

# The Prophets

Lesson #32

Jeremiah 44:1-52:34

## Outline

### I. ***The Ministry Of Jeremiah After The Fall Of Jerusalem (40:1-45:5)***

- A. Ministry in Egypt (43:1-44:30).
  - 1. Condemnation of Ishtar worship (44:1-30).
    - a) Exhortation to heed past experience (44:1-10).
    - b) Warning of punishment (44:11-14).
    - c) The stubborn persistence in idolatry (44:15-19).
    - d) Condemnation of the remnant's stubbornness (44:20-30).
- B. The message to Baruch (45:1-5).
  - 1. Baruch's complaint (45:1-3).
  - 2. The response of the Lord (45:4-5).

### II. ***Prophecies Concerning The Nations (46:1-51:64)***

- A. Prophecies concerning Egypt (46:1-28).
  - 1. The defeat of the Egyptian army (46:2-6).
  - 2. The humbling of Egypt's pride (46:7-12).
  - 3. The coming of Nebuchadnezzar (46:13-19).
  - 4. The fall of Egypt (46:20-26).
  - 5. Blessing on Jacob (46:27-28).
- B. Prophecies concerning Philistia (47:1-7).
- C. Prophecies concerning Moab (48:1-47).
  - 1. Desolation of the Moabite cities (48:1-10).
  - 2. The proud complacency of Moab (48:11-19).
  - 3. The downfall of Moab (48:20-28).
  - 4. The pride of Moab (48:29-39).
  - 5. The terror caused by the invader (48:40-47).
- D. Prophecies concerning Ammon (49:1-6).
- E. Prophecies concerning Edom (49:7-22).
- F. Prophecies concerning Damascus (49:23-27).
- G. Prophecies concerning Kedar and Hazor (49:28-33).
- H. Prophecies concerning Elam (49:34-39).
- I. Prophecies concerning Babylon (50:1-51:64).
  - 1. Babylon's doom announced (50:1-10).
  - 2. Babylon's sin and judgment (50:11-16).
  - 3. Consolation to Israel (50:17-20).
  - 4. God's vengeance on Babylon (50:21-28).
  - 5. Babylon's arrogance (50:29-32).
  - 6. Israel's Kinsman-Redeemer (50:33-40).
  - 7. The permanence of Babylon's doom (50:41-46).

8. The Lord's vengeance on Babylon (51:1-14).
9. The omnipotent Lord and impotent idols (51:15-26).
10. The nations summoned (51:27-33).
11. Babylon's defenses useless (51:34-44).
12. Warning to Israel to flee Babylon (51:45-48).
13. The certainty of Babylon's fall (51:49-53).
14. The completeness of Babylon's destruction (51:54-58).
15. The mission of Seraiah (51:59-64).

### III. **Historical Supplement (52:1-34)**

- A. The fall of Jerusalem (52:1-11).
- B. Results of the fall (52:12-27a).
- C. Nebuchadnezzar's captives (52:27b-30).
- D. Evil-Merodach's kindness to Jehoiachin (52:31-34).

## **Notes**

### **Jeremiah 40:1-45:5**

- Ministry in Egypt (43:1-44:30).
  - Condemnation of Ishtar worship (44:1-30).
    - Exhortation to heed past experience (44:1-10).
      - This section rebukes the Jews dispersed in Egypt. It is surprising that the Jews were practicing idolatry in Egypt; they had not yet learned from their past sins.
      - The Lord's words were so filled with expressions of condemnation that Jeremiah's current audience appears to be the worst of the lot. Only the evil King Manasseh receives harsher criticism.
  - Warning of punishment (44:11-14).
    - Jeremiah sternly rebukes them for coming to Egypt. Then he dramatically specifies the troubles the remnant can expect in Egypt.
    - He makes it clear that he is not referring to any permanent Jewish settlers in Egypt, but only to those who had sought refuge there in the hope of returning to the land of Judah at the earliest opportunity.
- The stubborn persistence in idolatry (44:15-19).
  - The response of "the men" is one of open defiance. They make no denials and offer no apologies for their sinful actions.
  - The remnant claimed that idolatry had done more for them than the Lord whom Jeremiah represented. Nothing is more blinding than unbelief. Not once did they connect their trials with their sins.

- Condemnation of the remnant's stubbornness (44:20-30).
  - These last eleven verses constitute the very last message of Jeremiah recorded in the book (the remaining chapters contain prophecies dating from earlier years).
  - Since the people were going ahead with their idolatrous worship, Jeremiah announces their punishment. In a powerful expression of irony and revulsion, Jeremiah tells the remnant to proceed with fulfilling their godless vows.
- The message to Baruch (45:1-5).
  - Baruch's complaint (45:1-3).
    - This chapter contains the message the Lord gave to Baruch. Historically it supplements 36:1-8 and can be precisely dated at 604 B.C. (cf. 36:1).
    - Baruch came from an influential family of noble birth. He was the grandson of Mahseiah (cf. 32:12), governor of Jerusalem in Josiah's reign (cf. 2 Chronicles 34:8). His brother had been chief chamberlain in the court of Zedekiah (cf. 51:59).
    - Baruch shared Jeremiah's burdens. He grieved over what he had to record about the people's sin and their coming punishment. His sorrow, pain and groaning wore him out, and his emotional involvement in what he wrote gave him no rest.
  - The response of the Lord (45:4-5).
    - These verses imply that the Lord's concern for his people is greater than any human being's. The destruction of Judah is in view in vs. 4.
    - When the nation was suffering judgment, instead of making demands, he should be satisfied that his life was spared. With this he must be content. The last clause of vs. 5 implies that Baruch would have to flee for his life.

### ***Jeremiah 46:1-51:64***

- Prophecies concerning Egypt (46:1-28).
  - The defeat of the Egyptian army (46:1-6).
    - The Pharaoh Neco referred to is the one who slew Josiah at Megiddo (609 B.C.) and placed Jehoahaz on the Judean throne.
    - In words tinged with sarcasm, Jeremiah vividly describes the preparation of the Egyptians for the battle, their march to it and their defeat.
    - The Egyptians were conquered and destined not to return home but to fall on foreign soil. History has fully confirmed Jeremiah's predictions: Egypt's advance was halted at the Euphrates.

- The humbling of Egypt's pride (46:7-12).
  - Jeremiah compares the Egyptian forces with the Nile itself, suggesting enormous and unrelenting power.
  - Men from throughout Egypt had marched proudly out to face the Babylonians, expecting a resounding victory. What had gone wrong? The Lord had decreed their defeat.
  - Jeremiah advises Egypt to seek a remedy for her wounds. Her defeat dealt her an irrecoverable blow; she could not heal herself. From antiquity Egypt was famous for her medical arts.
- The coming of Nebuchadnezzar (46:13-19).
  - Jeremiah asserts, before it has actually happened, that the real "victor" is Israel's God.
  - They call Pharaoh "a noise" (i.e., a braggart), blaming him for ruining his chances of victory by his procrastination -- probably an allusion to his inaction when Nebuchadnezzar returned to Babylon after Carchemish.
- The fall of Egypt (46:20-26).
  - The heaping up of destructive images in this section helps to convey the certainty of the Egyptian defeat and the unabating nature of the Babylonian attack.
  - The use of all these phrases must have been intended to evoke a strong empathy in the Israelites for the Egyptians in their humiliation.
- Blessing on Jacob (46:27-28).
  - In striking contrast with the vivid portrayal of Egypt's fall and destruction is the salvation promised to the people of Israel in words that will encourage them in captivity.
  - Looking, as they do, beyond the captivity, these verses are indeed consoling. If Egypt's woes are but temporary, those of Israel are even more so.
- Prophecies concerning Philistia (47:1-7).
  - The Philistines settled in the coastal region known as the Philistine plain. Their main cities consisted of Ekron, Ashdod, Gaza, Ashkelon and Gath. The Philistines were greatly reduced in power by the campaigns of David against them, but during the divided kingdom they asserted their independence of Judah. Military actions against them from the Assyrian Age down through the time of Alexander the Great weakened them; finally they were conquered by the Maccabees (second century B.C.) and merged into Israel.
  - Jeremiah uses a flood to describe the Babylonian threat to Philistia, Tyre and Sidon. The word "waters" is an Old Testament figure for an army (46:8; cf. Isaiah 8:7). In her distress, Philistia will find no help in her former allies, Tyre and Sidon.

- Connected with the Philistines (cf. Joshua 11:22), the Anakim lived near Hebron in prehistoric times. The “cry” is that of the Philistines -- their appeal is for the divine judgments to cease. Jeremiah’s answer is that “the sword of the Lord” must first accomplish its judgment on the Philistine plain.
- Prophecies concerning Moab (48:1-47).
  - Desolation of the Moabite cities (48:1-10).
    - There is no hope that God can be repulsed. The Babylonian army, which serves as His instrument here, is actually weak in comparison to His military might. The defeat of Moab is certain.
    - The Moabites are taken away at the command of the Lord. He is the divine commander who has given the order to attack; anyone who dares ignore the order will suffer the harshest punishment, like as the fate of Jerusalem.
  - The proud complacency of Moab (48:11-19).
    - Moab lives with an inflated sense of herself. She has never suffered as the Israelites have; she has never been forced to leave her land.
    - The Moabites have been trusting in their false god, Chemosh, and in their own military abilities. Rather than making them proud, though, these will bring them only shame.
  - The downfall of Moab (48:20-28).
    - If anyone in Aroer should ask why the fugitives were streaming from Moab, the answer would be that the land of Moab was devastated. So Jeremiah issues the call to proclaim by the River Arnon the destruction of Moab.
    - The “horn” (i.e., an animal horn) and the “arm” (i.e., a human one) are metaphors of strength and military power, which Moab will lose.
  - The pride of Moab (48:29-39).
    - Much of the comments in this section are taken from Isaiah 16:6-11. Some of the surrounding verses are loosely based on Isaiah 15:2-6.
    - God is bringing great destruction on a “Gentile” nation because of its sinfulness, yet He still grieves with that people over their losses.
  - The terror caused by the invader (48:40-47).
    - This confident, arrogant people went too far, defying the Lord Himself. They have relied on Chemosh to protect them, but he was powerless.
    - The strongest cities in Moab will be utterly helpless, because of Moab’s defiant pride toward God. There will be no escape from the calamity; it is everywhere (cf. Amos 5:19).

- Prophecies concerning Ammon (49:1-6).
  - This section begins with a series of three rhetorical questions. This is a popular style in Jeremiah (2:14, 31; 8:5, 19, 22; 14:19; 22:28).
  - Living in an inaccessible country with mountains on three sides, Ammon considered herself beyond invasion. She was proud of her valleys made fertile by the Arnon waters.
- Prophecies concerning Edom (49:7-22).
  - The Edomites are occasionally associated with wisdom, but their great wisdom cannot prevent the Lord's judgment. None can hide nor escape.
  - Vs. 13 uses some of the strongest language concerning Judah's devastation to describe Edom (24:9; 25:9, 18; 29:18; 42:18; 44:8, 12, 22).
  - The nations are summoned to war against Edom. Because of her fortifications and topography, Edom had convinced herself that she was impregnable. The "rock" referred to was later called Sela (Petra, a name that means "rock") -- the capital city and chief fortress of the Edomites.
- Prophecies concerning Damascus (49:23-27).
  - Damascus, capital of Aram (Syria), lay between Israel and her Mesopotamian invaders. It prospered at times from trade because of its proximity with Assyria and Babylon, but it also faced repeated threats of invasion. It too was a perennial enemy of the Israelites.
  - The young men, soldiers, the walls and fortresses of the city are all to be destroyed. Fire will ruin its walls and defenses. In conquering Damascus, Nebuchadnezzar vindicated Babylon's surge toward the west.
- Prophecies concerning Kedar and Hazor (49:28-33).
  - Nebuchadnezzar also moved against some of the eastern tribes. Their secluded position in the Arabian desert will not ensure them of safety, for they too will feel the power of Babylon.
  - This section falls into four pieces. The Lord twice addresses the Babylonian attackers, encouraging them in their efforts. In between, He advises those being attacked to seek shelter in caves. The section closes with a divine announcement of coming desolation.
- Prophecies concerning Elam (49:34-39).
  - Elam is mentioned among the nations that are to drink from the Lord's cup of wrath (25:25), but it had very little contact with the Israelites over the years.
  - The Elamites were famous for being an "ancient" kingdom, with strong kings and powerful armies. That is all eclipsed now by the Lord's actions. He will overcome them and set up His own throne.

- Prophecies concerning Babylon (50:1-51:64).
  - Babylon's doom announced (50:1-10).
    - This lengthy section, which concludes at 51:64, would have been delivered originally within a short time frame, during the first half of Zedekiah's reign, several years before the fall of Jerusalem.
    - "A nation from the north" (i.e., the Medes and Persians) will execute judgment on Babylon. The Lord exhorts His people to flee from Babylon because of the impending invasion.
    - Scattered and penitent Israel is given a chance to escape. Flight alone will enable her to escape Babylon's doom.
  - Babylon's sin and judgment (50:11-16).
    - Babylon had come to think of herself as the nation without compare (cf. Isaiah 47:8-10), but now she will be the least of the nations.
    - Babylon's enemies are summoned to wreak destruction on her. Babylon was in a fertile agricultural area. With the decline of her political power, the irrigation canals were silted up so that the country became desolate.
  - Consolation to Israel (50:17-20).
    - This short portion summarizes the biblical interpretation of Israel's history. The sufferings of Israel are stated, then the judgment God will bring on those who inflicted such sufferings on Israel.
    - Next, her return to her land in peace and plenty is discussed and, finally, the greatest blessing of all -- the pardon of Israel's iniquity. All these will be realized in Messianic times.
  - God's vengeance on Babylon (50:21-28).
    - Once more God calls on the foes of Babylon to execute his wrath on her. "Merathaim" ("double rebellion") signifies Babylon; "Pe-kod" means "visitation" or "punishment."
    - Babylon, who hammered so many nations to pieces, will know the armory of God opened against her through her foes. There will be wholesale slaughter of Babylon's finest men.
  - Babylon's arrogance (50:29-32).
    - The exiles, as they summon archers, are exulting over God's retribution on Babylon. The call is to complete the destruction of the haughty empire.
    - The message originally addressed to Jerusalem (cf. 21:13-14) is directed against Babylon here with the necessary changes. For godless Babylon the consequences can only be fall, fire and final consumption.

- Israel's Kinsman-Redeemer (50:33-40).
  - A "redeemer" functions officially in a court of law, speaking and acting to support the legal rights of a relative who is economically destitute (Leviticus 25:25-55; Numbers 35:21; Ruth 4:1-12).
  - The Lord steps forward -- as a relative, not just a generous neighbor -- to vigorously defend their cause. In a sense, Israel is the epitome of all that Babylon enslaved.
- The permanence of Babylon's doom (50:41-46).
  - Vss. 41-43 are taken from 6:22-24, except that the one formerly inflicting the punishment is now receiving the punishment.
  - Vss. 44-46 are taken from 49:19-21. There, Babylon is meting out the Lord's justice on Edom. Now it is Babylon's turn to receive her just punishment.
- The Lord's vengeance on Babylon (51:1-14).
  - Chapter 51, the longest in the book, continues the message of condemnation and ruin for Babylon and concludes with a word concerning an important mission sent to Babylon by Jeremiah.
  - The people of Judah tended to look on the people of Israel as the apostate ones, whom the Lord had abandoned more than a century earlier (cf. 7:15).
  - The aggressor (Media) is now identified and the work of judgment described. The Medes were allied with Babylon in the destruction of Nineveh in 612 B.C. Later they joined the Persians to defeat Babylon in 539 B.C. (cf. Daniel 5:28, 31; 8:20).
- The omnipotent Lord and impotent idols (51:15-26).
  - In 10:1-25 Jeremiah showed how the house of Israel had no cause to fear the impotent idols of the pagans. Here he demonstrates to the Babylonians the uselessness of their idols, which will all be destroyed before the mighty Creator and Ruler of the universe.
  - Babylon was situated on a plain; so "O destroying mountain" is a metaphor for a powerful kingdom (cf. Daniel 2:35, 14-15). Babylon will become as an extinct volcano -- "a burnt mountain," never to be rebuilt.
- The nations summoned (51:27-33).
  - A call summons the nations to fight against Babylon. As God's avenger, Cyrus will harvest her.
  - The people north of Babylon, who were conquered by the Medes early in the sixth century B.C., are named: Ararat, Minni and Ashchenaz. These three are called to aid the Medes against Babylon.
- Babylon's defenses useless (51:34-44).
  - The Lord in His judgment will answer Zion's complaint against Babylon. This will mean the end of Babylon. Babylon is compared

to lions' cubs. She will be given a feast, followed not by drunken sleep, but by the perpetual sleep of death.

- Two items Babylon was famous for were the god Bel and the great wall of the city. Bel will be compelled to regurgitate the nations he has swallowed, and the great wall will collapse.
- Warning to Israel to flee Babylon (51:45-48).
  - Again, the Lord's people are warned to flee the doomed city before disaster strikes. They will need faith and courage until Babylon falls.
  - However, they are not to be terrified by the rumors that will be widespread, for each year will have its own rumors of tyrants against tyrants. Heaven and earth will rejoice over Babylon's fall.
- The certainty of Babylon's fall (51:49-53).
  - Retribution will overtake Babylon. The remnant of Israel is ashamed when they think of Jerusalem, for they have been the cause of the temple's having been defiled by strangers.
  - Jeremiah encourages them to think about Jerusalem, not with shame because of her current desecration, but with hope because of her future restoration.
- The completeness of Babylon's destruction (51:54-58).
  - Jeremiah sees the destroyers of Babylon as already present. The enemy overruns the land as tidal waves sweep over a country.
  - When most needed, Babylon's men are made drunk by God's wrath. The slave labor of many nations expended in building the wall will have been for naught.
- The mission of Seraiah (51:59-64).
  - Seraiah apparently is the brother of Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe (32:12). Seraiah's symbolic act was a visual enactment of the fall of Babylon.
  - This passage is an appendix to this prophecy against Babylon that shows how it was taken to Babylon. It is remarkable that at the time Jeremiah was advising submission to that city, he was also foretelling its final overthrow (cf. 28:1, 14).
    - At the same time, Jeremiah is strongly advising King Zedekiah and his cohort nations to submit to Babylonian rule (27:4-11) because the Lord has decreed that Babylon will punish these nations.
    - The reason for Zedekiah's resistance to Jeremiah's call for submission is his ill-advised conviction that submission to Babylon indicates a lack of faith in the Lord.
    - In reality, the opposite is true. Jeremiah's prophecies against Babylon show that the destruction of Jerusalem is not the end of the story. Babylon's destruction primarily is an encourage-

ment to King Zedekiah, assuring him that Judah's submission to Babylon is temporary.

### ***Jeremiah 52:1-34***

- The fall of Jerusalem (52:1-11).
  - Vss. 1-3 give a brief summary of the reign of Zedekiah and show the proximate cause of the fall of Jerusalem. The siege lasts eighteen months (Fall 588 B.C. to Spring 586 B.C.; cf. 39:1-2), ending when the people run out of food.
  - The narrative goes on to give a vivid account of how the city fell. So crucial was this event that the Old Testament records it four times -- 2 Kings 25; 2 Chronicles 36:11-21; Jeremiah 39:1-14; and in this passage.
- Results of the fall (52:12-27a).
  - There is no contradiction between v. 12 and v. 29. In the former the accession year of Nebuchadnezzar has been included; in the second it has not.
  - The account of the taking of the sacred vessels to Babylon is more elaborate here than in 2 Kings. Zedekiah's revolt surely had an opposite effect from what the priests and false prophets had wanted.
  - The priests and false prophets had been largely responsible for inciting Zedekiah's revolt against Nebuchadnezzar. They and the chief officers of the city were captured because of their responsibility for the calamity.
- Nebuchadnezzar's captives (52:27b-30).
  - Under Judean kings there were three deportations: (1) under Jehoiakim (606 B.C.), which marked the beginning of the seventy years of exile; (2) under Jehoiachin (597 B.C.); and (3) under Zedekiah (586 B.C.).
  - If only Jews are numbered or only males reckoned in vss. 28-30, the ultimate total of exiles was doubtless much higher (cf. 2 Kings 24:14).
- Evil-Merodach's kindness to Jehoiachin (52:31-34).
  - This passage agrees with 2 Kings 25:27-30. The humane treatment accorded Jehoiachin (c. 561 B.C.) is confirmed by cuneiform tablets.
  - No reason for this shift are given, but it evidently signals new reasons for the people to hope for better treatment for themselves.
  - The previous Babylonian monarch served as the instrument of the Lord's wrath. This one seems to serve as the instrument of the Lord's mercy.
  - These verses conclude Jeremiah's somberly beautiful book with a comforting thought -- namely, that the Lord did not forget the Davidic line, even in exile.