

The Fall Of Babylon • Jeremiah 51:58

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Can't Escape Judgment*

1. I love reading stories about inept criminals.
2. Like the two men who decided to try and steal an ATM by wrapping a chain around it and attaching the chain to the back bumper of their truck.
 - a. They gunned the engine, and instead of ripping the ATM out of the ground, they tore the bumper off their truck.
 - b. Instead of stopping to recover it, they just drove away, leaving the license plate behind.
 - c. The police detective who was in charge of that case had an easy day.
3. Then there's the story of Gary Tindle .
 - a. He was in a California courtroom charged with robbery.
 - b. He asked for and got permission from Judge Armando Rodriguez to go to the bathroom.
 - c. While the bathroom door was guarded by the bailiff,
 - d. Mr. Tindle climbed up onto the plumbing, opened a ceiling panel
 - e. and climbed up into the crawl space above.
 - f. He'd gone thirty or so feet when the ceiling panels broke from under him and dropped him to the floor . . .
 - g. right back in Judge Rodriguez's courtroom.
4. Tindle learned a lesson that day that everyone will eventually learn – judgment is inevitable!
5. And that's the lesson our text teaches us this morning

B. *Judgment In Jeremiah*

1. All 52 chapters of the book of Jeremiah speak to us about *judgment*
2. But here at the end of the book we see a picture of the *final* judgment.

II. TEXT

A. *Set The Scene*

1. At the outset of Jeremiah's ministry, when he was still a young man, God told him he would be a prophet to the *nations*
2. While most of the book of Jeremiah is his prophecy to and about the nation of *Judah*, in the last chapters he gives several oracles of judgment on the other nations of the ancient Middle East
3. The instrument of God's judgment on these countries was Babylon
4. But in the very last chapters, the judgment of Babylon *itself* is given
 - a. God describes both the reason and the extent of Babylon's fall
 - b. because they had been rebellious, arrogant, and had trusted in their own power rather than God, they would go down in flames!
 - c. the judgment of the other nations is given in about a ½ chapter each
 - d. the Fall of Babylon is described in 2 chapters!
5. But it all ends with this . . .

B. V. 58

58 Thus says the LORD of hosts: “The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, And her high gates shall be burned with fire; The people will labor in vain, And the nations, because of the fire; And they shall be weary.”

1. One of the reasons why ancient Babylon appeared to be invincible was because it’s capital, it’s central city, also called Babylon, was *impregnable*
2. In a day when battles and wars were determined by the strength of the cities, Babylon was the grand daddy of them all
3. The city simply would not fall to an attack or siege
 - a. it was so big, they to grow food instead the walls.
 - b. A river ran through it so they didn’t have to fear for lack of water.
 - c. They could easily out-wait any siege
4. As far as breaching the *walls*? Forget it!
 - a. The ancient historian Herodotus tells us that the walls spanned over 60 miles!
 - b. they were 300 feet high and 75 feet thick
 - c. the walls were so massive, they used to hold chariot races around the top
 - d. there was imply no battering ram that could pierce them
5. The *gates* of Babylon were also legendary
 - a. there were one hundred of them and they were made of solid bronze!
 - b. archaeologists, working on the ruins of Babylon have discovered one of the most famous gates in the city, the Ishtar Gate, which was so massive and ornate that it is almost hard to believe
6. But you see, that was the goal of the kings of Babylon: To over-awe and strike fear into the hearts of all through their demonstration of power
7. They set about to build a city would never fall
8. Yet here God says, “It’s coming down!”
 - a. “the broad walls of Babylon will be utterly broken;”
 - 1) literally, they will vanish!
 - 2) when Darius the Mede conquered Babylon, he reduced the walls to only 75 feet high
 - 3) and then later, they were dismantled all together
 - b. “her gates will be burned with fire”
 - 1) history tells us that when Darius took the city, he removed the bronze gates,
 - 2) and took all 100 of them back to Persia where he melted them down
 - c. God says that the people of Babylon will labor in vain
 - 1) and indeed they did
 - 2) their attempt to build a city that would never be defeated, at such great cost, was indeed defeated – and in a manner that was almost too easy
 - 3) one night, the Persians diverted the river that fed the city and then snuck in through the wall in the dry river bed
 - 4) because the Babylonians were so sure of themselves and their security, they failed to post enough sentries
 - 5) and the Persians took the city virtually without a fight
9. It’s the last phrase of v. 58 that captures our attention this morning
10. “And the nations, because of fire; and they shall be weary.”
11. This points out that what we’re reading about in the destruction of Babylon applies to more than just the ancient city that stood on the plain between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers

12. What we are reading about here is the judgment of *all* the nations
13. The judgment and destruction of Babylon is but a picture of the judgment of this world when Christ comes again

C. A Picture of Judgment

1. It's provocative that several of the pictures of the judgment we find in chapters 50 & 51 are picked up and used by John in his description of the great last days world system in Revelation 17 & 18.
2. The destruction of ancient Babylon, that mighty, arrogant city with its massive walls and seemingly self-sufficient attitude, becomes a picture of the final judgment of the rebellious, arrogant, and self-sufficient world system that defiantly rejects God.
3. So I want to ask you to take a look at v. 58 again, but this time, using the clue of the very last phrase, let's see Babylon here as meaning the whole last days world system that stands in opposition to God

58 Thus says the LORD of hosts: "The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, And her high gates shall be burned with fire; The people will labor in vain, And the nations, because of the fire; And they shall be weary."

4. One day, Jesus will come in judgment
 - a. the walls mankind has constructed to keep Him out will be of no avail
 - b. the armies that the leaders of the world amass in the valley of Meggido to forestall His arrival will be of no help
 - c. the laws that have removed religion from the public square will not stop Him
 - d. separation of church and state will mean nothing in that day
 - e. The King is coming to take His throne and to rule over that which rightly belongs to Him
 - f. and He begins by cleaning house
5. Then, after 1000 years of His perfect and righteous reign, the time allotted for this creation as we know it will be over and it will be time for a new heavens and earth
6. Then, as it says here, fire will consume it all; but not the kind of fire you may be thinking of
7. This same event is described by Peter in his second letter – 2 Peter 3:10-12

10 The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

8. Though Peter penned these words in the first century, what he describes here is uncannily close to a description of a *nuclear explosion*
 - a. I have often remarked on the fact that physicist are still at a bit of a loss to explain how the atom is held together
 - b. we know that like charges repel, yet the nucleus of an atom is comprised of protons
 - c. it has baffled scientists for years to explain why the nucleus of the atom doesn't fly apart.
 - d. that it doesn't moves them to propose that there must be some kind of "nuclear glue", their word, that holds it together.
 - e. now, I'm no scientist, but *I* can tell them what holds the nucleus of every atom together, and so can you = Jesus Christ! The Creator and Sustainer of the Universe

- f. as it says in Colossians 1, in Him all things *consist*, or “hold together”
- 9. But one day, the purpose for *why* God created the physical universe will have been fulfilled and it will be needed no more
- 10. Then, Jesus will simply let go – and we will see what Peter describes here
 - ... **the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.**
 - a. that word “melt” means literally to “untie – unravel”
 - b. this is a perfect description of a massive nuclear explosion
- 11. The Psalms, Isaiah, and Revelation all speak of the end coming by a great fire that consumes all things
- 12. It’s Peter’s next words we want to consider this morning,
 - 11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,**
 - 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?**
- 13. Since all of this stuff is going to burn, since it’s all temporal and doomed to decay and loss, why center our lives on working and living for it?
- 14. Why count our treasure in stuff that only gets old, rusts, breaks, gets stolen and ultimately is going to vanish into nothingness?
- 15. Why not instead, live for those things that last, like holiness!
- 16. Years ago I had a really nice 10 speed bike
 - a. I had saved and spent a lot of time shopping, and finally picked which one I wanted
 - b. I loved that bike and rode it a lot
 - c. one day, I left the garage door open for just a couple minutes while I went in to the house, but when I went back out to the garage, guess what, it was gone!
 - d. I was sad – I was mad – and I wanted to find the thief and beat him to within a millimeter of his life
 - e. there was a deep and lingering sense of loss
 - f. even though I had enjoyed the bike for many hours, it was like all my saving and care spent in getting that bike had been a colossal waste of time and effort
- 17. That’s what Peter is warning you and I away from here.
- 18. That’s what Jeremiah said the people of the earth *will* experience when judgment comes
 - a. their labor will be in vain
 - b. they have spent their lives believing a fiction and building a treasure that dissolves in the blink of an eye.
 - c. and once it is gone, a great weariness will settle over them as they realize they have been fools because they have lived for the wrong things
- 19. Some time back, I went to the store and as I looked at different items I noticed that the prices didn’t seem right.
 - a. really expensive items had super low prices on them
 - b. and cheap stuff was ultra expensive
 - c. when I looked closer, it was obvious that some mischief maker had shuffled the price tags
- 20. That’s what the chief mischief maker, Satan, has done with this world

- a. he's switched the price tags on things and made what really matters look cheap and worthless,
- b. while at the same time putting a higher value on things that are just going to burn
- 21. Peter tells us that what matters is *holiness* and *godliness*
- 22. But you tell me – how valuable is holiness to the world?
- 23. Stand in the Middle of WalMart and cry out “Godliness anyone?” and see how many people respond.
- 24. No – what the world values is *stuff, possessions, wealth*

- 25. Now – there is nothing wrong with wealth, there is nothing evil in owning a home and a car.
- 26. Things in themselves aren't the problem – it's our attitude toward them that makes the difference
- 27. If we make *things* our *treasure*, if we start to define our lives by what we own, what we wear, where we live, who we hang out with, what car we drive, and how much money we have in the bank, then we're living our lives in vain, because it's all going to burn
- 28. But if instead of laying up treasures on earth where moth and rust corrupt and where thieves can break in and steal, we lay up treasure in heaven, treasures of love, faithfulness, stewardship, diligence, and holiness, then our lives will not have been vain and we will have a reward in heaven that lasts for all of eternity
- 29. You can't take it with you – but you can send it on ahead!

III. CONCLUSION

A. Vesuvius

1. One of the most spectacular archaeological digs in the world is at Pompeii and Herculaneum in Italy.
2. In 79 AD, Mount Vesuvius suddenly exploded!
 - a. It came so quickly that the residents were killed while in their daily routine:
 - 1) men and women were at the market,
 - 2) the rich in their luxurious baths,
 - 3) slaves at toil.
 - b. first, a wave of superheated gas swept through the city, sucked all the oxygen out of the air and burned the inside of their lungs
 - c. then a huge cloud of volcanic ash settled over the cities burying everyone alive in dozens of feet of rock
3. Even family pets suffered the same quick and final fate.
4. It takes little imagination to picture the panic of that terrible day.
5. The saddest part is that these people did not have to die.
6. Scientists have confirmed what ancient Roman writers record
 - a. weeks of rumblings and shakings preceded the actual explosion.
 - b. even an ominous plume of smoke was clearly visible from the mountain days before the eruption.
 - c. if only they had read and respond to Vesuvius's warning!

B. Be Warned!

1. Friend, be warned! Judgment is coming!
2. Read the book, don't wait for the movie.
3. Live for those things that last, not for that which will pass away

4. Live for God
5. My tendency at this point in the message is to make some specific suggestion on the way you can do that, but I don't want to this morning
6. I think it best that we end by spending some time quietly waiting before the Lord
7. Let's open up to the work of the Holy Spirit revealing to us where our priorities are
8. What do we value; what's really important to us?
9. What are we living for?
10. And then, if the Spirit shows you that you've lost focus, repent, and renew your commitment to Him