

Class 13: Jeremiah 49-51

June 28, 2017

Message to Ammon, Edom, Damascus, Arabia, Elam & Babylon

A continuation of the prophecies against the nations surrounding Jerusalem, with the culmination being the nation of Babylon. Note that in some cases, the false gods of the nations are directly mentioned.

Note as well that some of the nations are promised a restoration.

Prophecy Against Ammon: the other nation descended from Lot. Their God Molech (meaning “king”) was the detestable thing to which Judah sacrificed their children. The promise of one of terror, not of the utter destruction of Moab (48:46). The Ammonites did survive Nebuchadnezzar (Neh. 2:10) well into the Persian period. At the end of the prophecy, like the Moabites, there is a promise of restoration for them.

Prophecy Against Edom: the Edomites are the brother nation to the Israelites (Deut. 23:7, Obad. 1:10). They too were given an inheritance from God (Deut. 2:5). They were known for dwelling in hills and caves. There is no mention of any of the gods of the Edomites, to whom God had sent prophets in the past (Obadiah). It seems possible that Edom allied itself with Nebuchadnezzar and was not displaced at that time. The prophecy of Jeremiah (as well as Ezekiel 25) was that Edom would be stripped bare and no one would dwell there. Historically, sometime during or after the Persian era the movement of the Arab peoples and the Nabateans overwhelmed the area. It is unclear what happened next, but the region became Idumea (Edom).

Prophecy Against Damascus: Damascus was to the kingdoms of Syria what Jerusalem was to Judah – a city that embodied the entire nation. The Syrians and the Israelites had long fought against each other. The prophecy here is brief: Damascus too will suffer. Elsewhere promises are made that Damascus will be a heap of ruins (Isaiah 17:1). Neither Nebuchadnezzar nor the Persians caused much damage to Damascus when they conquered it. This prophecy could be more symbolic than literal (i.e. the destruction of its power). As well, there may have been a destruction on the city unknown to us.

Prophecy Against Kedar and Hazor: two kingdoms or peoples about which very little is known. Kedar likely refers to some of the descendants of Ishmael (Gen. 25:13), a people who dwelled in tents (Ps. 120:5). Likely they lived in the Arabian area (Ezek. 27:21). As for Hazor, it is not clear if this is the same Hazor conquered by Joshua (Jos. 11:1-10). If it is, then these two groups are rather different, one being a nomadic people and one being a city north of Judah. Regardless, they are both to be destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. Their locations were to become desolate, with no one dwelling there forever.

Prophecy Against Elam: the Elamites are an ancient people who were first in the region of Canaan in the time of Abraham (Gen. 14:1). They dwelled the furthest from Judah, in what is today Iran. The Persians used the language of Elam in their empire. They were under the rule of the Assyrians until the Assyrian collapse after Carchemish. They briefly rose again, until they were absorbed by the Medean Empire. This prophecy is in this brief time where they began to rise again. Ezekiel (Ezek. 32:24) describes them at this same time as being a terror on other nations. The prophecy of Jeremiah is of disaster and a destruction of the Elamite throne. It is that they would cease to be a nation, and be scattered to the four winds. As with some of the other nations, a promise is made of a latter day restoration.

Prophecy Against Babylon: This is the largest of the prophecies against the nations (chapters 50-51). Babylon has been prophesied against in the past; nearly a century before by Isaiah. Babylon is an important nation in prophetic language. It begins the four empire countdown to the Messiah (Daniel 2).

It was given power for 70 years. It was uniquely given God's sword to execute God's wrath on the nations (Ezek. 30:24), and the end of the freedom of the nations of Israel and Canaan in general.

The prophecy begins with a proclamation against the gods of Babylon, Bel and Marduk (two prominent Jews were named for these Gods – Daniel/Belteshazzar and Mordechai). It is declared that the city will become a waste, something that literally did occur by the time of Christ. With this waste the people of Judah in Babylon will be called out, and leave. This speaks both to the literal return to Israel under Zerubbabel and Ezra, and the spiritual coming of the Kingdom of Heaven in Christ. Babylon will be the last nation to devour the physical people of Israel (50:17). The Christ will come and the nation will be transformed into a spiritual nation.

Babylon is called a gold cup in the Lord's hand intoxicated the nations of the earth. We cannot help but to think of the Harlot of Babylon in Revelation 17, drunk on the blood of the saints. In Revelation we are told that the Harlot of Babylon would be consumed by the nations it devoured. In a similar way the nations which were under Babylon are going to be the very destruction of this city. These many nations of the north are identified in 51:11 as the Medes, fulfilled in 539BC by Cyrus the Great.

God makes it clear that while it was necessary to use Babylon to punish the nations of the world, Babylon too must be punished for its purpose. It cannot be that the blood it has spilled can go without retribution.

Jeremiah gives this prophecy to the brother of Baruch, Seraiah, an official of King Zedekiah on his journey of captivity to Babylon. He instructs him to cast the scroll into the river Euphrates, wrapped around a stone to sink, and then to declare that so it is with Babylon.

Making Applications:

1. God made this retribution against nations by Nebuchadnezzar. Does God still judge nations in such a fashion?
2. Some of these prophecies speak of a city being left in ruins. Some of these cities are today in ruins (Babylon), while others seem to thrive (Damascus). How might we understand this?
3. After the time of Ezekiel / Daniel / Jeremiah, there are no more prophecies against nations such as these. Why might this be the case? Hint – Daniel 2, 7
4. Why is it important to understand Jeremiah 50-51 in order to understand Revelation?