

Jeremiah 50:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The word that the LORD spake against Babylon and against the land of the Chaldeans by Jeremiah the prophet.

Analysis

The word that the LORD spake against Babylon and against the land of the Chaldeans by Jeremiah the prophet. This superscription introduces the longest prophetic oracle against a single nation in Scripture (chapters 50-51). The explicit divine origin—"the word that the LORD spake"—emphasizes that judgment on Babylon comes from God's sovereign decree, not human vengeance or nationalistic spite. Though Babylon served as God's instrument to judge Judah (25:9; 27:6), the empire's own pride and cruelty now bring divine reckoning.

The parallel terms "Babylon" and "land of the Chaldeans" emphasize both the political entity (Babylon as imperial capital) and the ethnic-geographical reality (Chaldeans as the Neo-Babylonian dynasty's ruling people). This comprehensive address demonstrates that God's judgment extends to nations and peoples, not merely individuals. The use of "Jeremiah the prophet" reaffirms prophetic authority—this isn't political propaganda but divine revelation.

Theologically, this verse establishes:

1. God judges all nations, not only covenant Israel
2. those God uses as instruments of judgment aren't exempt from judgment for their own sins
3. international affairs operate under divine sovereignty
4. prophetic word addresses geopolitical realities, not merely personal spirituality.

The Reformed understanding of God's providence extends to all nations, with none escaping accountability before the divine judge (Psalm 2:1-12; Acts 17:30-31).

Historical Context

This prophecy against Babylon came during the period when Babylon dominated the ancient Near East (circa 605-539 BCE). Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562 BCE) had conquered Judah, destroyed Jerusalem (586 BCE), and established history's most powerful empire since Assyria. The prophecy's fulfillment came in 539 BCE when Cyrus the Persian conquered Babylon, allowing exiled Jews to return (Ezra 1:1-4).

Archaeological discoveries including the Cyrus Cylinder confirm the Persian conquest of Babylon and the new policy of allowing displaced peoples to return home. The prophecy's vindication within living memory of its utterance (approximately 50-60 years if given around 594-593 BCE, per 51:59) demonstrated God's sovereignty over empires. Babylon's fall became paradigmatic for all future imperial collapses, finding symbolic application to Rome in Revelation 18.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does God's judgment on Babylon demonstrate that being used by God doesn't exempt one from accountability for sin?
2. In what ways does this prophecy's historical fulfillment strengthen confidence in biblical prophecies of future judgment?
3. How should understanding that all nations remain accountable to God affect Christian political engagement and prayer?

Interlinear Text

הַדָּבָר	אֲשֶׁר	דִּבֶּר	יְהוָה	אֵל	בָּבֶל	אֵל
The word	H834	spake	that the LORD	H413	against Babylon	H413
H1697		H1696	H3068		H894	
אֶרֶץ	כַּשְׂדִּים	בֶּן	יְרֵמְיָהוּ	הַנָּבִיא:		
and against the land	of the Chaldeans	by	Jeremiah	the prophet		
H776	H3778	H3027	H3414	H5030		

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