A. **Overview**

1. Important questions

   a) Who is Babylon?
   In the context of the rest of Jer, the only ID that makes
   sense is the nation of Nebuchadnezzar.

   b) When is this fulfilled?

      1) The oracles against the other nations fulfilled by
         Nebuchadnezzar.

      2) Bab. was conquered in antiquity.
         a> Isa. 45 promises that God will open the city to Cyrus.
         b> The actual conquest took place the night of the party in
            Dan. 5; note (v.31) that the kdom was given to Darius as
            Cyrus' lieutenant.
         c> 2 Chr. 36 shows Cyrus' authority over the people of
            Babylon, as he sends the Jews back to rebuild their
            temple.

      3) But that conquest doesn't count here:
         a> He did not destroy the city, but snuck in through the
            river gate (Herodotus). Yet these chapters foretell its
            destruction (50:12, 15, 26; 51:58).
         b> The city has never been completely abandoned; there were
            three Arab villages within its walls until recently,
            when Hussein relocated them to rebuild the main city
            structures. But these chapters emphasize that when the
            destruction here prophesied occurs, the city will never
            be occupied again (50:13, 38-40; 51:26, 37, 41, 43).

      4) It seems, then, that Jer is looking forward to a
         destruction of Babylon yet to come.

   c) Rev. 18-19 makes extensive use of this prophecy in its
      description of the apostasy of the last times.

      1) Fits well with our conclusion that the destruction of
         Babylon here described is still future.

      2) Also cautions us that we should not be too eager to
         spiritualize Babylon into the Roman Catholic organization,
         though undoubtedly all ungodly religion will play an
         important part in that last rebellion.

2. Overview of these chapters

a) Key players
           1) Babylon (naturally)
           2) Israel, depicted as
              a> suffering under Babylon (51:34-35)
              b> fleeing her judgment (51:45)
              c> restored to fellowship with the Lord (50:4-5)
           3) The enemy who attacks Babylon (50:29)
           4) The Lord as the ultimate cause of her fall (50:25)

        b) Four oracles, three in ch. 50 and one long one in ch. 51. All
           are odd chiasms, and it is fruitful to compare their centers,
           the focal points, with respect to repeated features.

                                    50:11-13 25   38-40   51:25-26
           1) Babylon desolate   X   X   X
           2) The Lord's agency   X   X   X
           3) Her sin against people X   X
           4) Her idolatry   X   X

   3. Lessons for us
      a) God will take vengeance for his people; thus we can afford to
         love our enemies.
      b) God's judgment may linger, but when it does come, it will be
         terrible.
      c) God's people should beware of ungodly associations, lest they
         catch the overflow of judgment.

   4. The first oracle, 50:2-20: God will Punish Babylon for Abusing
      Israel.
      ABCBA chiasm.
      a) B's are commands, the first to Israel, the second to the
         attacker. The other three are descriptive.
      b) A's emphasize three themes: Israel's torment, Babylon's
         judgment, and Israel's restoration. C has only the first two
         of these.

B. **2-7, Summary of Major Themes**
   Presents the three major themes, without making explicit the
   connection among them. That will be developed through the rest of
   the oracle.

   1. 2-3, An enemy from the north will conquer Babylon. "Bel" and
      "Merodach" (Marduk) refer to the chief god of the Babylonian
      pantheon. "Bel" is his title (as we refer to "the Lord"), and
      "Marduk" is his name (cf. YHWH). God's victory against Babylon is
      explicitly a defeat and shame to her idols.

   2. 4-5, Israel will return to the Lord. Important features here:

      a) Israel and Judah reunited. How can one spiritualize this? In
         Jer's context, pretty clearly a reference to the literal
         restoration of the nation.

      b) This will happen at the same time ("in those days, and in

                                    2

that time") as the fall of Babylon, confirming that the fall
in view hasn't happened yet.

    c) Note how they come. NOT automatic because they are Jews.
       They are saved through the same mechanisms as anyone else.
       In particular,
       1) v.4, They come in repentance, seeking the Lord.
       2) v.5, the come on the basis of the everlasting covenant
          (32:40, the new covenant).
       3) v.5, they seek to be joined to that covenant: BELIEF.

  3. 6-7, Israel has previously been abused. They are described as
    "lost sheep," a title that is then amplified in three ways.

    a) They were abused by their shepherds, their "pastors." The OT
       prophets are vitriolic in their criticism of how those who
       should have led the people in godliness instead abused them
       for their own gain. This abuse sheds a particularly
       interesting light on professionalism in the ministry today.

    b) As a result, they are lost and wandering. Whatever the cause
       of going astray, it's still fatal. We can't say, "He misled
       me, so it's OK." Lost is still lost, however we get there.

    c) Their enemies justify abusing them: "After all, they sinned
       against the Lord." It is shameful to think how often
       professed Christians have used exactly this excuse to hate
       and oppress the Jews. The balance of these chapters should
       be adequate commentary on how God feels about that attitude.
       They may have sinned, but they are still God's people, under
       his protection.

C. **8-10, Command to Israel**
   Flee from Babylon because of the coming invasion. Instead of
   wandering sheep, they should be purposeful goats.

   Note that vv. 9-10 give the reason for this command, which
   becomes clearer when the command is repeated later. If you
   don't want to catch the heat, leave before the fire starts.
   This is the same principle as Lot in Sodom. If you're around
   when the Lord brings judgment, be careful that you don't get
   hit. A warning against close associations with those on whom
   God's judgment rests.

D. **11-13, Focus: Babylon Shamed**
   Here we revisit two of the three major themes, and make the
   connection between them explicit with the thrice-repeated "because."
   Babylon has proudly persecuted Israel, so she herself will be put to
   shame and become a wilderness instead of the center of civilization.

E. **14-16, Command to Babylon's Attackers**
   We have three sets of commands, interspersed with two motives, one
   at the end of v.14 and the other in the middle of v.15.

1. The motives show that the Lord lies behind the human
   attacker, a theme we have seen several times already in the
   oracles against the other nations. It is because Babylon has
   offended the Lord that the human enemy comes.

2. The three sets of commands are progressive.

   a) Before the first motive, the enemy is commanded to attack.

   b) Between the motives, it is to shout out that the city has
      fallen.

   c) After the second motive, it is to devastate the economy by
      depopulating the land (cf. what Neb. did to Jerusalem). The
      last two clauses in v.16 can just as well be read as
      jussives, thus preserving the symmetry: "For fear of the
      oppressing sword *let* them turn every one to his people, and
      let them flee every one to his own land."

F. **17-20, Integration of Major Themes**
   Now we see all three themes integrated with one another.

   1. 17, Israel's abuse reappears under the same figure as in 6-7,
      tormented sheep.

   2. *Therefore* (explicit connection) the Lord will do two things:

      a) 18, he will punish Babylon.

      b) 19-20, he will restore Israel. This restoration takes two
         forms.

         1) 19, physical restoration to their historic homeland
            (including Bashan and Gilead, which are east of the
            Jordan--no way of confusing this with the present
            situation).

            *That in itself is wonderful, but by itself it would be of
            only temporal value. The real blessing is the next one:*

         2) 20, Israel's sins will be forgiven. As she "seeks" and
            finds the Lord (v.4), her own sins will be "sought" but not
            found (here). The final clause balances Israel's initiative
            in vv. 4-5 with God's sovereignty: God forgives those whom
            he preserves for himself.

   Summary
   God watches out for his people. He will take care of all the
   "getting even" that is needed. Our place is to love our enemies, in
   the hopes that some of them might come to trust in him.

   Psalm: Ps. 72:16-19, "On Hilltops Sown a Little Grain," a psalm of
   the coming kingdom.

Analysis
Heavily indebted to Aitken's analysis in *Tyndale Bulletin* 35 (1984),
although significantly different.

Part I: The Oracles
50:1 HA/D.FBFR):A$ER D.IB.ER Y:HWFH)EL-B.FBEL)EL-)EREC
K.A&:D.IYM B.:/YAD YIR:M:YFHW. HA/N.FBIY)

A. 2-20, ABCBA chiasm. Babylon abused Israel, so God will destroy her
    and restore Israel. Center, 11-13, Babylon will be destroyed.

    1. 2-7, the three major elements of Israel's torment, Babylon's
        judgment, and Israel's restoration. No explicit logical
        connections among them yet: that comes in 17-20.

        a) 2-3 Judgment of Babylon: quote p
            1) quote f
                a> 50:2 HAG.IYDW. BA/G.OWYIM
                b> W:/HA$:MIY(W.
                c> W./&:)W.-N"S
                d> HA$:MIY(W.
                e>)AL-T.:KAX"DW.
                f>)IM:RW.
            2) 2b-3 judgment of Babylon: reason p
                a> text:
                    1> NIL:K.:DFH BFBEL
                    2> HOBIY$ B."L
                    3> XAT M:RODFK:
                    4> HOBIY$W. (:ACAB.EY/HF
                    5> XAT.W. G.IL.W.LEY/HF
                b> reason: 50:3 K.IY
                    1> (FLFH (FLEY/HF G.OWY MI/C.FPOWN
                    2> HW.)-YF$IYT)ET-)AR:C/FH. L:/$AM.FH
                    3> W:/LO)-YIH:YEH YOW$"B B./FH.
                    4> M")/FDFM W:/(AD-B.:H"MFH NFDW. HFLFKW.

        b) 4-5 restoration of Israel: temporal p
            1) time: 50:4 B.A/Y.FMIYM HF/H"M.FH W./BF/("T HA/HIY)
                N:)UM-Y:HWFH
            2) text:
                a> YFBO)W. B:N"Y-YI&:RF)"L H"M.FH W./B:N"Y-Y:HW.DFH
                    YAX:D.FW
                b> HFLOWK: W./BFKOW Y"L"KW.
                c> W:/)ET-Y:HWFH):ELOH"Y/HEM Y:BAQ."$W.
                d> 50:5 CIY.OWN YI$:)FLW.
                e> D.EREK: H"N.FH P:N"Y/HEM
                f> their cry to one another as they progress: B.O)W.
                g> W:/NIL:WW.)EL-Y:HWFH B.:RIYT (OWLFM LO) TI$.FK"XA S
                    take as impf 3mp, not impv, which would be NILLAWW. This
                    is the final summary of their prosperity.

        c) 6-7 Previous plight of Israel as lost sheep: ampl p
            1) text: 50:6 CO)N)OB:DOWT {HFYFH} [HFYW.] (AM./IY

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         2) ampl:
            a> abused by their shepherds
               1> RO("Y/HEM HIT:(W./M
               2> HFRIYM {$OWB"BIYM} [$OWB:BW./M]
            b> lost and wandering
               1> M"/HAR )EL-G.IB:(FH HFLFKW.
               2> $FK:XW. RIB:C/FM
               3> 50:7  K.FL-MOWC:)"Y/HEM ):AKFLW./M
            c> dominated by their enemies: quote p
               1> quote f: W:/CFR"Y/HEM )FM:RW.
               2> quote:
                  a: reason p:
                     1: text: LO) NE):$FM
                     2: reason: T.AXAT ):A$ER XF+:)W. LA/YHWFH
                        N:W"H-CEDEQ W./MIQ:W"H ):ABOWT"Y/HEM Y:HWFH S

  2. 8-10 reason p: motivated command to Israel: flee because of
     the coming invasion. Cf. 14-16.
     a) text: Invitation to Israel
        1) 50:8  NUDW. MI/T.OWK: B.FBEL
        2) W./M"/)EREC K.A&:D.IYM {YFC:)W.} [C")W.]
        3) WI/H:YW. K.:/(AT.W.DIYM LI/P:N"Y-CO)N
     b) reason: 50:9  K.IY
        1) HIN."H )FNOKIY M"(IYR W./MA(:ALEH (AL-B.FBEL Q:HAL-G.OWYIM
           G.:DOLIYM M"/)EREC CFPOWN
        2) W:/(FR:KW. L/FH.
        3) MI/$.FM T.IL.FK"D
        4) XIC.FY/W K.:/GIB.OWR MA$:K.IYL
        5) LO) YF$W.B R"YQFM
        6) 50:10  W:/HFY:TFH KA&:D.IYM L:/$FLFL
        7) K.FL-$OL:LEY/HF YI&:B.F(W. N:)UM-Y:HWFH

  3. 11-13, center. reason p: Babylon will be shamed because she
     abused Israel
     a) reason: Because Babylon rejoiced to abuse Israel ...
        1) 50:11  K.IY {TI&:M:XIY} [TI&:M:XW.]
        2) K.IY {TA(:AL:ZIY} [TA(AL:ZW.] $OS"Y NAX:ALFTIY
        3) K.IY
           a> {TFPW.$IY} [TFPW.$W.] K.:/(EG:LFH DF$FH
           b> {W:/TIC:H:ALIY} [W:/TIC:H:ALW.] K.F/):AB.IRIYM
     b) text:
        1) 50:12  B.OW$FH )IM./:KEM M:)OD
        2) XFP:RFH YOWLAD:T./:KEM
        3) HIN."H )AX:ARIYT G.OWYIM MID:B.FR CIY.FH WA/(:ARFBFH
        4) contrast p
           a> 50:13  MI/Q.ECEP Y:HWFH LO) T"$"B
           b> W:/HFY:TFH $:MFMFH K.UL.FH.
        5) K.OL (OB"R (AL-B.FBEL YI$.OM W:/YI$:ROQ
           (AL-K.FL-MAK.OWTEY/HF

  4. 14-16 motivated command to Babylon's attackers
     Interesting combination of Commands, Motives, and (perhaps)
     Descriptions. Fulfillment of v.9.
     a) C 50:14  (IR:KW. (AL-B.FBEL SFBIYB K.FL-D.OR:K"Y QE$ET
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b) C Y:DW.)"LEY/HF
c) C)AL-T.AX:M:LW.)EL-X"C
d) M K.IY LA/YHWFH XF+F)FH
e) C 50:15 HFRIY(W. (FLEY/HF SFBIYB
   Might be quote f, and next three clauses might be the
   quote--but is *RW(* ever used of intelligible discourse, or just
   of a shout? Ps. 66:1-3 is the closest I can find.
f) D NFT:NFH YFD/FH.
g) D NFP:LW. {)A$:WIY.OTEY/HF} [)F$:YOWTEY/HF]
h) D NEHER:SW. XOWMOWTEY/HF
i) M K.IY NIQ:MAT Y:HWFH HIY)
j) C HIN.FQ:MW. B/FH.
k) C K.A/):A$ER (F&:TFH (:A&W.-L/FH.
l) C 50:16 K.IR:TW. ZOWR"(A MI/B.FBEL W:/TOP"& MAG.FL B.:/("T
   QFCIYR
m) D (or C) MI/P.:N"Y XEREB HA/Y.OWNFH)IY$)EL-(AM./OW YIP:NW.
   W:/)IY$ L:/)AR:C/OW YFNUSW. S

5. 17-20, integrated statement: result p: Because Israel was abused,
   the Lord will punish Babylon and restore Israel.
   a) text: Israel is a tormented sheep
      1) 50:17 &EH P:ZW.RFH YI&:RF)"L
      2)):ARFYOWT HID.IYXW. HF/RI)$OWN
      3)):AKFL/OW MELEK:)A$.W.R
      4) W:/ZEH HF/)AX:AROWN (IC.:M/OW N:BW.KAD:RE)C.AR MELEK:
         B.FBEL S
   b) 18-20 result: 50:18 LF/K"N K.OH-)FMAR Y:HWFH C:BF)OWT
      ):ELOH"Y YI&:RF)"L
      1) HIN/:NIY POQ"D)EL-MELEK: B.FBEL W:/)EL-)AR:C/OW K.A/):A$ER
         P.FQAD:T.IY)EL-MELEK:)A$.W.R
      2) 50:19 W:/$OBAB:T.IY)ET-YI&:RF)"L)EL-NFW"HW.
      3) W:/RF(FH HA/K.AR:MEL W:/HA/B.F$FN
      4) W./B:/HAR)EP:RAYIM W:/HA/G.IL:(FD T.I&:B.A(NAP:$/OW
      5) temporal reason p
         a> time: 50:20 B.A/Y.FMIYM HF/H"M W./BF/("T HA/HIY)
            N:)UM-Y:HWFH
         b> text:
            1> Y:BUQ.A$)ET-(:AWON YI&:RF)"L
            2> W:/)"YNEN.W.
            3> W:/)ET-XA+.O)T Y:HW.DFH
            4> W:/LO) TIM.FCE)YNFH
         c> reason: K.IY)ES:LAX LA/):A$ER)A$:)IYR

B. 21-32, ABC-D-ABAC. Deemphasizes Babylon's opposition to Israel, and
   focuses on her pride against the Lord and his agency in opposing
   her. Center, 25, God is the ultimate agent in judging Babylon. (No
   description of her sin)
   See next study.

C. 33-46, ABCBA Now the central focus is on Babylon's idolatry, 38-40,
   everlasting desolation because of her idolatry. (None of God's
   agency in center)
   See next study.

D. ch. 51, X ABCBA X. Between summary oracles (X), both introduced by
   "Thus saith the Lord," the Lord conducts extensive conversations
   with the refugees (A), and directly addresses the attacker (B) and
   Babylon (C, 25-26).
   See next study.

   Part II, 51:59-63a: The Delivery Mechanism: quote p
   See next study.

   Colophon, 51:63b
   (AD-H"N.FH D.IB:R"Y YIR:M:YFHW. S