



ISAIAH 47

AN ODE TO THE FALL OF BABYLON

Trading Places...God calls Babylon a "virgin daughter," and whisks her off her metaphorical throne. She's going to grind meal and tromp about through the rivers naked and ashamed. God vows he's taking a "take no prisoners" attitude towards Babylon. Now, even though God is the one who gave up Israel to Babylon in the first place, it's time for a reversal: Babylon is going to sit in shame and darkness, instead of being the richly rewarded mistress of all the nations.

Unable to enjoy its fine pleasures anymore, Babylon will know what it's like to be a widow and lose its children (just as Israel had). This is all prophesied more than 150 years before the event took place!

| English Standard (ESV) | Passion Notes | Passion Translation (TPT) |
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| <p>Isaiah 47:1 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.</p> <p>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.</p> | <p>a 47:1 Or "pampered and spoiled."</p> <p>b 47:2 Or "your flowing tresses."</p> <p>c 47:2 Grinding with millstones was considered the lowest of menial work, usually done by slaves. See Ex. 11:5.</p> <p>d 47:3 It is true that Babylon has fallen historically, but we can understand that the "Babylonian system" in the church is also falling. Old concepts are crumbling and being swept away (2 Cor. 10:3–6) as God exposes our impurity. Yet the Redeemer stands ready to restore and revive those with hungry, passionate hearts for God.</p> <p>e 47:3 The Hebrew meaning of this clause is uncertain.</p> <p>f 47:6 Or "defiled," which comes from a root word "to pierce, to wound."</p> | <p>An Ode to the Fall of Babylon</p> <p>Isaiah 47:1 "Get down from your throne and sit in the dust, O Miss Babylon! Sit on the ground where you belong, not on a throne, O Miss Chaldea! For you will never be described again as 'delicate and dainty.' a ² Take off your pretty veil; b take two millstones and grind grain. c Lift your skirt, bare your legs, and wade through the rivers. ³ Your humiliating nakedness will be uncovered, your shame exposed and seen by all. d I will take vengeance and let no one intercede for you." e ⁴ We have a Redeemer. Yahweh is his name, the Commander of Angel Armies, the Holy One of Israel!</p> <p>⁵ "Sit silently and go away into the darkness, O Miss Chaldea! For you will no longer be called the Mistress of Kingdoms. ⁶ I became angry with my people, so I wounded f my special ones. I handed them over to you, and you took them captive. You showed them no mercy; you even made the elderly suffer under your heavy yoke. ⁷ You thought, 'I will be the Mistress of Kingdoms forever.' But you never considered what you were doing or reflected on how all this would end."</p> |

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| <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> | | <p>⁸ So now, listen to this, you pampered lover of pleasure, who sits smug and secure and says in her heart, ‘I am, and there is no one like me!’ “I will never have to live as a widow or suffer the loss of my children.’ ⁹ Suddenly both of these losses will overtake you in one day, for you will lose your husband and your children. Despite your many magic spells and your powerful sorceries, you will be overwhelmed by these tragedies in full measure!</p> <p>¹⁰ You felt so smug and secure in your wickedness. You thought, ‘No one sees me.’ Your idea of ‘wisdom’ and self-professed ‘knowledge’ has led you astray, saying in your heart, ‘I am! There is none like me!’ ¹¹ An avalanche of evil will come upon you that no magic spell will be able to avert. Great disaster is about to fall upon you that you will not be able to ward off! Total devastation will strike you suddenly. It will happen so swiftly you won’t even see it coming!</p> <p>¹² So go ahead—keep trusting in your sorceries and the witchcraft you’ve practiced since your youth. Perhaps you might succeed! Perhaps you’ll scare away your impending doom! ¹³ You must be fatigued with so much counsel! Let the stargazers and astrologers take their stand. See if they can help you now! Let them make their monthly predictions. Maybe they can reveal what is about to come upon you.</p> <p>¹⁴ Look at them! They’re nothing but straw for the consuming fire. They can’t even rescue themselves from the power of the flame. And this is not some cozy fire that you sit beside to keep yourself warm! ¹⁵ These traders, with whom you have dealt since your youth, will do nothing but disappoint you. Each has wandered off to his own way—there is no one left to rescue you!</p> |

Bible Knowledge Commentary

JOHN A. MARTIN

- **The Lord’s assurance of Babylon’s fall** (chap. 47) Isaiah described Babylon’s fall to the Persians in 539 B.C., more than 150 years before the event took place. The Babylonians, Judah’s captors, would become captives.
 - **47:1-3.** When conquered, Babylon would become a humbled servant, sitting in the dust, an act depicting great mourning (cf. Jonah 3:6). The words Virgin Daughter personify the people of a city as a young, innocent girl (cf. Isa. 23:12; 37:22), probably meaning that the city’s walls had never been breached. The people would no longer be tender and delicate like a virgin because of the hardships they would face. As servants of the conquerors, they would have to grind the flour, unable to worry about their clothing or modesty. Some of them would have to flee across streams. Many of them would be raped and abused (47:3).

- **47:4.** This verse records the response of Israel when they would sense the relief coming to them because of Babylon's defeat. Seeing God's vengeance on their captors (v. 3b), they would praise the Lord for they would recognize that release from exile would come from God, not themselves. So they would call God their Redeemer (cf. comments on 43:14), the LORD Almighty, and the Holy One of Israel (cf. comments on 1:4).
- **47:5-7.** The Lord had used Babylon to judge Judah, but that ruthless nation, like Assyria (cf. Isa. 10), had abused its power (cf. Hab. 1:6-11). So God's sentence was pronounced on Babylon: no longer would she be ... queen of kingdoms (cf. "eternal queen" in Isa. 47:7). Babylon was considered nearly impregnable. Babylon had been able to conquer Judah, God's inheritance (see comments on Deut. 4:20), only because God allowed it (Isa. 47:6). Merciless, the Babylonians even treated the aged Jewish captives harshly. Therefore God would treat everyone in Babylon harshly (v. 3b). The Babylonians never considered the possibility that they would not be in a position of power forever (v. 7). Babylon thought she was the eternal queen (cf. v. 5).
- **47:8-11.** Babylon thought that she could never be defeated (v. 8). 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 (cf. Jerusalem as a widow, Lam. 1:1). Though Babylon thought she was unique—I am, and there is none besides me (Isa. 47:8, 10)—she was wrong; God is the One who is unique, as Isaiah had stated repeatedly (43:11; 44:6; 45:5-6, 14, 18, 21-22; 46:9). Babylon prided herself in her sorcerers who supposedly "told the future" and cast spells to influence others (cf. 47:12). Sorceries (vv. 9, 12) translates, a word used in the Old Testament only here and in 2 Kings 9:22; Micah 5:12; Nahum 3:4. It suggests seeking information about the future by means of demonic forces. Such supposed knowledge, however, was unreliable, for the sorcerers could not foresee Babylon's forthcoming calamity and would not be able to conjure it away.
- **47:12-15.** The Lord mockingly urged the Babylonians to keep on in their spells and sorceries (cf. v. 9), which the city had been involved in since childhood (cf. v. 15), that is, since the nation was founded. In sarcasm He suggested the astrologers and stargazers ... save them. Astrology was common in Babylon (cf. Dan. 2:2, 4-5). But their work was worthless, like mere stubble, the dried stalks of grain that burn quickly. Those religious leaders could not save even themselves, let alone Babylon. Yet they persisted in their error.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When the Lord says, "Vengeance is mine," he is not kidding! Leaving justice in his hands and not trying to administer it ourselves is very difficult at times. We don't like it when someone "gets away with" something. In this story, Yahweh will use a pagan king, Cyrus, to administer his justice. Can you think of another time when God used someone outside the nation of Israel to accomplish his will?
2. Most accept that Chapter 47 of Isaiah was written soon after 700 BC. Cyrus, who was King of Persia and conquered Babylon and ended the Neo Babylonian Empire October 12th 539 BC. That means Isaiah prophesied the event 161 years before it took place. Most historians believe Israel was held captive in Babylon from 608 to 538 BC. Share some of your thoughts as to why God would prophesy such an important event so far in advance of when it occurred.
3. Brian Simmons, in his commentary on Is. 47:3, describes a "Babylonian system" he says exists in the church and refers to 2 Cor. 10:3-6. Read that passage and comment on how this system pops its head up in the church, if you believe God is removing it and what church life might look like when it's gone.

4. Has the Lord been purging anything out of your life since this whole Covid-19 crisis began? What is the one thing you really hope is gone from your life before this viral season is over?

5. Lana Vawser, in an article released yesterday, gave a strong warning to not let busyness in our lives squeeze out what the Lord might be wanting to do during this season. She said, “The Lord showed me very clearly that the FRUIT of this SELAH TIME is going to be VERY evident when we come out of this time. This divine SELAH moment was a time of significant alignment, a time of purification, a time of repentance, a time of going deep.” Have you seen evidence of the Lord aligning, purifying, leading you to repentance and going deeper in these past six weeks? What has it felt like?