and where, is he that can break so powerful a kingdom as Babylon? The prophet gives an account of him from the description he had formerly given of him, and of his sovereignty and victory over all pretenders (²⁴¹⁰Jeremiah 10:12-16), which was there intended for the conviction of the Babylonian idolaters and the confirmation of God's Israel in the faith and worship of the God of Israel; and it is here repeated to show that God will convince those by his judgments who would not be convinced by his word that he is *God over all*. Let not any doubt but that he who has determined to destroy Babylon is able to make his words good, for,

- 1.** he is the God that made the world (v. 15), and therefore nothing is too hard for him to do; it is in his name that our help stands, and on him our hope is built.
- 2.** He has the command of all the creatures that he has made (v. 16); his providence is a continued creation. He has *wind and rain* at his disposal. He speaks the word, there is a *multitude of waters in the heavens* (and it is a wonder how they hang there), fed by *vapours out of the earth*, and it is a

wonder how they ascend thence. *Lightnings and rain* seem contraries, as fire and water, and yet they are produced together; and the wind, which seems arbitrary in its motions, and we *know not whence it comes*, is yet, we are sure, brought *out of his treasuries*.

3. The idols that oppose the accomplishment of his word are a mere sham and their worshippers brutish people, v. 17, 18. The idols are falsehood, they are vanity, they are *the work of errors*; when they come to be visited (to be examined and enquired into) *they perish*, that is, their reputation sinks and they appear to be nothing; and those *that make them are like unto them*. But between the God of Israel and these gods of the heathen there is no comparison (v. 19): *The portion of Jacob is not like them*; the God who speaks this and will do it is the *former of all things* and the *Lord of all hosts*, and therefore can do what he will; and there is a near relation between him and his people, for he is *their portion* and they are his; they put a confidence in him as their portion and he is pleased to take a complacency in them and a particular care of them as the *lot of his inheritance*; and therefore he will do what is best for them. The repetition of these things here, which were said before, intimates both the certainty and the importance of them, and obliges us to take special notice of them; *God hath spoken once; yea, twice have we heard this, that power belongs to God*, power to destroy the most formidable enemies of his church; and if God thus *speak once, yea, twice*, we are inexcusable if we do not perceive it and attend to it.

V. A description of the instruments that are to be employed in this service. God has *raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes* (v. 11), Darius and Cyrus, who come against Babylon by a divine instinct; for *God's device is against Babylon to destroy it*. They do it, but God devised it, he designed it; they are but accomplishing his purpose, and acting as he directed. Note, God's counsel shall stand, and according to it all hearts shall move. Those whom God employs against Babylon are compared (v. 1) to a *destroying wind*, which either by its coldness blasts the fruits of the earth or by its fierceness blows down all before it. This wind is *brought out of God's treasuries* (v. 16), and it is here said to be *raised up against those that dwell in the midst of the Chaldeans*, those of other nations that inhabit among them and are incorporated with them. The Chaldeans rise up against God by falling down before idols, and against them God will raise up destroyers, for he will be too hard for those that contend with him. These enemies are compared to fanners (v. 2), who shall *drive them away*

as chaff is driven away by the fan. The Chaldeans had been fanners to winnow God's people (²⁴¹⁷Jeremiah 15:7) and to empty them, and now they shall themselves be in like manner despoiled and dispersed.

VI. An ample commission given them to destroy and lay all waste. Let them *bend their bow* against the archers of the Chaldeans (v. 3) and *not spare her young men*, but *utterly destroy them*, for the Lord has *both devised and done what he spoke against Babylon*, v. 12. This may animate the instruments he employs, but assuring them of success. The methods they take are such as God has devised and therefore they shall surely prosper; what he has spoken shall be done, for he himself will do it; and therefore let all necessary preparations be made. This they are called to, v. 27, 28. Let *a standard be set up*, under which to enlist soldiers for this expedition; *let a trumpet be blown* to call men together to it and animate them in it; let the nations, out of which Cyrus's army is to be raised, prepare their recruits; let the kingdoms of *Ararat*, and *Minni*, and *Ashkenaz*, of Armenia, both the higher and the lower, and of *Ascania*, about Phrygia and Bithynia, send in their quota of men for his service; let general officers be appointed and the cavalry advance; let the horses come up in *great numbers*, as the *caterpillars*, and come, like them, leaping and pawing in the valley; let them lay the country waste, as *caterpillars* do (²⁴¹⁸Joel 1:4), especially rough caterpillars; let the kings and captains prepare nations against Babylon, for the service is great and there is occasion for many hands to be employed it.

VII. The weakness of the Chaldeans, and their inability to make head against this threatening destroying force. When God employed them against other nations they had spirit and strength to act offensively, and went on with admirable resolution, conquering and to conquer; but now that it comes to their turn to be reckoned with all their might and courage are gone, their hearts fail them, and none of all their men of might and mettle have found their hands to act so much as defensively. They are called upon here to prepare for action, but it is ironically and in an upbraiding way (v. 11): *Make bright the arrows*, which have grown rusty through disuse; *gather the shields*, which in a long time of peace and security have been scattered and thrown out of the way (v. 12); *set up the standard upon the walls of Babylon*, upon the towers on those walls, to summon all that owed suit and service to that mother-city, now to come in to her assistance; let them make the watch as strong as they can, and

appoint the sentinels to their respective posts, and prepare ambushes for the reception of the enemy. This intimates that they would be found very secure and remiss, and would need to be thus quickened (and they were so to such a degree that they were in the midst of their revels when the city was taken), but that all their preparations should come to no purpose. Whoever will may call them to it, but they shall have no heart to come at the call, v. 29. *The whole land shall tremble, and sorrow* (a universal consternation) shall seize upon them; for they shall see both the irresistible arm and the irreversible counsel and decree of God against them. They shall see that God is making *Babylon a desolation*, and therein is performing what he has purposed; and then *the mighty men of Babylon have forborne to fight*, v. 30. God having taken away their strength and spirit, so that they have *remained in their holds*, not daring so much as to peep forth, the might both of their hearts and of their hands fails; they *become as timorous as women*, so that the enemy has, without any resistance, *burnt her dwelling-places and broken her bars*. It is to the same purport with v. 56-58. When the spoiler comes upon Babylon her mighty men, who should make head against him, are immediately taken, their weapons of war fail them, *every one of their bows is broken* and stands them in no stead. Their politics fail them; they call councils of war, but their princes and captains, who sit in council to concert measures for the common safety, are made drunk; they are as men intoxicated through stupidity or despair; they can form no right notions of things; they stagger and are unsteady in their counsels and resolves, and dash one against another, and, like drunken men, fall out among themselves. At length they *sleep a perpetual sleep*, and never *awake* from their wine, the wine of God's wrath, for it is to them an opiate that lays them into a fatal lethargy. The *walls of their city* fail them, v. 58. When the enemy had found ways to ford Euphrates, which was thought impassable, yet surely, think they, the walls are impregnable, they are *the broad walls of Babylon* or (as the margin reads it), *the walls of broad Babylon*. The compass of the city, within the walls, was 385 furlongs, some say 480, that is, about sixty miles; the walls were 200 cubits high, and fifty cubits broad, so that two chariots might easily pass by one another upon them. Some say that there was a threefold wall about the inner city and the like about the outer, and that the stones of the wall, being laid in pitch instead of mortar (^(III)Genesis 11:3), were scarcely separable; and yet these shall be *utterly broken*, and *the high gates and towers shall be burnt*, and the people that

are employed in the defence of the city shall *labour in vain in the fire*; they shall quite tire themselves, but shall do no good.

VIII. The destruction that shall be made of Babylon by these invaders.

1. It is a certain destruction; the doom has passed and it cannot be reversed; a divine power is engaged against it, which cannot be resisted (v. 8): *Babylon is fallen and destroyed*, is as sure to fall, to fall into destruction, as if it were fallen and destroyed already; though when Jeremiah prophesied this, and many a year after, it was in the height of its power and greatness. God declares, God appears against Babylon (v. 25): *Behold, I am against thee*; and those cannot stand long whom God is against. He will *stretch out his hand upon it*, a hand which no creature can bear the weight of nor withstand the force of. It is his purpose, which shall be performed, that *Babylon must be a desolation*, v. 29.

2. It is a righteous destruction. Babylon has made herself meet for it, and therefore cannot fail to meet with it. For (v. 25) *Babylon has been a destroying mountain*, very lofty and bulky as a mountain, and *destroying all the earth*, as the stones that are tumbled from high mountains spoil the grounds about them; but now it shall itself be *rolled down from its rocks*, which were as the foundations on which it stood. It shall be levelled, its pomp and power broken. It is now a burning mountain, like Aetna and the other volcanoes, that throw out fire, to the terror of all about them. But it shall be a burnt mountain; it shall at length have consumed itself, and shall remain a heap of ashes. So will this world be at the end of time. Again (v. 33), "*Babylon is like a threshing-floor*, in which the people of God have been long threshed, as sheaves in the floor; but now the time has come that she shall herself be threshed and her sheaves in her; her princes and great men, and all her inhabitants, shall be beaten in their own land, as in the threshing-floor. The threshing-floor is prepared. Babylon is by sin made meet to be a seat of war, and her people, like corn in harvest, are ripe for destruction," ^{<6415>}Revelation 14:15; ^{<3112>}Micah 4:12.

3. It is an unavoidable destruction. Babylon seems to be well-fenced and fortified against it: *She dwells upon many waters* (v. 13); the situation of her country is such that it seems inaccessible, it is so surrounded, and the march of an enemy into it so embarrassed, by rivers. In allusion to this, the New-Testament Babylon is said to *sit upon many waters*, that is, to rule over many nations, as the other Babylon did, ^{<6175>}Revelation 17:15.

Babylon is abundant in treasures; and yet “thy end has come, and neither thy waters nor thy wealth shall secure thee.” This end that comes shall be the measure of thy covetousness; it shall be the stint of thy gettings, it shall set bounds to thy ambition and avarice, which otherwise would have been boundless. God, by the destruction of Babylon, said to its proud waves, Hitherto shall you come, and no further. Note, if men will not set a measure to their covetousness by wisdom and grace, God will set a measure to it by his judgments. Babylon, thinking herself very safe and very great, was very proud; but she will be deceived (v. 53): Though Babylon should mount her walls and palaces up to heaven, and though (because what is high is apt to totter) she should take care to fortify the height of her strength, yet all will not do; God will send spoilers against her, that shall break through her strength and bring down her height.

4. It is a gradual destruction, which, if they had pleased, they might have foreseen and had warning of; for (v. 46) “*A rumor will come one year that Cyrus is making vast preparations for war, and after that, in another year, shall come a rumour that his design is upon Babylon, and he is steering his course that way;*” so that when he was a great way off they might have sent and desired conditions of peace; but they were too proud, too secure, to do that, and their hearts were hardened to their destruction.

5. Yet, when it comes, it is a surprising destruction: *Babylon has suddenly fallen* (v. 8); the destruction came upon them when they did not think of it and was perfected in a little time, as that of the New-Testament *Babylon* — *in one hour*, ⁶⁶⁸⁷Revelation 18:17. The king of Babylon, who should have been observing the approaches of the enemy, was himself at such a distance from the place where the attack was made that it was a great while ere he had notice that the city was taken; so that those who were posted near the place sent one messenger, one courier, after another, with advice of it, v. 31. The foot-posts shall meet at the court from several quarters with this intelligence to the king of Babylon that his *city is taken at one end*, and there is nothing to obstruct the progress of the conquerors, but they will be at the other end quickly. They are to tell him that the enemy has *seized the passes* (v. 32), the forts or blockades upon the river, and that, having got over the river, he has set fire to the reeds on the river side, to alarm and terrify the city, so that all the men of war are affrighted and have thrown down their arms and surrendered at discretion. The messengers come, like Job's, one upon the heels of another, with these tidings, which are immediately confirmed with a witness by the enemies'

being in the palace and slaying the king himself, ⁽²¹⁵⁾ Daniel 5:30. That profane feast which they were celebrating at the very time when the city was taken, which was both an evidence of their strange security and a great advantage to the enemy, seems here to be referred to (v. 38, 39): *They shall roar together like lions*, as men in their revels do, when the wine has got into their heads. They call it *singing*; but in scripture-language, and in the language of sober men, it is called *yelling like lions' whelps*. It is probable that they were drinking confusion to Cyrus and his army with loud huzzas. Well, says God, in their heat, when they are inflamed (⁽²¹⁶⁾ Isaiah 5:11) and their heads are hot with hard drinking, I will *make their feasts*, I will *give them their portion*. They have passed their cup round; now *the cup of the Lord's right hand shall be turned unto them* (⁽²¹⁷⁾ Habakkuk 2:15, 16), a cup of fury, which shall *make them drunk that they may rejoice* (or rather *that they may revel it*) and *sleep a perpetual sleep*; let them be as merry as they can with that bitter cup, but it shall lay them to sleep never to wake more (as v. 57); for *on that night*, in the midst of the jollity, was *Belshazzar slain*.

6. It is to be a universal destruction. God will make thorough work of it; for, as he will perform what he has purposed, so he will perfect what he has begun. *The slain shall fall* in great abundance throughout *the land of the Chaldeans*; multitudes shall be *thrust through in her streets*, v. 4. They are *brought down like lambs to the slaughter* (v. 40), in such great numbers, so easily, and the enemies make no more of killing them than the butcher does of killing lambs. The strength of the enemy, and their invading them, are here compared to an irruption and inundation of waters (v. 42): *The sea has come up upon Babylon*, which, when it has once broken through its bounds, there is no fence against, so that she is *covered with the multitude of its waves*, overpowered by a numerous army; *her cities* then become *a desolation*, an uninhabited uncultivated desert, v. 43.

7. It is a destruction that shall reach the gods of Babylon, the idols and images, and fall with a particular weight upon them. "In token that *the whole land shall be confounded* and *all her slain shall fall* and that throughout all the country *the wounded shall groan*, I will do judgment upon her graven images," v. 47 and again v. 52. All must needs perish if their gods perish, from whom they expect protection. Though the invaders are themselves idolaters, yet they shall destroy the images and temples of the gods of Babylon, as an earnest of the abolishing of all counterfeit deities. Bel was the principal idol that the Babylonians worshipped, and

therefore that is by name here marked for destruction (v. 44): *I will punish Bel*, that great devourer, that image to which such abundance of sacrifices are offered and such rich spoils dedicated, and to whose temple there is such a vast resort. He shall disgorge what he has so greedily regaled himself with. God will bring forth out of his temple all the wealth laid up there, ^{<815>}Job 20:15. His altars shall be forsaken, none shall regard him any more, and so that idol which was thought to be a wall to Babylon shall fall and fail them.

8. It shall be a final destruction. You may *take balm for her pain*, but in vain; she that *would not be healed* by the word of God *shall not be healed* by his providence, v. 8, 9. *Babylon shall become heaps* (v. 37), and, to complete its infamy, no use shall be made even of the ruins of Babylon, so execrable shall they be, and attended with such ill omens (v. 26): *They shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations*. People shall not care for having any thing to do with Babylon, or whatever belonged to it. Or it denotes that there shall be nothing left in Babylon on which to ground any hopes or attempts of raising it into a kingdom again; for, as it follows here, *it shall be desolate for ever*. St. Jerome says that in his time, though the ruins of Babylon's walls were to be seen, yet the ground enclosed by them was a forest of wild beasts.

IX. Here is a call to God's people to go out of Babylon. It is their wisdom, when the ruin is approaching, to quit the city and retire into the country (v. 6): *“Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and get into some remote corner, that you may save your lives, and may not be cut off in her iniquity.”* When God's judgments are abroad it is good to get as far as we can from those against whom they are levelled, as Israel from the tents of Korah. This agrees with the advice Christ gave his disciples, with reference to the destruction of Jerusalem. *Let those who shall be in Judea flee to the mountains*, ^{<1216>}Matthew 24:16. It is their wisdom, *to get out of the midst of Babylon*, lest they be involved, if not in her ruins, yet in her fears (v. 45, 46): *Lest your heart faint, and you fear for the rumour that shall be heard in the land*. Though God had told them that Cyrus should be their deliverer, and Babylon's destruction their deliverance, yet they had been told also that *in the peace thereof they should have peace*, and therefore the alarms given to Babylon would put them into a fright, and perhaps they might not have faith and consideration enough to suppress those fears, for which reason they are here advised to get out of the hearing of the alarms. Note, Those who have not grace enough to keep their temper in temptation

should have wisdom enough to keep out of the way of temptation. But this is not all; it is not only their wisdom to quit the city when the ruin is approaching, but it is their duty to quit the country too when the ruin is accomplished, and they are set at liberty by the pulling down of the prison over their heads. This they are told, v. 50, 51: “*You Israelites, who have escaped the sword of the Chaldeans your oppressors, and of the Persians their destroyers, now that the year of release has come, go away, stand not still; hasten to your own country again, however you may be comfortably seated in Babylon, for this is not your rest, but Canaan is.*” 1. He puts them in mind of the inducements they had to return: “*Remember the Lord afar off, his presence with you now, though you are here afar off from your native soil; his presence with your fathers formerly in the temple, though you are now afar off from the ruins of it.*” Note, Wherever we are, in the greatest depths, at the greatest distances, we may and must remember the Lord our God; and in the time of the greatest fears and hopes it is seasonable to *remember the Lord*. “*And let Jerusalem come into your mind. Though it be now in ruins, yet favour its dust* (^{Psalm 102:14}); *though few of you ever saw it, yet believe the report you have had concerning it from those that wept when they remembered Zion; and think of Jerusalem until you come up to a resolution to make the best of your way thither.*” Note, When the city of our solemnities is out of sight, yet it must not be out of mind; and it will be of great use to us, in our journey through this world, to let the heavenly Jerusalem come often into our mind.

2. He takes notice of the discouragement which the returning captives labour under (v. 51); being reminded of Jerusalem, they cry out, “*We are confounded; we cannot bear the thought of it; shame covers our faces at the mention of it, for we have heard of the reproach of the sanctuary, that is profaned and ruined by strangers; how can we think of it with any pleasure?*” To this he answers (v. 52) that the God of Israel will now triumph over the gods of Babylon, and so that reproach will be for ever rolled away. Note, The believing prospect of Jerusalem's recovery will keep us from being ashamed of Jerusalem's ruins.

X. Here is the diversified feeling excited by Babylon's fall, and it is the same that we have with respect to the *New-Testament Babylon*, ^{Revelation 18:9, 19.}

1. Some shall lament the destruction of Babylon. There is *the sound of a cry*, a great outcry coming from Babylon (v. 54), lamenting this great destruction, the voice of mourning, because the Lord has *destroyed the voice* of the multitude, that great voice of mirth which used to be heard in Babylon, v. 55. We are told what they shall say in their lamentations (v. 41): “*How is Sheshach taken*, and how are we mistaken concerning her! How is that city surprised and become an *astonishment among the nations* that was the praise, and glory, and admiration of the whole earth!” See how that may fall into a general contempt which has been universally cried up.

2. Yet some shall rejoice in Babylon's fall, not as it is the misery of their fellow-creatures, but as it is the manifestation of the righteous judgment of God and as it opens the way for the release of God's captives; upon these accounts *the heaven and the earth, and all that is in both, shall sing for Babylon* (v. 48); the church in heaven and the church on earth shall give to God the glory of his righteousness, and take notice of it with thankfulness to his praise. Babylon's ruin is Zion's praise.

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THE PROPHECY SENT TO THE PEOPLE

We have been long attending the judgment of Babylon in this and the foregoing chapter; now here we have the conclusion of that whole matter.

1. A copy is taken of this prophecy, it should seem by Jeremiah himself, for Baruch his scribe is not mentioned here (v. 60): *Jeremiah wrote in a book all these words that are here written against Babylon*. He received this notice that he might give it to all whom it might concern. It is of great advantage both to the propagating and to the perpetuating of the word of God to have it written, and to have copies taken of the law, prophets, and epistles.

2. It is sent to Babylon, to the captives there, by the hand of Seraiah, who went there attendant on or ambassador for king Zedekiah, *in the fourth year of his reign*, v. 59. He *went with Zedekiah*, or (as the margin reads it) *on the behalf of Zedekiah, into Babylon*. The character given of him is observable, that this *Seraiah was a quiet prince*, a prince of rest. He was in

honour and power, but not, as most of the princes then were, hot and heady, making parties, and heading factions, and driving things furiously. He was of a calm temper, studied the things that made for peace, endeavoured to preserve a good understanding between the king his master and the king of Babylon, and to keep his master from rebelling. He was no persecutor of God's prophets, but a moderate man. Zedekiah was happy in the choice of such a man to be his envoy to the king of Babylon, and Jeremiah might safely entrust such a man with his errand too. Note, it is the real honour of great men to be quiet men, and it is the wisdom of princes to put such into places of trust.

3. Seraiah is desired to read it to his countrymen that had already gone into captivity: "*When thou shalt come to Babylon, and shalt see what a magnificent place it is, how large a city, how strong, how rich, and how well fortified, and shalt therefore be tempted to think, Surely, it will stand forever*" (as the disciples, when they observed the buildings of the temple, concluded that nothing would *throw them down* but the end of the world, [Ⓜ]Matthew 24:3), "*then thou shalt read all these words to thyself and thy particular friends, for their encouragement in their captivity: let them with an eye of faith see to the end of these threatening powers, and comfort themselves and one another herewith.*" 4. He is directed to make a solemn protestation of the divine authority and unquestionable certainty of that which he had read (v. 62): *Then thou shalt look up to God, and say, O Lord! it is thou that hast spoken against this place, to cut it off.* This is like the angel's protestation concerning the destruction of the New-Testament Babylon. *These are the true sayings of God,* [Ⓜ]Revelation 19:9. *These words are true and faithful,* [Ⓜ]Revelation 21:5. Though Seraiah sees Babylon flourishing, having read this prophecy he must foresee Babylon falling, and by virtue of it must curse its habitation, though it be *taking root* (Job v. 3): "*O Lord! thou hast spoken against this place, and I believe what thou hast spoken, that, as thou knowest every thing, so thou canst do every thing. Thou hast passed sentence upon Babylon, and it shall be executed. Thou hast spoken against this place, to cut it off, and therefore we will neither envy its pomp nor fear its power.*" When we see what this world is, how glittering its shows are and how flattering its proposals, let us read in the book of the Lord that its *fashion passes away*, and it shall shortly be *cut off* and be *desolate for ever*, and we shall learn to look upon it with a holy contempt. Observe here, When we have been reading the word of God it becomes us to direct to him whose word it is a

humble believing acknowledgment of the truth, equity, and goodness, of what we have read.

5. He must then tie a stone to the book and throw it into the midst of the river Euphrates, as a confirming sign of the things contained in it, saying, “*Thus shall Babylon sink, and not rise; for they shall be weary, they shall perfectly succumb, as men tired with a burden, under the load of the evil that I will bring upon them, which they shall never shake off, nor get from under,*” v. 53, 64. In the sign it was the stone that sunk the book, which otherwise would have swum. But in *the thing signified* it was rather the book that sunk the stone; it was the divine sentence passed upon Babylon in this prophecy that sunk that city, which seemed *as firm as a stone*. The fall of the New-Testament Babylon was represented by something like this, but much more magnificent, ~~682~~ Revelation 18:21. *A mighty angel cast a great millstone into the sea, saying, Thus shall Babylon fall.* Those that sink under the weight of God's wrath and curse sink irrecoverably. The last words of the chapter seal up the vision and prophecy of this book: *Thus far are the words of Jeremiah.* Not that this prophecy against Babylon was the last of his prophecies; for it was dated in the *fourth* year of Zedekiah (v. 59), long before he finished his testimony; but this is recorded last of his prophecies because it was to be last accomplished of all his prophecies against the Gentiles, ~~244E~~ Jeremiah 46:1. And the chapter which remains is purely historical, and, as some think, was added by some other hand.