

Pentwater Bible Church

Isaiah Message 112

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The Flight into Egypt By Caravaggio Cir 1595

Daniel E. Woodhead – Pastor Teacher

Pentwater Bible Church

The Book of Isaiah

One-Hundred-Twelve

THE JUDGEMENT UPON BABYLON

May 23, 2021

Daniel E. Woodhead

Isaiah 47:1–15

Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon; sit on the ground without a throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate. ²Take the millstones, and grind meal; remove thy veil, strip off the train, uncover the leg, pass through the rivers. ³Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen: I will take vengeance, and will spare no man. ⁴Our Redeemer, Jehovah of hosts is his name, the Holy One of Israel. ⁵Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans; for thou shalt no more be called The mistress of kingdoms. ⁶I was wroth with my people, I profaned mine inheritance, and gave them into thy hand: thou didst show them no mercy; upon the aged hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke. ⁷And thou saidst, I shall be mistress for ever; so that thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end thereof.

⁸Now therefore hear this, thou that art given to pleasures, that sittest securely, that sayest in thy heart, I am, and there is none else besides me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children: ⁹but these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood; in their full measure shall they come upon thee, in the multitude of thy sorceries, and the great abundance of thine enchantments. ¹⁰For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness; thou hast said, None seeth me; thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee, and thou hast said in thy heart, I am, and there is none else besides me. ¹¹Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know the dawning thereof: and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it away: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou knowest not.

¹²Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast labored from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. ¹³Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels: let now the astrologers, the star-gazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from the things that shall come upon thee. ¹⁴Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: it shall not be a coal to warm at, nor a fire to sit before. ¹⁵Thus shall the things be unto thee wherein thou hast labored: they that have trafficked with thee from thy youth shall wander every one to his quarter; there shall be none to save thee (ASV, 1901).

THE LORD'S PUNISHMENT ON BABYLON

Isaiah 47:1

¹Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon; sit on the ground without a throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate (ASV, 1901).

In this chapter the Lord prophecies the downfall of Babylon. Although He had already done so in Chapters 13 and 21, He repeats it to underscore the great harm the Babylonians will inflict upon Israel and the world. This was written approximately 166 years before the fall of Babylon to the Media Persians under Cyrus. As a result this event will stop the Babylonians in that status and cause the city of Babylon to lie in remission until the Antichrist makes it his civil and economic world headquarters yet future to us today. They promulgated the occult, a love for commerce instead of God and a rebellious attitude against all morality and obedience to God.

The Babylonians, Judah's captors in 586 B.C., would become captives themselves of the Media-Persians. Isaiah the prophet likens Babylon to a princess who sits on the ground in mourning for her family who have been killed. The mourning period over, she gets up to return to her throne, only to be told that her kingdom has been conquered and her people taken into captivity. Now no longer will she be delicate and dainty. She will be lower than common. She will be a prisoner of war.

When conquered, Babylon would become a humbled servant, sitting in the dust, an act depicting great mourning (Jonah 3:6). The words *virgin daughter* personify the people of a city as a young, innocent girl (Isaiah 23:12; 37:22), probably meaning that the city's walls had never been breached, nor had any nation previously conquered them. The people would no longer be tender and delicate like a virgin because of the hardships they would face. There is an implied connection of the dust with the rubble of the destroyed city of Babylon. Further we can include an allusion to death and the underworld, thus making this scene parallel to the decent of the king of Babylon (The Antichrist), into the underworld (Isaiah 14:3–22).

The fall of ancient states is a warning to modern ones. But the value and use of history is seen in the fact that, history does repeat itself. History does teach lessons, and among its most important lessons are those that it teaches to existing states by the example of the fates of earlier empires. Studying the decline and fall of empires are often of value. It is important to credit the creator and ruler of the Universe for His role in the rise and fall of societies and empires. A plethora of authors asserting speculations of empire collapse focus on the symptoms and do not uncover the source of the issue. The God of all creation has stated that He alone controls all things including the hearts and movements of men on earth. If we pay attention to what He has said we can uncover the *true* reasons for all the empires that have collapsed. Most important is the Divine view of the causes which brought about the fall of those empires. Now, according to Isaiah, the downfall of Babylon had four principal causes.

1. EXCESSIVE LUXURY. Babylon was given to pleasure.
2. EXCESSIVE CRUELTY. Babylon showed no mercy.
3. EXCESSIVE PRIDE. Babylon thought that she was the finest and would never be shamed.
4. EXCESSIVE FOOLISH SUPERSTITION. Babylon worshipped false idols and superstitions.

Isaiah 47:2–3

²Take the millstones, and grind meal; remove thy veil, strip off the train, uncover the leg, pass through the rivers. ³Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen: I will take vengeance, and will spare no man (ASV, 1901).

The illustration used is making reference to Babylon as an upper-class woman of royalty. For them to *take the millstones, and grind meal* is a reference of having to do the hard work commonly performed by female slaves. This is difficult work which is generally performed by slaves or prisoners of war. They will now be enslaved themselves to the kings of Media and Persia. She would be ordered to remove her veil as well as, every garment of her royal clothing, and be lowered in status of the lowest female degradation. The woman's head being the part of the body depicting the most feminine modesty in ancient Bible lands, therefore was wholesomely kept covered.

Bare a leg is suggesting even more common work that the formerly prideful Babylonians will now have to do. Even though upper class women customarily did cover their legs, they lifted their skirts somewhat when crossing streams, now they lift them even more to perform the common person's tasks. The dainty daughter of Babylonia will have to cross rivers on foot to grind flour, thereby exposing various parts of her body to her shame, the nakedness itself is degrading various parts of her body. These passages continue the description of Babylon's humiliation.

The reference to nakedness and humiliation means that Babylon will be seen for what she truly is. She appeared to the world as a mighty and powerful kingdom. Now, however, her true inward condition, which is nakedness, will be made obvious as the truth is revealed. This is the corruption of God's moral order manifested in excessive luxury, excessive cruelty, excessive pride, and excessive foolish superstition. God closes this verse saying His justice will be applied to all. These examples are just a few of the reasons the apostle Paul says the Old Testament is an example and warning for us.

I Corinthians 10:11–13

¹¹Now these things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come. ¹²Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. ¹³There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it (ASV, 1901).

When God says *I will take vengeance, and will spare no man* is best simply to take Him in the ordinary sense that no man will be able to withstand or resist God. His morality stands firm always no matter what dispensation or era. He expects the same obedience always from us.

Isaiah 47:4–7

⁴Our Redeemer, Jehovah of hosts is his name, the Holy One of Israel. ⁵Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans; for thou shalt no more be called The mistress of kingdoms. ⁶I was wroth with my people, I profaned mine inheritance, and gave them into thy hand: thou didst show them no mercy; upon the aged hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke. ⁷And thou saidst, I shall be mistress for ever; so that thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end thereof (ASV, 1901).

God is the sovereign one who will bring all these things to pass on Babylon. The Hebrew concept relates to the basic execution of justice for one who has done wrong. This just divine punishment of Babylon will cause her to receive the right proportion of retribution based on the nature of her sins. It is Divine fairness. Isaiah now assures his audience that God is our Redeemer therefore the undertaking of justice against Babylon is carried out by the same God that defeated the Egyptians many years earlier and provides access to Him and His salvation. He is the Almighty Commander of the armies of heaven who fought and won holy wars against his enemies in the past and who will defeat all his enemies in the future. He is the Holy One of Israel who sets Himself apart from all ungodliness. These statements should give the audience great confidence in God's ability to fulfill this prophecy against Babylon.

After God granted this nation some power, it gradually became arrogant and misused the power He gave it; therefore, just like Assyria whom He also used to correct the Northern Israel, Babylon will one day lose its high status as the most important kingdom on the earth.

The Babylonians are instructed to sit “in silence” and to “go into darkness.” The lights, excitement, and noise of this busy capital city will end, and this could be a reference that someday after the Tribulation that this symbolism should be carried even further to include aspects of imprisonment in a dark dungeon or consignment to death and the netherworld (Jeremiah 51:37).

Even though God used the Babylonians to correct the nation Israel they went too far and used excessive cruelty on the Israelis. An additional reason why God will execute His justice against Babylon was based on her proud claims that “*I shall be mistress (Queen) for ever*” The Babylonian prideful boast refers to the thought that Babylon was a very strong nation and saw no opposing power that might threaten her security, consequently she assumed her kingdom would continue indefinitely.

BABYLON BELIEVES HERSELF TO BE SECURE

Isaiah 47:8–11

⁸Now therefore hear this, thou that art given to pleasures, that sittest securely, that sayest in thy heart, I am, and there is none else besides me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children: ⁹but these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood; in their full measure shall they come upon thee, in the multitude of thy sorceries, and the great abundance of

thine enchantments. ¹⁰For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness; thou hast said, None seeth me; thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee, and thou hast said in thy heart, I am, and there is none else besides me. ¹¹Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know the dawning thereof: and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it away: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou knowest not.

Babylon thought that she could never be defeated. She had a deep conviction of mind, that her supremacy was unquestioned. But the Lord said that she would lose her children and become a widow on a single day, speaking figuratively of her desolation from defeat. These conditions were considered calamities for women especially in Bible times. Though Babylon thought she was unique she was wrong. For God only is the one who is unique. Babylon prided herself in her sorcerers who supposedly “told the future,” and cast spells to influence others. Sorceries which in Hebrew is *kešāpîm*, is used in the Old Testament only here and in II Kings 9:22; Micah 5:12; Nahum 3:4. It suggests seeking information about the future by means of demonic forces. Babylon trusted in her wickedness (Isaiah 59:4; Psalms 52:7; 62:10). That is, her demon-energized idolatry, feeling secure in the trust of the false idols, which however, was unreliable. Because the sorcerers could not prophecy Babylon’s forthcoming calamity and would not be able to avoid it, the idols had no power to predict the future or change its course. The evil that would eventually befall Babylon would be unexpected and prove that idolatry can not assist in any way for making ones way through this life. This will also be the case for Babylon’s demise in the future when her dependence on false religion and love of commerce will cause her to cease to completely exist (Revelation 18:1–20).

THE LORD CHALLENGES THE BABYLONIANS

Isaiah 47:12–15

¹²Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast labored from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. ¹³Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels: let now the astrologers, the star-gazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from the things that shall come upon thee. ¹⁴Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: it shall not be a coal to warm at, nor a fire to sit before. ¹⁵Thus shall the things be unto thee wherein thou hast labored: they that have trafficked with thee from thy youth shall wander every one to his quarter; there shall be none to save thee (ASV, 1901).

Mockingly, He says to them that they should continue to depend upon the sorceries of their idolaters to assist them in preventing this invasion by the Lord’s anointed Cyrus. They have trusted these false gods since the days of Nimrod when Babel was first founded. So, He challenges them to continue to give these practices a try to see if they work. Seeing that they are *wearied in the multitude of thy counsels* He suggests that they try the astrologers instead of the idol worshippers. Perhaps gazing at the stars will be of greater benefit to them. The Chaldeans, by long observation of the stars, were thought to have formed a certain practice, where they could foretell events to everyone, and what fate he was born to: *the monthly*

prognosticators; or that make known months, or for the month; what shall be in every month; what whether it will be, and what things shall happen. This is nothing short of additional false certainty apart from God to predict the future. God only knows the future and says that any reliance on these things will be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame. That is, these astrologers and diviners shall be like stubble. They will not be able to stand before the fire of divine wrath, or before the judgments of God, by the hands of the Medes and Persians, any more than stubble can stand before a consuming fire: *they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the fame;* from those dreadful calamities that shall come upon them like flames of fire. So now He says, “and if they can’t deliver themselves by their art and skill, how should they deliver others?” Stubble, when burnt, leaves no coals for warmth. It ignites and is consumed very quickly. It will give a hot bright blazing light for a very short time, while burning. Then it is quickly burned out, and gives no sustained light nor heat. So, these soothsayers in comparison to stubble provide no profit which signifies that there were no hope, or help, or comfort, to be expected from those sorts of persons.

Finally, the chapter closes with the prophet saying that the astrologers with whom Babylon had been in a relationship since its youth will leave them and not even be available to help them. The whole chapter is a near term prophecy and a far term one regarding the fall of economic and political Babylon (Revelation 18:1-24) and the entire satanic world system (Zechariah 13:2; Revelation 20:1-3).

message ISRAEL IS REMINDED OF GOD’S PROMISES TO THEM
E-mail: Pentwaterbiblechurch@scotlandinstitute.org Call: 877-706-247