

"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!' (Isaiah 47:10, Passion translation)

Last week, in Isaiah 46, Isaiah records, for the fourth and final time in the book of Isaiah, God's great anguish over those He created in His image worshipping false gods, and the folly of it all--noting how the two most prominent gods of Babylon (Bel, or Baal, and Nebo) not only couldn't save Babylon from its enemies but actually had to be carried around on the backs of "burdened-down beasts," even as they were being led away into their own captivity! In stark contrast with the God of Israel who had "borne the house of Israel from birth, carrying them from the womb (to the tomb!), and committed to "bearing them up even to their graying years...and delivering them securely"!

"I am God! (He emphasized again and again for those who weren't getting it!), and there is no other...no one like Me...the One declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done"! And He assured the readers of the book of Isaiah that He "would accomplish all His pleasures"! He had planned it, He said, and "surely He would do it"!

"Listen to Me, you stubborn-minded, who are far from righteousness! I will bring it near! It's not far away...and I will grant salvation in Zion, and My glory in Israel!"

And with that background, and insight from the mind of God, we approach Isaiah 47--where He speaks directly, up close and personal, in a first-person mode, to the nation of Babylon, which He depicts as "a virgin daughter of the Chaldeans" (a virgin in the sense of never before having been taken captive)! Commanding her to "sit down on the ground, in the dust, without a throne...and announcing to her that she would no longer be called "the queen of kingdoms"! But, rather, that she should--in an ultimate act of shame and humiliation--"take the milestones and grind grain; remove her veil, strip off her skirt...uncovering her nakedness, and exposing her shame"!

The God of Israel had purposely given over "His people" into the hands of "the daughter of the Chaldeans" (Babylon) as an act of judgment for Israel (because of His righteous anger toward her!), but she (Babylon), in her arrogance, did not show the proper mercy to them during their time of captivity, and even oppressed the elderly ones (something unacceptable even in that culture)! And so, for this reason, and in retaliation, He would "humble" the Babylonians, and free His people! (Israel had a "Redeemer, Yahweh was His name, the Commander of the Angel Armies, the Holy One of Israel"! Don't mess with Him!)

He would humble the Babylonians just like He had humbled Pharaoh and the Egyptians, in the Exodus! (Constable notes, however, that He would again "redeem His people from a nation that had lifted up itself in pride, and oppressed His people"!)

The mark of Babylon's arrogance was that she thought she would be "a queen forever," and had the audacity to think in her prideful heart--and even declare--that she was God, or like God, by saying that "I am! And there is no one besides me!" (Words that God Himself used over and over, in the book of Isaiah, to describe Himself to those who would listen and acknowledge Him as the true and only God--words that only could be said of Him!)

As a result of her prideful heart, she would "live as a widow, and suffer the loss of her children," God told her! Something she quickly denied would happen, but which "would come on her suddenly"! And it would come, He said, "despite her many sorceries and the great power of her spells"! (Archer notes

that "Chaldean Babylon combined the practical atheism of the freethinker with astrology, necromancy (or communicating allegedly with the dead), and crass superstition"! Grogan adds that "those who have turned from the living God to the daily horoscope in our own society would do well to heed this passage"!)

Isaiah 47:10 sums up how God assessed Babylon's attitude and outlook: "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!'"

And so, He challenged the Babylonians (somewhat sarcastically!) to continue to trust in their mediums and horoscopes, as though they might be able to deliver them from the fate about to come upon them! "Try calling upon your many sorcerers...and the witchcraft you've practiced since your youth--and see if they can rescue you! Look at them! They're nothing but straw for the fire, and they will do nothing but disappoint you! There is no one to rescue you!"

Then He "lowered the boon" by telling them that destruction would fall upon them, and that they would not be able to "charm it away"! A destruction, the Passion translation says, "about which they did not know will come upon you suddenly"! So suddenly that they "wouldn't even see it coming"!

The fulfillment of this prophecy came when God used Darius and the Medes and Persians to take over the Babylonian kingdom in 539 B.C. You can read all about it in Daniel 5! Remember how the "handwriting appeared on the wall," and how they were "weighed in the balances and found wanting"!

And so Isaiah 47 ends with the destruction, and end, of the Babylonian empire! Or does it?

The Bible makes it clear, in many passages of prophecy, that it's not over for Babylon and its influence in the world! And God's dealing with them! Babylon, in fact, will be revived, Scripture says, and influence the world for evil again, and particularly in the "end time"--before its final fall!

In his book, "Agents for Babylon," David Jeremiah writes that "throughout history, Babylon has been a symbol of the world's worst evils! Extreme decadence! Infinite cruelty! Ravenous power! And implacable contention against God! And he writes that a close examination of the prophecies described in Daniel reveals indisputable evidence that "the ancient spirit of Babylon is not only on the rise but that the end times are much closer than we think"!

Note also some of what Revelation 17-19 has to say about what's still to come concerning Babylon in the end time (we believe at the end of the tribulation period):

- In Revelation 17, "one of the seven angels" shows John (in a vision) the coming judgment of "the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed acts of immorality...the women clothed in purple...with a name written on her forehead...BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATION OF THE EARTH...and the mystery of 'the beast' who carries her to make war against the Lamb..."!
- In Revelation 18, he sees "another angel coming out of heaven, having great authority, crying out with a mighty voice, saying, 'Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place of demons and a haunt of every unclean spirit...and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality..."!
- Also, in Revelation 18, John sees another angel "taking up a stone like a great millstone and throwing it into the sea, saying, 'So will Babylon, the great city, be thrown down with violence, and will not be found any longer"!

- Then, in Revelation 19, John hears "something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, 'Hallelujah and glory and power belong to our God; because His judgments are true and righteous; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and He has avenged the blood of His bond-servant on her'!"

Constable notes that "the point of Isaiah 41-47 is that the entire structure and system of the Babylonian empire was developed by humans (beginning with Babel, in Genesis 11)--a human fabrication which in time would (and will!) collapse"! God may grant these man-made systems to temporarily sanction, including to use them to do His will--but He also has the right to repudiate and destroy them"!

Constable also notes that the "main point of Isaiah 47 is not primarily to predict Babylon's fall, but to glorify the power and grace of Yahweh, using the destruction of Babylon as a backdrop"!

Israel "must reserve her worship, and her ultimate commitment to Yahweh"! And so must we!

Only God deserves our worship and adoration!

There is none like Him!

Lowell