

Isaiah Chapter 47

Verses 1-15: Isaiah now pictures “Babylon” as a deposed queen who can do no more than “sit in the dust.” In spite of its splendor, ancient Babylon was built upon the dust of the desert of Shinar. The “Chaldeans” were the elite ruling class of the New-Babylonian Empire. In this passage Babylon is pictured as a slave girl reduced to sitting in the dust. She is no longer “the lady” (mistress) “of kingdoms.” This same imagery is found in Revelation, where Babylon is called the “great whore” (Rev. 17:1; 19:2; 18:3).

Verses 1-3: “O virgin daughter of Babylon”: The prophet depicted Babylon as a virgin in the sense of never before having been captured. Babylon sat like a royal virgin in the dust, experiencing complete humiliation. The “throne” was gone, taken by Persian power, and the empire never recovered from being robbed of its power, its people and its name.

The former royal virgin is depicted as a slave woman forced to exchange royal garments for working clothes, who must lift her garment to wade through the water as she serves like a slave traversing the river in her duties. Such duties in the East belonged to women of low rank, a fitting imagery for Babylon’s fall into degradation.

Isaiah 47:1 "Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground: [there is] no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate."

This chapter is speaking of the downfall of Babylon. Babylon had been thought of as one of the greatest cities and now it will be in ruin. Those who had been so mighty have now been brought down by the God of Israel.

The virgin daughter is speaking of Babylon, who had been ruler. The thrones are all destroyed now, and there are no longer thrones to sit on. Babylon had been a city of great luxury. Now it is fallen. The luxurious life is gone.

They will have to work hard now for everything they get. Literal Babylon has never been rebuilt to the greatness it knew. There are many Babylons speaking from the spiritual. Babylon has come to mean "evil city".

Isaiah 47:2 "Take the millstones, and grind meal: uncover thy locks, make bare the leg, uncover the thigh, pass over the rivers."

Female slaves usually did the work of grinding the meal. This shows the severity of their fall from greatness. Now their women will work as slaves. They would pass over rivers to their land of captivity. They would possibly, need to remove their shoes and wade over.

Isaiah 47:3 "Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen: I will take vengeance, and I will not meet [thee as] a man."

Even the men of Babylon will be shamed to the extent of slave women. The truth of the matter is, these idol worshippers will be totally humiliated by God. God's fury will be upon them.

Isaiah 47:4 "[As for] our redeemer, the LORD of hosts [is] his name, the Holy One of Israel."

Israel is redeemed from the bondage of Babylon. They, as Christians today, have a Redeemer. He is Jesus Christ the Lord. He is Jehovah to the Jewish people.

Isaiah 47:5 "Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called, The lady of kingdoms."

“The lady of kingdoms”: The title continues the analogy of (verse 1), and speaks of the exalted position from which Babylon was to fall. She was mistress of the world, but would later become a slave woman (verse 7), degraded by pride and false security (verse 8).

Babylon will never be restored to its former greatness. These people have fallen so far, they will want to hide in the darkness to keep their shame from being more apparent to the world. They sat like a lady in their greatness, but this will be no more.

Isaiah 47:6 "I was wroth with my people, I have polluted mine inheritance, and given them into thine hand: thou didst show them no mercy; upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke."

“Didst show them no mercy”: Though God was punishing Israel in captivity, Babylon’s cruel oppression of the captive Israelites was cause for the kingdom’s overthrow (Jeremiah 50:17-18; 51:33-40; Zech. 1:15).

We will find in the following Scripture that God blesses those who bless His people, but He brings great curses on those who oppress His people.

Genesis 12:3 "And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

Babylon did not capture Israel. God put them in the hands of the Babylonians to punish them. The Babylonians had been extra cruel to God's people, and God does not soon forget.

Verses 7-9: (In Revelation 18:7-8, 10, 16, 19), John alludes to these verses in describing the downfall of Babylon just before Christ’s return. Compare “a queen forever”; “not sit as a widow” (in 18:7), and “in one day” (with 18:8).

Isaiah 47:7 "And thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever: [so] that thou didst not lay these [things] to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it."

Babylonians had thought themselves to be so great; there was nothing that could bring them down. It appears they had their chance to have a change of heart about God, because it says, "thou didst not lay these things to thy heart".

They did not change and judgment came upon them. They could have looked back at God's dealings with other nations regarding Israel. They did not look back at history.

Isaiah 47:8 "Therefore hear now this, [thou that art] given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I [am], and none else beside me; I shall not sit [as] a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children:"

Worldly pleasures lead to ruin. When Cyrus occupied the city, they did not believe it was serious, and they went right on dancing and reveling. They felt they were above the judgment of God. They felt that they were so great; they would not lose any of their children.

Isaiah 47:9 "But these two [things] shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their perfection for the multitude of thy sorceries, [and] for the great abundance of thine enchantments."

"In a moment in one day": Babylon did not decay slowly, but went from being the wealthy lady, the unconquered virgin, the proud, invincible mother of many to a degraded, slave woman in the dust who lost her throne, her children, and her life. It happened in one night, suddenly and unexpectedly, when Cyrus and the Persian army entered the city (Daniel 5:28, 30).

"Loss of children and widowhood": Babylon did lose its inhabitants, many of whom were killed and taken captive under Cyrus. This prophecy was fulfilled again when Babylon revolted against Darius; and in order to hold out in the siege, each man chose one woman of his family and strangled the rest to save provisions. Darius impaled 3,000 of those who revolted.

The suddenness of the destruction was so, that it seemed all of the destruction came in one day. Their husbands were killed, and they lost their children, as well. We see 2 of the reasons for their destruction was sorceries and enchantments.

"Sorceries", here means magic and witchcraft. Enchantments means charmings and have to do with the occult. The saddest thing I see in these Scriptures is a condition that is in our society today.

Isaiah 47:10 "For 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 thine heart, I [am], and none else beside me."

Sinners foolishly think they are safe, and there is none to judge them (Psalms 10:11; 94:7).

"I am, and none else beside me" shows a person filled with conceit, or self-worth. They are so proud of themselves; they do not see the need for God.

They were depending on fortune telling, and horoscopes, and things like that to guide them. All of this worldly wisdom had led them into perversion.

Isaiah 47:11 "Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth: and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, [which] thou shalt not know."

“Evil ... mischief ... desolation”: The Persians under Cyrus suddenly initiated (verse 9) the visitation that ultimately obliterated Babylon. Its culmination is to come in conjunction with the destruction of a revived Babylon, the world headquarters of evil at the second coming of Christ (51:8; Rev. 18:2-24).

God will send this evil upon them, because of their sin. When God sends His wrath, there is no one to go to for help. There is no one above Him. It will be so sudden; they will have no idea where it came from.

Isaiah 47:12 "Stand 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."

“Enchantments ... sorceries”: The magical practices of Babylon, designed to aid against enemies (verse 9), will characterize the Babylon of the future also (Rev. 18:23).

This is a challenge from God to them to get help from these things they had put their trust in. If you think they can help you, it is time to call upon them now. Of course, they cannot help them, because idols are nothings.

Sorceries and enchantments are from Satan himself. Satan has no power at all against God.

Isaiah 47:13 "Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from [these things] that shall come upon thee."

“Let now the astrologers ... save thee”: Babylon relied heavily on those who looked for combinations of stars, who watched conjunctions of heavenly bodies, who made much of months of birth, and who relied on the movements of stars to predict the future (Dan. 2:2, 10). The prophet sarcastically points out the futility of such trust. This ancient deception is still popular today in the widespread use of horoscopes.

We can easily see from this verse, many of the things we are doing in our society today that are displeasing to God. How sad it would be, to think being born a certain month of the year determined your life. That would mean that you have no control over your behavior.

We can see that these things are very worldly and, also, displeasing to God. Many of the false gods they had been worshipping had been connected to stargazing. "Monthly prognosticators"

means horoscope readers. Astrological forecasting is prominent today, but is a terrible sin in the sight of God.

Isaiah 47:14 "Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: [there shall] not [be] a coal to warm at, [nor] fire to sit before it."

“They shall not deliver themselves”: The astrologers were helpless to save themselves, much less the Babylonians who depended on them, or anyone else. The divine fire that came was not to be a fire to warm them, but to consume them.

All of these things mentioned are of the world, and they will be destroyed, and the people who look to these worthless things for help will be disappointed. They cannot help anyone, and they bring the wrath of God down on those who depend upon them.

Isaiah 47:15 "Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast labored, [even] thy merchants, from thy youth: they shall wander every one to his quarter; none shall save thee."

“None shall save thee”: When judgment comes, the astrologers with whom the people trafficked and spent their money, will run to their homes, unable to save themselves or anyone else.

The foreigners who sided in with all of this evil of Babylon will suffer the same punishment as Babylon. These false gods cannot save; they just destroy those who look to them for help. It is God who saves.

Isaiah Chapter 47 Questions

1. Where does verse 1 say for them to come and sit?
2. Why?
3. Who was this spoken to?
4. What is the downfall speaking of?
5. Babylon had been a city of great _____.
6. Has Babylon ever been rebuilt?
7. Who usually did the grinding at the mill?
8. How would they cross the rivers to their captivity?
9. What would the men of Babylon be like?

10. Who is the Redeemer?
11. Where will they go to hide their shame?
12. Why were God's people captured by Babylon?
13. How far had these Babylonians' conceit gone?
14. What do we learn from the statement, "thou didst not lay these things to thy heart"?
15. How does verse 8 describe their condition?
16. Worldly pleasures lead to _____.
17. The suddenness of the judgment makes it appear to happen in ____ ____.
18. What does "sorceries" mean?
19. What is the saddest thing about verse 9?
20. Their wisdom and their knowledge did what to them?
21. They are so proud of themselves, they do not see their need for ____.
22. Who sends the evil upon the Babylonians?
23. What does God challenge them to do in verse 12?
24. What evils, from verse 13, are in our society today?
25. What does monthly prognosticators mean?
26. What happens to them in verse 14?
27. These false gods cannot save, they just _____.