

# A Man More Precious Than Gold

Previously, in chapters 1-12, Isaiah has spoken of Messiah, His spiritual kingdom and the gospel of salvation by Him. Now begins a series of chapters in which 'burdens' or events are foretold concerning the ruin of the enemies of God's people. These prophecies commence with Babylon into whose hands the people of Israel and Judah must be delivered captive for a period known as the Babylonian Exile or Babylonian Captivity. God gives Isaiah this vision to comfort the Jews during their exile and to confirm the remnant will be delivered from it.

## **Tools in God's hands**

Observe how God uses means to accomplish His purpose. He will destroy Babylon by means of the Medes and Persians, one empire will overthrow another. These nations acted freely in their own interest but in doing so fulfilled God's purpose like tools or weapons in His hand. God used one enemy to destroy another and to return the Jews to their homeland. In verse three the Medes are called God's 'sanctified ones' and their leaders, Cyrus and Darius, 'my mighty ones', not because they were holy, but because they were set apart, ordained and called to do God's will.

## **The day of the Lord**

Isaiah speaks of a coming day of the Lord. It is a day filled with wrath and fierce anger against sinners. This day will bring punishment upon the world for evil and upon the wicked for their iniquity, arrogance and pride. The descriptions of the cruelty to be inflicted by the Medes is vicious and barbaric and may be seen as payment in kind for Babylon's brutality against Israel. Here Babylon is principally in view yet the general indignation of God against sin, together with the intensity of His judgment, ought not to be overlooked. It is God who stirs up the Medes but there is a broader message. These are warnings. Sinful men and women who neglect God's great salvation will be cast away in the day of God's wrath.

## **Babylon is fallen**

The end of this chapter speaks of the thoroughness of the destruction of Babylon. Where once stood a mighty city with palaces and towers there shall be only wild beasts and serpents. Where once dwelt a proud people, the epitome of man's glory and human dominance, will be a barren wasteland of fearsome creatures.

This language, these pictures and descriptions are designed to encourage the Lord's people who suffered under Babylon during the captivity. It would take 250 years for this prophecy to be fulfilled but the Lord's elect believed their God. They trusted His gospel promises for the deliverance of the remnant and the coming of the Messiah.

## **Mercy and judgment**

Through the whole of Isaiah's prophecy it is always the Lord's purpose to comfort His elect. That comfort is primarily focused upon the coming of Christ the King. As a supporting comfort the Lord tells His people He shall not forget justice and will visit the iniquity of Israel's oppressors upon their own heads proportionate to the wickedness inflicted upon God's people. Sometimes, when we see the wickedness of men and terrible sins committed with impunity in the world we wonder if there is justice. Chapters such as these remind us that God continues to keep a record of evil. No crime goes unnoticed. None shall go unpunished.

## **Finding the Saviour**

It is with this in mind that I draw our attention to verses 11 and particularly 12. These verses are usually interpreted as emphasising Babylon's total overthrow and the great slaughter to follow, so great, indeed, that any man who survives would be more precious than gold. However, we shall take another view, one that does not see men to be rare but, rather, sees the rarest of men, the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **The riches of Christ**

Let us read this as another gesture of kindness from the Lord to His people. He is reminding the remnant not to lose sight of their Saviour. In the midst of trial the Lord's elect look to 'a man more precious than fine gold'. We see His worth, purity, richness and beauty to be more precious than Ophir's vast treasure. Jehovah calls the Lord Jesus, 'the man that is my fellow' (Zechariah 13:7) and the church commends the beauty of her Lord saying, 'His head is as the most

fine gold' (Song of Solomon 5:11).

**He is precious**

Nations rise and fall. Earthly kings come and go. Tyrants and heroes gain notoriety, shine briefly but are soon forgotten. We know there is a day yet to come when the Lord will punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their iniquity. In that day, God's people will look to the Man who, in His glorious person and in His saving ministry, is made unto them 'more precious than fine gold'.

Amen

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