

<https://youtube.com/live/0isN94oIURk> **Monday Evening Bible Reading Group: July 24<sup>th</sup>:  
Jeremiah 50 and 51**

After sundry battles elsewhere, Cyrus of Persia entered Babylon virtually without a struggle in 539 BC. Persians, Medes and Chaldeans tend to get run together as one people: the Jewish writers being a little prone to do what some English writers do in not bothering greatly about distinctions between different groups of foreigners. The message is summed up neatly in “The Hammer has been hammered!” Babylon has served its purpose, and now it gets its come-uppance – not for serving God’s purpose, but for its vanity: “Mr Pride will fall flat on his face”.

If you had been a Jew seeing the prophecies in political terms, I guess you would have been rather disappointed with the outcome. Solomon’s kingly glory, like Solomon’s Temple, never did get reinstated on the same scale – though Herod did a pretty impressive job with the Temple. The line of David, in political terms, was not restored: the last real king died in Babylonian exile, though not a bad sort of life for an ex-king. Little Israel continued to be less than it had been, and over-shadowed by, variously, Persia, Syria, Greece, Rome. In the New Testament, Rome is caricatured as Babylon. But, although not a missionary faith in the conventional sense, Judaism continued to be distinctive and influential; and of course the Christian off-shoot of Judaism has made its mark! Jehovah did triumph over Marduk!

“A Nothing nation.” “Rubble and garbage and weeds.” “A desert of death and emptiness”. “A land of make-believe gods gone crazy.” “Babylon was a fancy gold chalice held in my hands.” “Babylon is finished.” 50: 33-34 is the Jewish good news: sandwiched among all the bad news for Babylon. I seem to hear the human revenge voice here and there in the Babylonian material: rather jarring with the Babylon as God’s agent message. Compare 51: 24 with 51: 20-23.

The closing verses of Chapter 51 are rather intriguing. I don’t envy Seraiah: an immigrant in legal if not physical chains would not exactly endear himself to his hosts with this sermon!

If we make this the last of our Prophet Jeremiah readings, and go on to Lamentations for the last Monday in July and the August Monday meetings: any most memorable bits?

Separately, Babylon actually treated its migrant population rather well. Are migrants/refugees going to our 21<sup>st</sup> Century acid test?