Jeremiah

Chapter 51

**This is what the LORD says: “See, I will stir up the spirit of a destroyer against Babylon and the people of Leb Kamai. 2 I will send foreigners to Babylon to winnow her and to devastate her land; they will oppose her on every side in the day of her disaster. 3 Let not the archer string his bow, nor let him put on his armor. Do not spare her young men; completely destroy her army. 4 They will fall down slain in Babylon, fatally wounded in her streets. 5 For Israel and Judah have not been forsaken by their God, the LORD Almighty, though their land is full of guilt before the Holy One of Israel. 6 “Flee from Babylon! Run for your lives! Do not be destroyed because of her sins. It is time for the LORD’s vengeance; he will pay her what she deserves. 7 Babylon was a gold cup in the LORD’s hand; she made the whole earth drunk. The nations drank her wine; therefore they have now gone mad. 8 Babylon will suddenly fall and be broken. Wail over her! Get balm for her pain; perhaps she can be healed. 9 ”‘We would have healed Babylon, but she cannot be healed; let us leave her and each go to his own land, for her judgment reaches to the skies, it rises as high as the clouds.’ 10 ”‘The LORD has vindicated us; come, let us tell in Zion what the LORD our God has done.’ 11 “Sharpen the arrows, take up the shields! The LORD has stirred up the kings of the Medes, because his purpose is to destroy Babylon. The LORD will take vengeance, vengeance for his temple. 12 Lift up a banner against the walls of Babylon! Reinforce the guard, station the watchmen, prepare an ambush! The LORD will carry out his purpose, his decree against the people of Babylon. 13 You who live by many waters and are rich in treasures, your end has come, the time for you to be cut off. 14 The LORD Almighty has sworn by himself: I will surely fill you with men, as with a swarm of locusts, and they will shout in triumph over you. 15 “He made the earth by his power; he founded the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding. 16 When he thunders, the waters in the heavens roar; he makes clouds rise from the ends of the earth. He sends lightning with the rain and brings out the wind from his storehouses. 17 “Every man is senseless and without knowledge; every goldsmith is shamed by his idols. His images are a fraud; they have no breath in them. 18 They are worthless, the objects of mockery; when their judgment comes, they will perish. 9 He who is the Portion of Jacob is not like these, for he is the Maker of all things, including the tribe of his inheritance— the LORD Almighty is his name. 20 “You are my war club, my weapon for battle— with you I shatter nations, with you I destroy kingdoms, 21 with you I shatter horse and rider, with you I shatter chariot and driver, 22 with you I shatter man and woman, with you I shatter old man and youth, with you I shatter young man and maiden, 23 with you I shatter shepherd and flock, with you I shatter farmer and oxen, with you I shatter governors and officials. 24 “Before your eyes I will repay Babylon and all who live in Babylonia for all the wrong they have done in Zion,” declares the LORD. 25 “I am against you, O destroying mountain, you who destroy the whole earth,” declares the LORD. “I will stretch out my hand against you, roll you off the cliffs, and make you a burned-out mountain. 26 No rock will be taken from you for a cornerstone, nor any stone for a foundation, for you will be desolate forever,” declares the LORD. 27 “Lift up a banner in the land! Blow the trumpet among the nations! Prepare the nations for battle against her; summon against her these kingdoms: Ararat, Minni and Ashkenaz. Appoint a commander against her; send up horses like a swarm of locusts. 28 Prepare the nations for battle against her— the kings of the Medes, their governors and all their officials, and all the countries they rule. and all the countries they rule. 29 The land trembles and writhes, for the LORD’s purposes against Babylon stand— to lay waste the land of Babylon so that no one will live there. 30 Babylon’s warriors have stopped fighting; they remain in their strongholds. Their strength is exhausted; they have become like women. Her dwellings are set on fire; the bars of her gates are broken. 31 One courier follows another and messenger follows messenger to announce to the king of Babylon that his entire city is captured, 32 the river crossings seized, the marshes set on fire, and the soldiers terrified.” 33 This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: “The Daughter of Babylon is like a threshing floor at the time it is trampled; the time to harvest her will soon come.” 34 “Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has devoured us, he has thrown us into confusion, he has made us an empty jar. Like a serpent he has swallowed us and filled his stomach with our delicacies, and then has spewed us out. 35 May the violence done to our flesh be upon Babylon,” say the inhabitants of Zion. “May our blood be on those who live in Babylonia,” says Jerusalem.**

**36 Therefore, this is what the LORD says: “See, I will defend your cause and avenge you; I will dry up her sea and make her springs dry. 37 Babylon will be a heap of ruins, a haunt of jackals, an object of horror and scorn, a place where no one lives. 38 Her people all roar like young lions, they growl like lion cubs. 39 But while they are aroused, I will set out a feast for them and make them drunk, so that they shout with laughter— then sleep forever and not awake,” declares the LORD. 40 “I will bring them down like lambs to the slaughter, like rams and goats. 41 “How Sheshach will be captured, the boast of the whole earth seized! What a horror Babylon will be among the nations! 42 The sea will rise over Babylon; its roaring waves will cover her. 43 Her towns will be desolate, a dry and desert land, a land where no one lives, through which no man travels. 44 I will punish Bel in Babylon and make him spew out what he has swallowed. The nations will no longer stream to him. And the wall of Babylon will fall. 45 “Come out of her, my people! Run for your lives! Run from the fierce anger of the LORD. 46 Do not lose heart or be afraid when rumors are heard in the land; one rumor comes this year, another the next, rumors of violence in the land and of ruler against ruler. 47 For the time will surely come when I will punish the idols of Babylon; her whole land will be disgraced and her slain will all lie fallen within her. 48 Then heaven and earth and all that is in them will shout for joy over Babylon, for out of the north destroyers will attack her,” declares the LORD. 49 “Babylon must fall because of Israel’s slain, just as the slain in all the earth have fallen because of Babylon. 50 You who have escaped the sword, leave and do not linger! Remember the LORD in a distant land, and think on Jerusalem.” 51 “We are disgraced, for we have been insulted and shame covers our faces, because foreigners have entered the holy places of the LORD’s house.” 52 “But days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will punish her idols, and throughout her land the wounded will groan. 53 Even if Babylon reaches the sky and fortifies her lofty stronghold, I will send destroyers against her,” declares the LORD. 54 “The sound of a cry comes from Babylon, the sound of great destruction from the land of the Babylonians. 55 The LORD will destroy Babylon; he will silence her noisy din. Waves of enemies will rage like great waters; the roar of their voices will resound. 56 A destroyer will come against Babylon; her warriors will be captured, and their bows will be broken. For the LORD is a God of retribution; he will repay in full. 57 I will make her officials and wise men drunk, her governors, officers and warriors as well; they will sleep forever and not awake,” declares the King, whose name is the LORD Almighty. 58 This is what the LORD Almighty says: “Babylon’s thick wall will be leveled and her high gates set on fire; the peoples exhaust themselves for nothing, the nations’ labor is only fuel for the flames.” 59 This is the message Jeremiah gave to the staff officer Seraiah son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah, when he went to Babylon with Zedekiah king of Judah in the fourth year of his reign.  60 Jeremiah had written on a scroll about all the disasters that would come upon Babylon—all that had been recorded concerning Babylon.  61 He said to Seraiah, “When you get to Babylon, see that you read all these words aloud.  62 Then say, ‘O LORD, you have said you will destroy this place, so that neither man nor animal will live in it; it will be desolate forever.’  63 When you finish reading this scroll, tie a stone to it and throw it into the Euphrates.  64 Then say, ‘So will Babylon sink to rise no more because of the disaster I will bring upon her. And her people will fall.’” The words of Jeremiah end here.**

**51:1** *stir up the spirit.* See 1Ch 5:26; Hag 1:14. The Hebrew underlying this phrase is translated “aroused … the hostility of” in 2Ch 21:16. (CSB)

 *destroyer.* See note on 4:7; here including the “kings of the Medes” (v. 11). (CSB)

Such as the pestilential winds in the east; and here the emblem of a destroying army, carrying all before them, and wasting with fire and sword. (ACC)

 *Leb Kamai.* Lit. “the heart of my attackers” (cf. Rev 17:5, where Babylon is called “the mother of prostitutes and of the abominations of the earth”). Concerning the NIV text note see note on 25:26. (CSB)

**51:2** *foreigners … to winnow her.* The Hebrew for this phrase is an excellent example of alliteration and assonance (see Introduction: Literary Features). (CSB)

When the corn is trodden out with the feet of cattle, or crushed out with a heavy wheel armed with iron, with a shovel they throw it up against the wind, that the chaff and broken straw may be separated from it. This is the image used by the prophet; these people shall be trodden, crushed, and fanned by their enemies. (ACC)

**51:3** *completely destroy.* See NIV text note; 25:9; 50:21, 26; see also note on Dt 2:34. (CSB)

In the first two lines, the defenders are told that resistance is in vain, while in the next two lines, the attackers are called upon to prove it. (TLSB)

**51:4** *fall … in her streets.* See 49:26; 50:30. (CSB)

All this would happen on account of Israel's just cause against the Chaldeans. (Kretzmann)

**51:5** *forsaken.* Lit. “widowed”; contrast Isa 54:4, 6–7 and notes. (CSB)

God still continued his prophets among them; he had never cast them wholly off. Even in the midst of wrath—highly deserved and inflicted punishment, he has remembered mercy; and is now about to crown what he has done by restoring them to their own land. I conceive אשם asham, which we translate sin, as rather signifying punishment, which meaning it often has. (ACC)

 *Holy One of Israel.* See note on 50:29. (CSB)

The land of the Chaldeans is filled with guilt," because they refused to accept the true God in spite of the many manifestations of His power and glory in their midst as brought to their attention, for instance, through Daniel and his friends. Therefore the Lord addresses Himself to the members of His chosen people living in Babylon, urging the proper behavior at the time of Babylon's downfall. (Kretzmann)

**51:6** *Flee … ! Run for your lives!* See v. 45; 48:6. This was spoken to the people of Judah (as in 50:8). (CSB)

 *the Lord’s vengeance.* See note on 50:15. (CSB)

 *pay her what she deserves.* See Isa 59:18; 66:6. (CSB)

Note the contrast between human transgression, on the one hand, and the righteous punishment of the Lord, on the other. This is brought out most strongly by the picture of the golden cup. (Kretzmann)

**51:7** See 25:15–16 and notes. (CSB)

 *Babylon was … gold.* See note on Da 2:32–43. (CSB)

The cup of God’s wrath is the plenitude of punishment, that he inflicts on transgressors. It is represented as intoxicating and making them mad. (ACC)

**51:8** *Babylon will … fall.* See Isa 21:9 and note. (CSB)

These appear to be the words of some of the spectators of Babylon’s misery. (ACC)

 *balm.* See note on 8:22. (CSB)

Spoken ironically to Babylon’s sympathizers and confederates who see her wound. (TLSB)

**51:9** The speakers are the nations conquered by Babylon. (CSB)

 WOULD HAVE HEALED – Had it been in our power, we would have saved her; but we could not turn away the judgment of God. (ACC)

 *each go to his own land.* See 50:16 and note – (The Hebrew for this passage has a parallel in Isa 13:14. The captive peoples are warned to flee Babylon in order to avoid being cut down by her invaders.) (CSB)

The strangers in the country are getting ready to preserve their lives before the threatening catastrophe comes. Over against this fate of Babylon is placed the deliverance of Judah from oppression and exile. (Kretzmann)

 *her judgment.* Her sin, deserving of judgment. (CSB)

 *reaches to the skies … high as the clouds.*† Poetic imagery (see Dt 1:28; Ps 57:10; 108:4). (CSB)

**51:10** Judah speaks (see 50:28). (CSB)

 *The Lord has vindicated us.* See Ps 37:6. (CSB)

Israel is reminded that her vindication comes by God’s grace. (TLSB)

**51:11** *stirred up.* Lit. “stirred up the spirit of” (see note on v. 1). (CSB)

 *Medes.* See v. 28; Isa 13:17 and note; Isa 21:2; Da 5:28, 31; 6:8, 12, 15; 8:20. (CSB)

Of Cyaxares king of Media, called Darius the Mede in Scripture; and of Cyrus king of Persia, presumptive heir of the throne of Cyaxares, his uncle. Cambyses, his father, sent him, Cyrus, with 30, 000 men to assist his uncle Cyaxares, against Neriglissar king of Babylon, and by these was Babylon overthrown. (ACC)

 *vengeance, vengeance for his temple.* See note on 50:28. (CSB)

The profanation at the hands of the Chaldeans must be punished. (Kretzmann)

**51:12** *prepare an ambush.* To keep defenders from retreating to the safety of their fortifications (see Jos 8:14–22; Jdg 20:29–39). (CSB)

This would be so that there would be no loophole of escape for the besieged. (Kretzmann)

**51:13** *many waters.* The “rivers of Babylon” (Ps 137:1), including the mighty Euphrates along with a magnificent system of irrigation canals, were proverbial. (CSB)

Thou who hast an abundant supply of waters. It was built on the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates; the latter running through the city. But the many waters may mean the many nations which belonged to the Babylonish empire; nations and people are frequently so called in Scripture. (ACC)

 *cut off.* Like a thread from the loom (see Isa 38:12). (CSB)

Babylon’s last thread has been stitched or woven in the tapestry of history. God is done with them. (TLSB)

There would be no more unjust enrichment through robbery and plunder after the fall of the city. (Kretzmann)

**51:14** *sworn by himself.* See note on Ge 22:16 – (There is no greater name in which the Lord can take an oath (see Heb 6:13). (CSB)

This is by His own soul or life. (Kretzmann)

 *as with … locusts.* See 46:23. (CSB)

By means of these very waters through the channel of thy boasted river, thou shalt be filled with men, suddenly appearing as an army of locusts; and, without being expected, shall lift up a terrific cry, as soon as they have risen from the channel of the river. (ACC)

 *shout in triumph.* See note on 48:33. (CSB)

**51:15–19** Repeated almost verbatim from 10:12–16 (see notes there). (CSB)

These verse describe the impotence of idols and warns against “a work of delusion” (v. 18) rather than the Creator God. This warning describes both Israel’s folly and Babylon’s folly for relying on their god Marduk to defend them against the “Lord of hosts.” (TLSB)

**51:15** MADE THE EARTH – The omnipotence of God is particularly manifested in the works of creation. (ACC)

 WORLD BY HIS WISDOM – The omniscience of God is particularly seen in the government of תבל tebel, the inhabited surface of the globe. What a profusion of wisdom and skill is apparent in that wondrous system of providence by which he governs and provides for every living thing. (ACC)

 STRETCHED OUT THE HEAVENS – Deep thought, comprehensive design, and consummate skill are especially seen in the formation, magnitudes, distances, revolutions, and various affections of the heavenly bodies. (ACC)

**51:16** WATERS…ROAR – For the electric spark, by decomposing atmospheric air, converts the hydrogen and oxygen gases, of which it is composed, into water; which falls down in the form of rain. (ACC)

 BRINGS OUT THE WINDS – He is the Author of that power of evaporation by which the water is rarified, and, being lighter than the air, ascends in form of vapor, forms clouds, and is ready to be sent down again to water the earth by the action of his lightnings, as before. And by those same lightnings, and the agency of heat in general, currents of air are formed, moving in various directions, which we call winds. (ACC)

**51:17** EVERY MAN IS SENSELESS – He is brutish for want of real knowledge; and he is brutish when he acknowledges that an idol is any thing in the world. (ACC)

**51:19** LORD ALMIGHTY IS HIS NAME – This paragraph is repeated from chapter 10, 12-16, where the prophet described the almighty power of the living God and pointed to the destruction of the idols at the time of the great judgment. In chapter 10 he intended to combat the fear of the idolatrous people concerning the power of the heathen gods; here he wants to overthrow the confidence of the Chaldeans in their idols, telling them that their gods are powerless before the omnipotence of Jehovah, and that Israel would realize this fact when the judgment would be brought about. By the overthrow of Babylon, Jehovah proved Himself to be the Creator of Israel, the Former of the universe, the one true God. The next paragraph is addressed to Babylon, as the "hammer of nations," chap. 50, 23, and the narrative ought to be given in the present or in the past tense, as a prophetic statement. (Kretzmann)

**51:20–23** Illustrates Jeremiah’s fondness for the effective use of repetition (see 4:23–26; see also Introduction: Literary Features). (CSB)

**51:20** *You are my war club.*† Cf. Pr 25:18; Babylon, destroyer of nations (see 50:23; see also note on Isa 10:5). (CSB)

AS God once used the Assyrians as rods of His anger (Is. 10:5-11), so the Babylonians were to “break nations in pieces” in their appointed rise to empire status. Babylon, however, committed its own sin, for which God judged her. (TLAB)

 *shatter.* See vv. 21–23. The Hebrew root for this verb is the same as that for “war club.” See also Ex 15:6. The Hebrew verb is translated “dash (to pieces)” in Ps 2:9; 137:9; Hos 10:14; 13:16. (CSB)

**51:22** OLD…YOUTH…MAIDEN – This would include every age and every station. (Kretzmann)

**51:23** I SHATTER – But at the same time the hammer would itself be overthrown, both actions taking place at the same time in the sight of the eternal God. (Kretzmann)

**51:24** *your.* Judah’s. (CSB)

 *repay … for all the wrong they have done.* See v. 6; 50:15, 29. (CSB)

**51:25** *destroying mountain.* Symbolizes a powerful kingdom (see Da 2:35, 44–45), here Babylon. (CSB)

Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the Lord, Babylon called thus on account of the physical and moral destruction which it brought upon the nations by a false use of its great power. (Kretzmann)

An epithet which he applies to the Babylonish government; it is like a burning mountain, which, by vomiting continual streams of burning lava inundates and destroys all towns, villages fields, etc., in its vicinity. (ACC)

 *burned-out mountain.* After being judged by the Lord, Babylon will be like an extinct volcano. (CSB)

I will tumble thee from the rocky base on which thou restest. The combustible matter in thy bowels being exhausted, thou shalt appear as an extinguished crater; and the stony mutter which thou castest out shall not be of sufficient substance to make a foundation stone for solidity, or a corner stone for beauty, verse 26. Under this beautiful and most expressive metaphor, the prophet shows the nature of the Babylonish government; setting the nations on fire, deluging and destroying them by its troops, till at last, exhausted, it tumbles down, is extinguished, and leaves nothing as a basis to erect a new form of government on; but is altogether useless, like the cooled lava, which is, properly speaking, fit for no human purpose. (ACC)

**51:26** *desolate forever.* See 25:12; 50:12–13; see also note on Isa 13:20. (CSB)

The great mass of materials of which Babylon was built to this day are lying more or less decomposed in the mountains of rubbish which mark the site of the once magnificent city. Thus the word of the Lord was fulfilled with its usual exactness. (Kretzmann)

**51:27** See 50:29. (CSB)

 *Lift up a banner … ! Blow the trumpet … !* See 4:5–6; 6:1 and notes. (CSB)

Another summons to the Medes and Persians to attack Babylon. (ACC)

 *Prepare … for battle.* Lit. “Consecrate” (see note on 6:4). (CSB)

 *these kingdoms.* Allies of the Medes (see v. 11 and note). (CSB)

 *Ararat.* See note on Ge 8:4. (CSB)

 *Minni.* A region mentioned in Assyrian inscriptions, it was located somewhere in Armenia. (CSB)

 *Ashkenaz.* See note on Ge 10:3. (CSB)

This was a country bordering on Armenia. (Kretzmann)

 *commander.* The Hebrew for this word appears again in the OT only in Na 3:17 (“officials”). It is a Babylonian loanword meaning lit. “scribe.” (CSB)

This was so that there would be efficient leadership. (Kretzmann)

 *like … locusts.* See note on 46:23. (CSB)

These were like hairy-crested grasshoppers. (Kretzmann)

**51:28** *Medes.* See note on v. 11. (CSB)

 *all the countries they rule.* See note on 34:1; see also 1Ki 9:19. (CSB)

This detailed enumeration is made for the purpose of increasing the impression of great and irresistible power. (Kretzmann)

**51:29** *land trembles and writhes.* At the fearful prospect of war. (CSB)

It is represented here as trembling under the numerous armies that are passing over it, and the prancing of their horses. (ACC)

**51:30** *exhausted … women.* In the Hebrew there is a play on words. (CSB)

They were panic-struck when they found the Medes and Persians within their walls, and at once saw that resistance was useless. (ACC)

 *become like women.* See 50:37; Na 3:13. (CSB)

 SET ON FIRE – When the stratagem of Cyrus in diverting the stream of the Euphrates succeeded and his soldiers entered the city through its empty bed, they found little or no opposition and could easily open the city gates from within. (Kretzmann)

**51:31** *One courier follows another.* They run to the palace from all parts of the city. (CSB)

As the city was taken by surprise, in the manner already related, so now messengers, one after another, were dispatched to give the king information of what was done; viz., that the city was taken at one end. Herodotus tells us that the extreme parts of the city were taken, before those of the center knew anything of the invasion. (ACC)

**51:32** *river crossings.* Fords and ferries (and perhaps bridges). (CSB)

Either the bridges or slips for boats, by which the inhabitants passed from one side to the other, and may mean the principal gates or passes in the city, which the victorious army would immediately seize, that they might prevent all communication between the inhabitants. (ACC)

 *marshes set on fire.* To destroy the reeds and prevent fugitives from hiding among them. (CSB)

What this means I cannot tell, unless it refer to something done after the taking of the city. Setting fire to the reeds in the marshy ground, in order the better to clear the places, and give a freer passage to the water, that it may neither stagnate nor turn the solid ground into a marsh. Dr. Blayney thinks it refers to the firing of the houses, in order to throw the inhabitants into the greater confusion; but no historian makes any mention of burning the city, except what is said verse 30, “They have burned her dwelling places;” and this may be a poetical expression. That they burnt nothing before they took the city must be evident from the circumstance of their taking the city by surprise, in the night time, with the greatest secrecy. Still there might have been some gates, barricadoes, or wooden works, serving for barracks or such like, which obstructed some of the great passages, which, when they had entered, they were obliged to burn, in order to get themselves a ready passage through the city. This is the more likely because this burning of reeds is connected with the stopping of the passages, burning the dwelling places, and breaking the bars. (ACC)

**51:33** *Daughter of Babylon.* See 50:42; see also note on Isa 47:1. (CSB)

The whole empire being included in this figure. (Kretzmann)

 *threshing floor.* The destruction of a city or nation is often depicted as a harvest (see Isa 27:12; Joel 3:13; Mic 4:12–13). (CSB)

This was done by the customary treading or stamping by means of which the kernels of grain were separated from their hulls. (Kretzmann)

 HARVEST WILL SOON COME – This would be done when she would be trodden under foot. The inhabitants of Israel and Judah are now introduced with a lament showing the reason for the Lord's punishment upon Babylon. (Kretzmann)

**51:34** HAS DEVOURED US – Zion’s delicacies and treasured possession were removed from Israel and transported to Babylon. Thus, Nebuchadnezzar “devoured” heer . CF 2 Ki 24-25. (TLSB)

 *serpent.* The Hebrew for this word is translated “monster” in Isa 51:9, where it symbolizes Egypt (see note on Ge 1:21). (CSB)

 *delicacies.* See Ge 49:20. (CSB)

With all the finest foods. (Kretzmann)

 SPEWED US OUT – The heaping of similar expressions brings out the greatness of the ruin which had come upon Judah. (Kretzmann)

He shall vomit all up; i.e., they shall be regained. (ACC)

**51:35** *flesh.* See Mic 3:2–3. (CSB)

Zion begins to speak, verse 34, and ends with this verse. The answer of Jehovah begins with the next verse. Though the Chaldeans have been the instrument of God to punish the Jews, yet in return they, being themselves exceedingly wicked, shall suffer for all the carnage they have made, and for all the blood they have shed. (ACC)

**51:36** *avenge you.* See vv. 6, 11; see also note on 50:15. (CSB)

The Lord is acting as the Advocate in defending the rights of His people. (Kretzmann)

 *sea … springs.* See note on v. 13. Babylonia is called the “Desert by the Sea” in Isa 21:1 (see note there). (CSB)

This was the Euphrates with all its channels, canals, and swamps. (Kretzmann)

 SPRINGS DRY – Babylon would no longer have a rich supply of water to give fertility to her land. (Kretzmann)

**51:37** See 9:11; 18:16 and notes. (CSB)

**51:38-40** The Babylonians acting like ravenous young lions inflamed with feverish craving for prey will be served food by the Lord, which will stupefy them into “a perpetual sleep” and change them from predatory beasts into domestic victims of “the slaughter.” (TLSB)

**51:38** *roar like young lions.* See 2:15 and note. (CSB)

They are growling over their food. This probably is a reference to the fact that Babylon was taken on a night when its rulers and leading citizens were attending a drunken debauch. (Kretzmann)

**51:39** *aroused.* Lit. “heated”; for a similar image see Hos 7:4–7. (CSB)

"For their intoxication I prepare them a drinking-bout," (Kretzmann)

 *drunk.* See v. 57; see also notes on 25:15–16, 26. (CSB)

It was on the night of a feast day, while their hearts were heated with wine and revelry, that Babylon was taken; see Daniel 5:1-3. This feast was held in honor of the goddess Sheshach, (or perhaps of Bel), who is mentioned, verse 41, as being taken with her worshippers. As it was in the night the city was taken, many had retired to rest, and never awoke; slain in their beds, they slept a perpetual sleep. (ACC)

**51:40** *lambs … rams and goats.* Symbolic of the people (see Isa 34:6; Eze 39:18) of Babylon. (CSB)

This would include all the classes of Babylon's population. (Kretzmann)

 *slaughter.* See Dt 32:34; Isa 13:22. (CSB)

Here the prophet inserts a word of astonishment over the downfall of Babylon. (Kretzmann)

**51:41** *Sheshach.* See note on 25:26. (CSB)

Perhaps the city is here called by the name of its idol. (ACC)

 BOAST OF THE WHOLE EARTH – Babylon was an object of envy and praise throughout the world. (Kretzmann)

One of the seven wonders of the world; superexcellent for the height, breadth, and compass of its walls, its hanging gardens, the temple of Belus, etc., etc. (ACC)

**51:42** *sea … its roaring waves.* See Isa 17:12 and note; here and in v. 55, Babylon’s enemies (see 46:7 and note). (CSB)

The image is based upon the action of the Euphrates, which, without the restraint of dikes and irrigation canals, would sometimes rise so high as to overflow the entire valley. (Kretzmann)

**51:43** See 48:9; 49:18, 33; 50:12–13. (CSB)

Their land would revert back to the desert stage where arid steppes stretched interminably. (Kretzmann)

**51:44** *Bel.* See 50:2; Isa 46:1 and note. (CSB)

Bel or Belus was their supreme deity. (ACC)

 *what he has swallowed.* Captive peoples (including Judah) and plundered goods (including vessels from the temple in Jerusalem; see Da 5:2–3). (CSB)

The sacred vessels of the temple of Jerusalem, which were taken thence by Nebuchadnezzar, and dedicated to him in his temple at Babylon. (ACC)

 *wall of Babylon.* A wall of double construction, the outer wall (12 feet thick) being separated from the inner wall (21 feet thick) by a dry moat 23 feet wide. (CSB)

It shall cease to be a defense; and shall moulder away until, in process of time, it shall not be discernible. (ACC)

**51:45** *Run for your lives!* See note on v. 6. (CSB)

A warning to all the Jews in Babylon to leave the city, and escape for their lives. (ACC)

 *fierce anger.* See 4:8, 26; Isa 13:13; Na 1:6. (CSB)

The Lord’s greatest anger would be poured out upon Babylon. (Kretzmann)

**51:46** *Do not … be afraid when rumors are heard.* While giving his Olivet discourse, Jesus may have had this passage in mind (see Mt 24:6; Mk 13:7; Lk 21:9). (CSB)

A year before the capture of the city there shall be a rumor of war,—and in that year Belshazzar was defeated by Cyrus. In the following year the city was taken. (ACC)

The tales of war and of acts of violence should not daunt the people of Jehovah. (Kretzmann)

**51:47** *punish the idols of Babylon.* See v. 52; see also note on 50:2. (CSB)

**51:48** *heaven and earth … will shout for joy.* See Isa 44:23; Rev 18:20; 19:1–3. (CSB)

The whole universe was called upon to witness God’s charges against His people, so it is summoned also to join in celebrating the defeat of His enemies (cf Dt 4:26; 30:19; Is 49:13). (TLSB)

 *out of the north.* See note on 50:3 - In Jeremiah, the foe from the north is almost always Babylon (see, e.g., 1:14–15). Here, however, the reference is probably to Persia. Babylon’s nemesis is expanded to “an alliance of great nations” in v. 9, specified by name in 51:27–28.) (CSB)

**51:49** See note on 25:26. (CSB)

Babylon had caused the fall of Israel is being engaged in their slaughter by a just recompense. The representatives of the various nations of the earth were at Babylon at the time of her overthrow. The prophet now summarizes the guilt and the punishment of Babylon. (Kretzmann)

**51:50** *leave.* See note on v. 6. (CSB)

Having escaped from the sword, the exiles are to consider their liberation as God’s calling to return to Jerusalem. (TLSB)

 THINK ON JERUSALEM – The thought of the return to their home country and its capital would immediately occur to them. But the prophet now, in the name of the congregation, gives utterance to an objection on their part, with the purpose of removing it. (Kretzmann)

**51:51** *foreigners have entered the holy places.* Refers to Nebuchadnezzar’s defiling the Jerusalem temple in 586 b.c. The same sacrilege would occur under Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 b.c. and under the Romans in a.d. 70. (CSB)

**51:52** *punish her idols.* See note on 50:2. (CSB)

The idols of Babylon, this being Jehovah's answer upon their taunt in burning His Temple as though He were powerless to avenge Himself. They will be stricken down by the Lord's mighty hand. (Kretzmann)

**51:53** *reaches the sky.* Cf. Job 20:6; see Ge 11:4 and note; see also Isa 14:13–15. (CSB)

Though it were fortified even to the skies, it shall fall by the enemies that I will send against it. (ACC)

literally, "make inaccessible the height of her firmness," so that her walls would rise up to a precipitous height, apparently impregnable. (Kretzmann)

 *destroyers.* See vv. 48, 56. (CSB)

**51:54** See 50:46. (CSB)

 *great destruction.* See note on 4:6. (CSB)

**51:55** *Waves.* See note on v. 42. (CSB)

 *like great waters.* See note on Ps 32:6. (CSB)

The attack by the enemy will be like the irrestible force of the sea and its deafening roar. (TLSB)

**51:56** *God of retribution.* See note on v. 24. (CSB)

God is rewarding them the evil which they had committed, paying back their wickedness as they deserved. (Kretzmann)

**51:57** *drunk.* See v. 39; see also notes on 25:15–16, 26. (CSB)

 *officials and wise men.* See 50:35. (CSB)

This would include all those who were at the head of the nation, both in peace and in war. (Kretzmann)

 *King.* See note on 46:18. The true King is the Lord, not Bel/Marduk (see 50:2 and note). (CSB)

**51:58** *thick wall.* See note on v. 44. (CSB)

Herodotus, who saw these walls, says, “The city was a regular square, each side of which was one hand red and twenty stadia, the circumference four hundred and eighty stadia. It was surrounded by a wall fifty cubits broad, and two hundred cubits high; and each side had twenty-five brazen gates.”—Herod. lib. 1 c. 178. Had not Cyrus resorted to stratagem, humanly speaking, he could not have taken this city. (ACC)

These according to some accounts, were so broad that two four-horse chariots could pass anywhere. (Kretzmann)

 *high gates.* The famous Ishtar Gate was almost 40 feet high. (CSB)

There were one hundred magnificent gates of brass. (Kretzmann)

 *the peoples … fuel for the flames.* Very similar to Hab 2:13. (CSB)

**51:59–64** A prose conclusion to the book in general and to the oracle against Babylon in particular. (CSB)

A written copy of the words spoken concerning Babylon were to be taken to Babylon, tied to a stone, and cast into the Euphrates to symbolize that Babylon will sink, to rise no more. (TLSB)

**51:59** *staff officer.* Lit. “resting-place officer” (see Nu 10:33), the official responsible for determining when and where his men on the march should stay overnight. (CSB)

 *Seraiah son of Neriah.* An ancient seal has been found that bears the inscription “Belonging to Seraiah son of Neriah,” and it no doubt refers to the man mentioned here. He was a brother of Jeremiah’s secretary, Baruch (see 32:12). (CSB)

 *he.* Seraiah. (CSB)

literally, "prince of the resting-place," that is, marshal of the caravan, he who had charge of the journey. (Kretzmann)

 *Zedekiah … fourth year.* 593 b.c. Zedekiah may have been summoned to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar to be interrogated by him (see note on 27:3). (CSB)

**51:60** *scroll.* See note on Ex 17:14 – (A long strip of leather or papyrus on which scribes wrote in columns (see Jer 36:23) with pen (see Isa 8:1) and ink (see Jer 36:18), sometimes on both sides (see Eze 2:10; Rev 5:1). After being rolled up, a scroll was often sealed (see Isa 29:11; Da 12:4; Rev 5:1–2, 5, 9) to protect its contents. Scrolls were of various sizes (see Isa 8:1; Rev 10:2, 9–10). Certain Egyptian examples reached lengths of over 100 feet; Biblical scrolls, however, rarely exceeded 30 feet in length, as in the case of a book like Isaiah (see Lk 4:17). Reading the contents of a scroll involved the awkward procedure of unrolling it with one hand while rolling it up with the other (see Isa 34:4; Eze 2:10; Lk 4:17, 20; Rev 6:14). Shortly after the time of Christ the scroll gave way to the book form still used today.) (CSB)

 *all that had been recorded concerning Babylon.* Probably the oracle of 50:2–51:58 (see note on 50:1). (CSB)

**51:62** *you have said.* See v. 26. (CSB)

This was a reminder to the Lord, as it were, that the threats of His prophecy must be fulfilled. (Kretzmann)

**51:64** *The words of Jeremiah end here.*† The next chapter, the account of the fall of Jerusalem, is appended to them. (CSB)