

A Trek Through Isaiah 60: 46:1 - 47:13

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Sep 3, 2017

For this week:

- The LORD's people and His purpose (part 2) 46:1-13
- Free but not yet home (part 1) 47:1-15

Context

- The book of the Servant (38 - 55): How will God's people be redeemed from captivity?

Structure

The Great Deliverance: the Work of Cyrus (44:24 - 48:22)
Cyrus: builder and conqueror 44:24 - 45:8
The LORD's people and His purpose 45:9 - 46:13
Free but not yet home 47:1 - 48:22

The LORD's people and His purpose 45:9 – 46:13

- The rebels and the Holy One of Israel 45:9-13
 - V9-10 Challenging the quibblers
 - V11-13 God's purpose
- Unchanged purpose for Israel 45:14-25
 - Here the prophet answers the assertion that the Davidic promises are lost.
 - V14-17 deal with the centrality of the nation Israel in the LORD's plan
 - V18-25 speak of co-equal Gentile membership in the Israel of God.
- Appeal to the rebels 46:1-13
 - V1-4 **Dead** idols, **living** God

1 Bel bows down; Nebo stoops; their idols are on beasts and livestock; these things you carry are borne as burdens on weary beasts. 2 They stoop; they bow down together; they cannot save the burden, but themselves go into captivity. 3 "Listen to me, O house of Jacob, all the remnant of the house of Israel, who have been borne by me from before your birth, carried from the womb; 4 even to your old age I am he, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save.

■ V1-2 Fall of Babylon's idols

- Bel is Marduk, head of the Babylonian gods, patron of Babylon. Nebo is Bel's son. These are the principal gods of Babylon.
- borne as burdens. They must be carried.
- themselves
 - The whole god: the image plus the spiritual being the image represents
- go into captivity
 - Fall of Babylon's gods indicates the fall of the city.
- Isaiah is speaking in principle; there is no recorded historical event when Babylon's idols were carried off. This is evidence that the passage was not written in Babylon.

■ V3-4 The living God

- Rather than being borne by men, He has borne His people from birth to old age, and will deliver them.
- I. 5x for emphasis.
- I will carry and will save.
 - Dependence on dead idols leads to death; dependence on the living God brings life.

- V5-7 Man-made gods, **unable** to save

5 “To whom will you liken me and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be alike? 6 Those who lavish gold from the purse, and weigh out silver in the scales, hire a goldsmith, and he makes it into a god; then they fall down and worship! 7 They lift it to their shoulders, they carry it, they set it in its place, and it stands there; it cannot move from its place. If one cries to it, it does not answer or save him from his trouble.

- V5 No comparison
 - Equal: on level terms in status and capacity.
 - Alike: of the same type.
- V6-7 The foolishness of idolatry
 - Gold and silver lavished to make the idol
 - God. Heb “el”: “mighty one” but not mighty
 - Must be carried to its place
 - Cannot move
 - Cannot answer
 - Cannot save

○ V8-11 Appeal to **remember**

8 “Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors, 9 remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, 10 declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,’ 11 calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country. I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it.

■ V8-9a Appeal to remember

- you transgressors. Rebellious Israel.
- Stand firm.
 - In faith in the LORD.
 - As the challenge to Ahaz in Is 7:9 If you are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all.’
- Two things to remember
 - Remember this.
 - The comparison between idols and the Living God.
 - remember the former things of old.
 - The LORD’s works in their history.
- What God was doing with Cyrus was hard to accept; they needed to remember who God was and what He had done.

■ v9b-10 God’s nature

- I am God...I am God. el (the transcendent deity)...elohim (fullness of divine attributes).
- Same tests of deity
 - Declaring the end from the beginning.
 - Accomplishing what He declares.
- Accomplish all my purpose.
 - Including all the promises given to Israel.

■ V11 God's means

- calling a bird of prey from the east.
 - Cyrus
 - Swift and warlike
- A man of my counsel.
 - The means to accomplish His purpose
- I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it.
 - Planned, declared, carried out

- V12-13 Appeal to be **saved**

12 “Listen to me, you stubborn of heart, you who are far from righteousness: 13 I bring near my righteousness; it is not far off, and my salvation will not delay; I will put salvation in Zion, for Israel my glory.”

- V12 God’s people
 - Stubborn of heart.
 - Heb ‘abbir refers to a bull; pictures stubborn strength.
 - Bull-headed. Hardened against God.
 - Far from righteousness.
 - Far from salvation
- V13 God’s plans
 - I bring. God acting.
 - My righteousness .
 - His righteousness of salvation.
 - Salvation in Zion.
 - Where salvation is to be found: with God’s people
 - Israel my glory.
 - God’s people given the beauty that God always intended
 - Trophies that demonstrate the glory of God

Free but not yet home 47:1 – 48:22

- Structure
 - Third part in the work of Cyrus: the great deliverance from Babylon

The Great Deliverance: the Work of Cyrus (44:24 - 48:22)
Cyrus: builder and conqueror 44:24 - 45:8
The LORD’s people and His purpose 45:9 - 46:13
Free but not yet home 47:1 - 48:22

- Two sections
 - Fall of Babylon. Is 47
 - Israel’s return to Jerusalem. Is 48
- Expands on previous prophecy
 - Captives released. 44:24-28
 - Babylon conquered. 45:1-8

- Babylon's Fall 47:1-15
 - Structure
 - No details of the actual conquest. Indicates that the author was not present at the scene of Babylon's fall.
 - Rather Isaiah speaks of the causes behind Babylon's fall
 - V1-7 Divine vengeance
 - V8-11 Pride
 - V12-15 Impotent religion
 - V1-7 Divine **vengeance**

1 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 you shall no more be called tender and delicate. 2 Take the millstones and grind flour, put off your veil, strip off your robe, uncover your legs, pass through the rivers. 3 Your nakedness shall be uncovered, and your disgrace shall be seen. I will take vengeance, and I will spare no one. 4 Our Redeemer—the LORD of hosts is his name— is the Holy One of Israel. 5 Sit in silence, and go into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans; for you shall no more be called the mistress of kingdoms. 6 I was angry with my people; I profaned my heritage; I gave them into your hand; you showed them no mercy; on the aged you made your yoke exceedingly heavy. 7 You said, "I shall be mistress forever," so that you did not lay these things to heart or remember their end.

- V1 Announcement of vengeance.
 - Come down and sit in the dust.
 - Descend from your throne and take the lowest place.
 - O virgin daughter of Babylon
 - City personified.
 - Virgin. Never conquered.
 - sit on the ground without a throne.
 - Formerly a queen, now a slave.
 - In Babylon, not to sit on a chair was regarded as a sign of degradation.
 - no more be called tender and delicate.
 - No longer pampered and protected.
- V2-3a Vengeance applied
 - Take the millstones and grind flour.
 - Slavery.
 - put off your veil
 - Be exposed to public view.
 - strip off your robe, uncover your legs, pass through the rivers.
 - On the way to her work.
 - Your nakedness shall be uncovered, and your disgrace shall be seen.
 - Public shame and disgrace.

- V3b Author of vengeance
 - I will take vengeance.
 - Retribution rightly due.
 - Done by the LORD.
- V4 Celebration
 - Our Redeemer—the LORD of hosts is his name— is the Holy One of Israel.
 - God’s people speak
 - Redeemer. The One who bears their burden.
 - The LORD of hosts. The One who rules heaven and earth.
 - The Holy One of Israel. Holy and Israel’s God.
- V5 second sentence of vengeance
 - Sit in silence. Rather than commanding.
 - go into darkness. Deepest obscurity. Maybe in prison. Maybe in depression from grief and anguish.
 - you shall no more be called the mistress of kingdoms. No longer ruling.
- V6-7 Babylon’s sins
 - Why Jerusalem fell
 - I was angry with my people; I profaned my heritage; I gave them into your hand;
 - The real cause of Judah’s fall was the LORD’s discipline.
 - What Babylon did.
 - you showed them no mercy
 - on the aged you made your yoke exceedingly heavy.
 - Babylon’s heart
 - You said, “I shall be mistress forever,”
 - Heb: “Forever I shall be mistress”
 - Eternal
 - Ruling over all.
 - You did not lay these things to heart or remember their end.
 - Did not consider who was acting or why.

○ V8-11 **Pride**

8 Now therefore hear this, you lover of pleasures, who sit securely, who say in your heart, "I am, and there is no one besides me; I shall not sit as a widow or know the loss of children": 9 These two things shall come to you in a moment, in one day; the loss of children and widowhood shall come upon you in full measure, in spite of your many sorceries and the great power of your enchantments. 10 You felt secure in your wickedness; you said, "No one sees me"; your wisdom and your knowledge led you astray, and you said in your heart, "I am, and there is no one besides me." 11 But evil shall come upon you, which you will not know how to charm away; disaster shall fall upon you, for which you will not be able to atone; and ruin shall come upon you suddenly, of which you know nothing.

- V8a Babylon's self-indulgence .
 - lover of pleasures. Sensuality. Focus on the things of this world.
 - Who sits securely. Complacency.
- V8b Babylon's pride
 - who says in her heart,
 - Heart attitude
 - Cause of her complacency
 - I am, and there is no one besides me
 - Making herself God
 - No fear of the LORD
 - I shall not sit as a widow
 - No poverty
 - No helplessness
 - or know the loss of children".
 - No bereavement
- V9 Babylon's judgment
 - Exactly what Babylon thought would never happen to her.
 - in a moment, in one day. Quickly
 - in full measure. Completely
 - in spite of your many sorceries and the great power of your enchantments
 - Enchantments. Magical arrangements to secure the future.
 - Sorceries. Incantations to invoke these arrangements.
- V10 Babylon's pride continued
 - you felt secure in your wickedness;
 - Complacency.
 - No fear of the LORD.
 - you said, "No one sees me";
 - Accountable to no one.
 - As Ps 14:1 The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."
 - your wisdom and your knowledge led you astray,
 - Worldly wisdom that leads to death.
 - you said in your heart, "I am, and there is no one besides me."
 - Repeated from v8.
- V11 Babylon's judgment continued

- But
 - History turned out differently than Babylon intended.
- Evil...disaster...ruin
 - What is coming for Babylon.
- shall come upon you suddenly..
 - No warning
- Of which you know nothing
 - Not within their experience
- you will not know how to charm away
 - Their knowledge will not save them.
- for which you will not be able to atone
 - Their wealth will not save them.

○ V12-15 Religion that **fails**

12 Stand fast in your enchantments and your many sorceries, with which you have labored from your youth; perhaps you may be able to succeed; perhaps you may inspire terror. 13 You are wearied with your many counsels; let them stand forth and save you, those who divide the heavens, who gaze at the stars, who at the new moons make known what shall come upon you. 14 Behold, they are like stubble; the fire consumes them; they cannot deliver themselves from the power of the flame. No coal for warming oneself is this, no fire to sit before! 15 Such to you are those with whom you have labored, who have done business with you from your youth; they wander about, each in his own direction; there is no one to save you.

■ V12-13 False religion

- Isaiah speaks sarcastically
 - Stand fast...perhaps you may be able to succeed.
- enchantments ...sorceries
 - As v9
 - Magical arrangements to secure the future.
- You are wearied with your many counsels; let them stand forth and save you, those who divide the heavens,
 - Challenge to the astrologers upon whose counsel Babylon depended.

■ V14-15 End of Babylon's religion

- they are like stubble
 - Worthless
 - Easily consumed
- the fire consumes them;
 - To be destroyed
- they cannot deliver themselves
 - Not only can they not save but they cannot even deliver themselves.
- No coal for warming oneself is this
 - The fire of destruction
- those with whom you have labored
 - False priests and astrologers
- who have done business with you
 - They treated spiritual matters like a business for profit.
- they wander about, each in his own direction; there is no one to save you.
 - Now that the profit is gone they are gone.
 - No one is left to save.

Discussion

We will break into three groups for discussion. The questions are

- 1. Dead idols, living God 46:1-4**
 - a. Idols that must be carried by their people**
 - b. The living God who carries His people**
- 2. Remember 46:8-11**
 - a. Remember that God is God**
 - b. Remember what God has done**
- 3. Being Babylonian 47:7-15**
 - a. Not considering**
 - b. Loving pleasure**
 - c. Sitting securely**
 - d. Saying, "No one sees me."**
 - e. Saying, "I am."**
 - f. Diligent in enchantments and sorceries**
 - g. Taking counsel from the world**

Remember to worship the Lord: (1) See (2) Know (3) Respond

For next week: Free but not yet home (part 2) 48:1-22

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