

# Baruch

## IGNATIUS CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE QUESTIONS

### Welcome

“You are approaching the ‘word of God’. But for thousands of years, . . . the Word of God has been approaching you.”

The following guide is provided to enhance your reading of the Book of Baruch using the *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible*. If you are new to this resource or to reading the Bible, we recommend you read the general Introduction before you begin. It explains what it means that Scripture is the Word of God as well as how we understand and interpret it as Catholics. It also introduces the special features of the Study Bible and tells how they can enrich your reading and study. Additionally, the *Introduction to Reading the Prophets*—especially the section on Baruch—will provide valuable context for your reading.

A simple rhythm of prayer followed by reading and reflection is offered below to guide you through the book one chapter at a time. Questions draw attention to key footnotes and word studies to lead you into a deeper understanding of what you read and then prompt you to consider how to apply what you have learned. For a deeper dive, take advantage of additional features as you go: not just the other footnotes but also cross-references to Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* that are provided above the footnotes as well as any maps, charts, or essays that are not touched on in the questions.

Don’t miss these helpful icons as you read! They highlight footnotes that pertain to the Church’s criteria for interpreting Scripture (see CCC 112–14):



### Be attentive to the content and unity of Scripture

Notes marked with a Bible icon connect Old Testament passages and New Testament mysteries, fostering appreciation for God’s unified plan.



### Read Scripture in light of the Church’s living tradition

This icon marks notes drawn from the Holy Spirit’s guidance of Church teaching and the spiritual senses of scripture. Here you’ll find official teaching as well as interpretations from Fathers, Doctors, and saints of the Church.



### Be attentive to the “analogy of faith”

Explore notes marked with an icon of keys to learn how the mysteries of faith, revealed in Scripture and defined by the Church, clarify and connect with one another in a unified, coherent way.

May God bless you as you read his word!

of God,\* did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,<sup>7</sup> but emptied himself,<sup>†</sup> taking the form of a servant,<sup>‡</sup> being born in the likeness of men.<sup>§</sup> And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.<sup>¶</sup> Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name,<sup>||</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,<sup>|||</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

12 Therefore, obeyed, so now much more in salvation with f work in you, bo pleasure.  
14 Do all th tioning,<sup>15</sup> that y children of God crooked and per

2:9–11: Rom 10:9; 14:9; Eph 1:20–21. 2:13: 1 Cor 15:10. 2

**2:7 emptied himself:** The Greek verb *kenōō* means “empty out” or “render void”. The idea is, not that Christ divested himself of divinity when he united himself with humanity, but that he restricted his rightful exercise of certain divine abilities during his earthly life and accepted certain limitations of the human condition. In effect, the Son of God made himself poor in order to make us rich with his grace (2 Cor 8:9) (CCC 472). • Christ emptied himself by compressing the glory of his Godhead within our smallness. What he always was remained perfect and incomprehensible, but what he assumed was in proportion to the measure of our nature (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Apollinarius*).

**2:8 death on a cross:** The ultimate indignity. Death by crucifixion was the most awful and degrading form of criminal execution in the ancient world. The Romans reserved it for slaves and insurrectionists. See note on Mk 15:24.

**2:9 exalted him:** By raising him from the dead, enthroning him in heaven, and clothing his humanity with divine glory. A similar destiny awaits all who humble themselves as Jesus did (3:21; Lk 14:11).

**2:10 every knee should bow:** An allusion to the divine oath in Is 45:23. • Yahweh swore that all peoples, to the very end of the earth, would acknowledge his Lordship and bow before him in homage. Paul moves Christ into the center of this prophecy as the divine Lord destined to be revered by all. **heaven . . . earth . . . under the earth:** The three principal realms in the world view of ancient Israel (Ex 20:4). Homage will come from all creatures great and small—the angels and saints above, the family of man and beasts spread over the earth, and the dead and the demons of the underworld.

**2:11 confess:** I.e., acknowledge. Included in this open dec

serious that we pur sense of awe at ser the prospect of sinn Encouragement con readers that God’s g desire (intention) at 21; CCC 308) (CC “work”, he address and trembling”, he good deeds were th not boast of your g within you (St. Augu **2:15 pervers** • Deuterono poetic lawsuit that and ingratitude du

*A Thing to Harpagmos* (G in the Greek O Occurrences of “robbery”. Its considerable d the leading vi (1) Some, like “something sel

## Prepare

Read the Introduction to Baruch, paying particular attention to the *Structure*, the *Content and Themes*, and the *Christian Perspective* on it. What one thing stands out to you, that you would like to remember?

Read the Outline of Baruch to get an overview of the book. What are its major divisions?

## Pray

Use the following questions to guide your reading of Baruch, going at a pace that is comfortable to you. Before you begin each new section, pray simply for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit:

*Come, Holy Spirit, open my heart to hear and receive these words as what they truly are, the Word of God. Enlighten my understanding and give me grace to put what I read into practice in my life. Amen.*

## Read and Reflect

Read and reflect on Baruch as follows:

- Pray before you read
- Read a section of biblical text by itself
- Read the text again, referring to the notes that accompany the text
- For deeper understanding and to aid in applying what you read, answer the questions that follow. The references at the top of each numbered question correspond to particular notes.

At the end of each chapter, review what you have written and linger where you feel drawn, asking the Lord to speak to your heart and into your life. What do you hear? Respond in prayer and ask his help to live what you hear in your attitudes and actions this week.

# STUDY QUESTIONS

## Chapter 1

### *For Understanding*

1. **1:1.** In what form was the book of Baruch used? What about its contents is uncertain? Who was Baruch, especially in his relation to Jeremiah? What have archaeologists uncovered about him? Although Baruch's presence in Babylon is not otherwise attested in ancient sources, where is it affirmed? Interestingly, what does the Jewish historian Josephus state about the Babylonian conquest of Egypt a few years after the fall of Jerusalem?
2. **1:3.** When was Jeconiah/Jehoiachin, king of Judah, taken captive to Babylon, and how long was he imprisoned? Where would this mean that Baruch read the book to him?
3. **1:8.** What is the month of Sivan? What liturgical items are referred to here? What does Baruch's return of these items to Jerusalem anticipate? Which other verses in the Bible speak of Zedekiah's replacement vessels?
4. **1:11.** What does urging prayer for the Babylonian king recall? Among whom was intercession for government rulers practiced? Why is it notable that Jewish exiles and residents of Jerusalem should pray for Nebuchadnezzar? Who was Belshazzar? Why is the note that Belshazzar was the son Nebuchadnezzar labeled an error, and why might that judgment be hasty?

### *For application*

1. **1:3–5.** How was the reading of Jeremiah's prophecies to Jehoiachin, Jeconiah's father, received before the Exile (Jer 36:22–23)? What accounts for the different reception Baruch receives before Jeconiah?
2. **1:10.** Why is a monetary offering requested for certain religious functions such as weddings, funerals, and Masses for special intentions? Although the amount for the offering is set by Church authorities, what happens if a person is too poor to pay it (cf. CIC 848)?
3. **1:11.** Why does St. Paul recommend to Timothy that prayers be offered for persons in authority (1 Tim 2:1–2)? Which authorities are typically included in the general intercessions of the Mass? Why should we include secular authorities in our private prayers as well?
4. **1:15–21.** Whose sins are the exiles confessing in these verses? Why does Mass usually begin with a penitential rite? In the Confiteor, who is at fault for the sins we confess? Why do we add that our sins are "grievous"?

## Chapter 2

### *For understanding*

1. **2:3.** How did Moses speak of parents cannibalizing their children during a food shortage? When did atrocities like this occur?
2. **2:11—3:8.** What do these verses narrate? What do memories of the Exodus from Egypt, which demonstrated God's power to save his people, inspire? While the prayer closely resembles Dan 9:15–19, what messages do select verses summarize?
3. **2:26.** Why is it unclear how the detail of the Temple's ruins in 581 B.C. fits the modern hypothesis that Baruch was addressed to the Jewish Diaspora long after the time of the Babylonian Exile? How do some scholars avoid this problem? When did the "house of Israel" forsake the Temple, and until when did the southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin continue to defile it?
4. **2:31.** To what does God's offer of a "heart that obeys" refer? Of what will "circumcision of the heart" be the sign? According to St. Augustine, how do we know who has received the gift of obedience from God?

### *For application*

1. **2:6.** In their confession, what do the exiles mean by "confusion of face"? How does awareness of having hurt someone cause confusion in one's approach to that person? How does this confusion show itself on the face or in other body language?
2. **2:14–15.** According to the exiles' prayer, why do they want to be granted favor in the sight of those who carried them into exile? As suggested in the note for this verse, what is the divine name by which the exiles are called? As a Christian, by whose name are you called?

3. **2:18.** How does this verse describe the spiritual condition of the exiles themselves? What self-conception is best calculated to win a favorable hearing from the Lord?
4. **2:31.** The note for this verse refers to St. Augustine, who describes obedience as a gift of God. How does obedience build character? What is the difference between servile and virtuous obedience?

## Chapter 3

### *For understanding*

1. **3:4.** How do many scholars surmise that the original Hebrew of this text of Baruch reads in contrast to that of a Greek translator? If the Greek text is correct, what belief does the passage reflect, and how is such a belief historically plausible?
2. **3:10.** What does Baruch's note about growing old in a foreign country suggest to many scholars? Why is this conclusion not demanded, however? How does defilement with the dead describe life in exile?
3. **3:29–30.** How is wisdom described in terms that Moses used? By contrast, what is the point here?
4. **3:37.** While the gender of the subject of this verse is ambiguous in Greek, how do the RSV2CE and others translate it? How is Wisdom personified? Like many passages in the OT, for what does this passage prepare? How does St. Cyril of Jerusalem interpret the passage? According to St. Thomas Aquinas, why, according to Baruch, did the Son of God assume human nature?

### *For application*

1. **3:4.** Read the note for this verse. How does the developing Jewish view of the afterlife resemble the Christian doctrine of Purgatory? How do the souls in Purgatory depend on the prayers of the living (CCC 1032)? For whom can these souls pray?
2. **3:10.** In what ways can our secular, materialist, and often atheist culture be considered a foreign country for committed Christians who live in it? What does it mean to grow old in such a culture? How can Christians be in the culture without becoming contaminated by it?
3. **3:14.** What is wisdom (as distinct, for example, from knowledge or understanding)? According to Scripture, where does one begin to learn it (Prov 9:10; Sir 1:14)? What is the relation of wisdom to the Holy Spirit?
4. **3:22–23.** What is the difference between the practical wisdom gained from business experience, political shrewdness, and good civic behavior and the kind of wisdom that Baruch has in mind? While the former is important for getting along in society, how is the latter superior?

## Chapter 4

### *For understanding*

1. **4:3.** What great advantage does Israel have over other nations? How does Paul likewise view this advantage?
2. **4:5—5:9.** With what news does this prophetic exhortation encourage Jewish exiles in Babylon? Which two voices can be heard? From what sources does this third section of the book draw extensively?
3. **4:12.** Who is the widow here? Why is it unclear how this picture of the desolated city squares with the modern view that Baruch was written to Diaspora Jews long after the Babylonian Exile?
4. **4:13.** To what does observance of the Mosaic Law lead, according to Deut 6:25? Because of the moral weakness of Israel (and all nations), from where alone can this gift come?

### *For application*

1. **4:2.** How does the word of God act like a lamp for your feet and a light for your path (Ps 119:105)? According to Ps 119, where in Scripture are you most likely to find passages that illuminate your way? How many synonyms for “your word” does the psalm use?
2. **4:7.** The note for this verse cites Deut 32:17, which alludes to gods that were new to Israelites. What are some of the new gods that our culture worships? How can they be characterized as demonic? How do those who worship them become like them?
3. **4:20.** As a Christian, why would you choose to wear sackcloth? How would it serve as an accessory to prayer? How would Jesus' injunction to pray or fast in secret (Mt 6:6, 17–18) apply to its use?

4. **4:28.** In what periods of a young person's life is he most likely to stray from Christianity? What are some common reasons for this? What attractions do non-Christian religions provide? What ultimate questions do these religions fail to answer that might prompt a return to the Christian faith?

## Chapter 5

### *For understanding*

1. **5:1–9.** What is the high point of the prophetic exhortation? Like Isaiah, what does Baruch invite Jerusalem to do? At that time, what will happen? What does the poetry underscore? In the ancient Church, to what are OT prophecies about a glorified Jerusalem related?
2. **5:5–9.** To what nonbiblical Jewish work do these verses bear a striking resemblance? What do scholars debate in regard to that work?
3. **5:9.** How is divine glory often depicted?

### *For application*

1. **5:3.** At the Last Judgment, what about human behavior will be revealed? Before whom will it be revealed (CCC 678, 1039)? How can we prepare for that event?
2. **5:6.** At the end of time, how will this prophecy be fulfilled in the resurrection of the dead? What enemy led people away, and to where? With what glory will they return? According to St. Paul, how will the rest of creation participate in that glory (Rom 8:19–21)?

## Chapter 6

### *For understanding*

1. **6:3.** How long did Jeremiah say the Babylonian Exile would last? Why is it uncertain how this text's calculation of seven generations relates to that figure? What do some think this figure signifies?
2. **6:11.** What does the Greek term for a brothel indicate, and what is unclear about it? What did the Torah outlaw regarding prostitution?
3. **6:27.** How do idols have to be secured in place? Why is the heathen practice of bringing food offerings to gravesites no different from bringing food to idols?
4. **6:43.** What once-in-a-lifetime obligation to the goddess Ishtar/Aphrodite do ancient sources indicate that Babylonian women had? What did it mean for a woman that her cord was not broken?

### *For application*

1. **6:4.** Compare the pagan practice of this verse with the Christian practice of carrying statues of the Blessed Virgin and other saints in procession. How come the latter does not merit Jeremiah's condemnation? What sort of fear should the Christian practices inspire in the faithful?
2. **6:7.** What bothers some people about the presence of God's angel (or God himself) watching their lives? Why might they object to divine oversight? Is God's watchfulness a matter of mere surveillance or something more benign, and if the latter, what?
3. **6:9.** Many parishes have the practice of crowning a statue of Mary with flowers during the month of May. Under what title is Mary venerated at such times? What other Marian devotions are practiced during this month? How are these practices compatible with the worship reserved to God alone?
4. **6:19.** Why are candles used in Catholic churches for liturgical worship and other devotions? What is the special significance of the Easter candle, and how is it used outside of the Easter season? What is the purpose of the votive candles placed near statues of Mary, Joseph, and other saints?