

Just
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Jeremiah 50:11-20, 33-34

“Settling the score” – What is the meaning of that old term? It’s origin goes back to the 17th century and adds even more definition to the term.

We’ve learned in this study that Israel and Judah disobeyed God by turning away from Him and turning to the worship of idols. For that He disciplined them using King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon as his “agent” of punishment.ⁱ For the seventy years most of Judah was in captivity in Babylon we have to imagine God’s people wondered: “*Will God allow evil Babylon to thrive with no punishment?*” Jeremiah 50 and 51 provide God’s answer to that question.

The point: We serve a just God and his judgment awaits those who defy Him. That applies to the saved and the unsaved. For the saved it is the necessary (but painful) discipline of a loving Father. For those who reject God it is punishment based on His perfect justice. That’s a heavy truth, but the end of Jeremiah’s prophecy shows us there is comfort for God’s children wrapped up in that truth. When we wonder if evil is winning we can rest assured God will settle the score.

Let’s look at our text and see both God’s judgment for Babylon and the hope He provided for Judah. Verse two sets the tone when God said, “Babylon will fall.” We begin in verse eleven as God calls this evil nation to account.

Jeremiah 50:11–20 (ESV) — 11 “Though you rejoice, though you exult, O plunderers of my heritage, though you frolic like a heifer in the pasture, and neigh like stallions, **12** your mother shall be utterly shamed, and she who bore you shall be disgraced. Behold, she shall be the last of the nations, a wilderness, a dry land, and a desert.

- Babylon “...was the largest city in the vast Babylonian empire...one of the most powerful cities of the ancient world During this period, Babylon became a city of beautiful architecture, including the Hanging Garden of Babylon, the Ishtar Gate and the Tower of Babel.”ⁱⁱ
- Eugene Peterson paraphrased verse eleven like this: “You Babylonians had a good time while it lasted, didn’t you? You lived it up, exploiting and using my people...”ⁱⁱⁱ
- Babylon’s chief sin was arrogance and pride toward God.
- The Life Application Bible: “Pride comes from feeling self-sufficient or believing that we don’t need God. Proud nations or persons, however, will eventually fail because they refuse to recognize God as the ultimate power.”^{iv}

- **Proverbs 16:18 (ESV) — 18** Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.
- No one thought this powerful and evil nation could fall but God had already promised in **Jeremiah 25:12 (NLT) — 12** “Then, after the seventy years of captivity are over, I will punish the king of Babylon and his people for their sins,” says the Lord. “I will make the country of the Babylonians a wasteland forever.
- Wiersbe: *“Yes, Babylon was God’s tool to chasten His sinful people, but the Babylonians went too far and enjoyed it too much...Any nation that cursed the Jews will ultimately be cursed by God (Gen. 12:1–3). As they treated Judah, so God will treat them (see Jer. 51:24, 35, 49).”^v*

13 Because of the wrath of the Lord she [Babylon] shall not be inhabited but shall be an utter desolation; everyone who passes by Babylon shall be appalled, and hiss because of all her wounds. **14** Set yourselves in array against Babylon all around, all you who bend the bow; shoot at her, spare no arrows, for she has sinned against the Lord. **15** Raise a shout against her all around; she has surrendered; her bulwarks have fallen; her walls are thrown down. For this is the vengeance of the Lord: take vengeance on her; do to her as she has done. **16** Cut off from Babylon the sower, and the one who handles the sickle in time of harvest; because of the sword of the oppressor, every one shall turn to his own people, and every one shall flee to his own land.

- *“History tells us that the Babylonian Empire fell very suddenly and very unpleasantly to the Persians under Cyrus The Great in 539 BC. Later when Darius was King the Babylonians revolted unsuccessfully and as a consequence they experienced many of the same brutalities they had previously inflicted upon the Jews...After the city was defeated Herodotus says that the city gates were pulled down and 3000 of the leading citizens were impaled upon the walls. The once great city...was defeated, devastated and despoiled.”^{vi}*
- When it seems like evil is winning, remember, God will settle the score.
- It would be judgment for Babylon and freedom for Israel and Judah.
- We need to remember how God’s people got into this mess. Back to **Jeremiah 25:6–9 (NLT) —** [God warned them] **6** Do not provoke my anger by worshiping idols you made with your own hands... **7** “But you would not listen to me,” says the Lord... **8**...Because you have not listened to me, **9** I will gather together all the armies of the north under King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, whom I have appointed as my deputy. I will bring them all against this land and its people and against the surrounding nations. I will completely destroy you and make you an object of horror and contempt and a ruin forever.
- Jerusalem was destroyed. Most of Judah was exiled to Babylon. This was God’s discipline for their sinful rejection of a loving Heavenly Father.
- **Hebrews 12:6–11 (NLT) — 6** For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes each one he accepts as his child.” **7** As you endure this

divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father? **10** ... God's discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness. **11** No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.

- Even if we've trusted Christ as Savior and Lord we're still human beings with a sin nature; we are no longer slaves to sin, but still sinners.
- If we defy God, He will discipline us as His child.^{vii} God's discipline is painful for sure, but it's confirmation that He is our loving Father and we are His children. Judah's seventy-year "time out" was coming to an end.

17 "Israel is a hunted sheep driven away by lions. First the king of Assyria devoured him, and now at last Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has gnawed his bones. **18** Therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I am bringing punishment on the king of Babylon and his land, as I punished the king of Assyria. **19** I will restore Israel to his pasture, and he shall feed on Carmel and in Bashan, and his desire shall be satisfied on the hills of Ephraim and in Gilead. **20** In those days and in that time, declares the Lord, iniquity shall be sought in Israel, and there shall be none, and sin in Judah, and none shall be found, for I will pardon those whom I leave as a remnant.

Jeremiah 50:33–34 (ESV) — 33 "Thus says the Lord of hosts: The people of Israel are oppressed, and the people of Judah with them. All who took them captive have held them fast; they refuse to let them go. **34** Their Redeemer is strong; the Lord of hosts is his name. He will surely plead their cause, that he may give rest to the earth, but unrest to the inhabitants of Babylon.

- Though Judah had sinned, God would redeem them and restore them. That is a picture of salvation through Christ.
- **Psalms 103:6–14 (NLT) — 6** The Lord gives righteousness and justice to all who are treated unfairly... **8** The Lord is compassionate and merciful, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. **9** He will not constantly accuse us, nor remain angry forever. **10** He does not punish us for all our sins; he does not deal harshly with us, as we deserve. **11** For his unfailing love toward those who fear him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth. **12** He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west. **13** The Lord is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him. **14** For he knows how weak we are; he remembers we are only dust.
- Now, let's circle back to God's judgment of the evil nation of Babylon.
- If we are followers of Christ, sometimes we face evil people and situations not because we've defied God, but simply because we live in a fallen world. Sometimes we may face evil BECAUSE we are Christ-followers.
- How can God's judgment on those who defy Him [i.e. Babylon] be a source of comfort to those of us who are followers of Christ?

- How should Christ-followers respond when we are hurt or harmed by evil people?
- **Romans 12:17 (NLT) — 17** Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable.
- **Romans 12:19 (NLT) — 19** Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, “I will take revenge; I will pay them back,” says the Lord.
- Think of the example of David and Saul. God anointed David to replace King Saul and Saul immediately began trying to kill David. **1 Samuel 24:12 (NLT) — 12** “May the Lord judge between us. Perhaps the Lord will punish you for what you are trying to do to me, but I will never harm you.
- Our ultimate example is Jesus. Peter writes in **1 Peter 2:23 (NLT) — 23** He did not retaliate when he was insulted, nor threaten revenge when he suffered. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly.
- *“He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly.”* When we face evil people and situations we should trust God to settle the score.
- I quoted Romans 12:17 and 19 but I skipped over verse 18: **Romans 12:18 (NLT) — 18** Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.
- But the standard is even higher than just “getting along.”
- **Romans 12:20 (NLT) — 20** Instead, “If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads.”
- Back to the example of Jesus: **Luke 23:34 (NLT) — 34** Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing.”
- Does this mean Christ-followers should never defend ourselves when we are wronged? What do you think?
- It’s a matter of scripture and prayer and each situation is unique.
- Here’s some homework: Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Corinthians 6:1-8 are relevant. Also, check out Paul’s tactic in Acts 22:25-27.
- What we know for sure from scripture is that first and foremost, before we try to avenge ourselves we should trust our loving and just Heavenly Father to settle the score.

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- One of the best passages of scripture to read when evil people have harmed us is Psalm 37. Listen to verses 7-9:
Psalm 37:7-9 (NLT) — 7 Be still in the presence of the Lord, and wait patiently for him to act. Don’t worry about evil people who prosper or fret about their wicked schemes. **8** Stop being angry! Turn from your rage! Do not lose your temper— it only leads to harm. **9** For the wicked will be destroyed, but those who trust in the Lord will possess the land.
- We serve a just God and his judgment awaits those who defy Him. That applies to the saved and the unsaved.

- For the saved it is the necessary (but painful) discipline of a loving Father. Because Christ died for our sins past, present, and future, we can turn to God, confess our sin, and be restored in our relationship to Him.
- For those who reject God there will be punishment based on God's perfect justice. We may not understand God's timing but when we wonder if evil will prevail we can rest assured that in His timing God judge evil.
- Instead of fretting or plotting revenge against evil people who harm us, let's trust God to settle the score.

ⁱ Jeremiah 25:7-9

ⁱⁱ <https://www.history.com/topics/ancient-middle-east/babylon#:~:text=Art%20and%20architecture%20flourished%20throughout,th at%20were%2040%20feet%20tall.>

ⁱⁱⁱ Peterson, E. H. (2005). *The Message: the Bible in contemporary language* (Je 50:11). Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress.

^{iv} Tyndale. Life Application Study Bible NKJV (LASB: Full Size) (Kindle Locations 154157-154158). Tyndale House Publishers. Kindle Edition.

^v Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *Be Decisive* (pp. 176–177). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^{vi} <https://ca.thegospelcoalition.org/columns/ad-fontes/fall-babylon-old-testament-new/>

^{vii} Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Heb 12:6). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.