

ISAIAH 47

BABYLON IN THE DUST

The Lord's infinite Wisdom could have ordered the turn of events so that the exiled Jews might have been released from captivity, while preserving Babylon from being hurt. But this was not His will. Because of the rebellious hardness of their hearts, the Babylonians only had themselves to thank when their ruin was employed to pave the way for the release of the Lord's people. That ruin is largely foretold here in this chapter. But it is not spoken of in order to gratify a spirit of revenge in the people of God, who had been treated barbarously by them; but rather, it was to be an encouragement for their faith and hope concerning their own deliverance, as well as a picture of the downfall of the great spiritual enemy of the Church – which, in the Book of Revelation, goes under the name of Babylon.

In the opening verses of this chapter, God sends a message to Babylon by His own prophet. Fair warning is thus given to Babylon, so that – by repentance – she might prevent her ruin and enjoy a lengthening of her peace. Isaiah was here commissioned to let her know that the righteous Judge – to whom vengeance truly belongs – has declared, “I will take vengeance” (verse 3). Well might these words strike terror into the heart of the “daughter of Babylon!” She truly had a reason to tremble when she was told Who it was that had this quarrel with her (verse 4) – namely, “our redeemer,” or our *goel*, Who undertakes to plead our cause. He here calls Himself by two names, which speak comfort to us, but terror to our adversaries. First, He is “the Lord of hosts,” Who has all creatures at His command, and all power in heaven and on earth. And second, He is “the Holy One of Israel” – a God in covenant with us, Who has His residence among us, and Who will faithfully perform all the promises which He has made to us. These titles may very fitly be applied to Christ, our Redeemer; for He is both the Lord of hosts and the Holy One of Israel!

What were the consequences of Jehovah's controversy for Babylon? She is here called a virgin, because she thought herself to be as beautiful as a virgin, and also because her favor was courted by all around her. She had formerly been called tender and delicate (verse 1), and the lady of kingdoms (verse 5); but now the case was altered. She who had sat in royal ease must now come down and sit in the dust as a mourner. She would no longer be called tender and delicate; for she would be put to hard service, and made to feel poverty and pain – which would be more than doubly grievous to her who formerly would not even venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground. All her glory would be gone; and instead, she would have nothing but shame. From all of this, we may learn that

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ Great ruin is threatened upon the Babylonians – verses 1-5
- ❖ A catalog of the sins that provoked God to bring this ruin upon them – verses 6-15



God can make those sit silently, who used to make the greatest noise in the world. Therefore, let us only glory in our God, Who changes not; and let us not be found guilty of making our boast in any changeable worldly wealth, pleasure, or honor.

The “daughter of Babylon” – now doomed to ruin – was justly upbraided in verses 7-15 for her pride, luxury, carnal security, and confidence in her own “wisdom” (which was derived from the wicked work of her astrologers). These things are mentioned in order to justify God in bringing these judgments upon her, and also to put her to even greater shame under these judgments; for when God comes forth to take vengeance, glory belongs to Him, but confusion is the portion of the sinner. Pride was the language of both the government and the people of Babylon, and this arrogant attitude is very offensive to God. They had given themselves over to become slaves to their own pleasures, and so they dwelt carelessly and laid nothing seriously to heart. They lulled themselves asleep in ease and pleasure, and dreamed of nothing else but the foolish imagination that tomorrow would be much more abundant than today. Their power and wealth, which they had gotten by fraud and oppression, were their confidence. Babylon did not look upon her honor as a gift from the sovereign Lord, the fountain of honor; and she took it for granted this honor would be the possession of herself and her heirs forever. She never imagined that she would one day sit in solitude and sorrow, nor that she would lose the power and wealth that she was wedded to, nor that she would suffer the loss of her “children” or people. But alas! Her false security would prove to be her ruin – and sudden ruin. How strange it was that the Babylonians placed so much vain confidence in their sorceries and witchcrafts, and yet they were deceived by them! Their stargazers and astrologers were utterly unable and insufficient to help in the day of their distress. This was literally fulfilled on the very night that Babylon was taken and Belshazzar was slain; for all of his soothsayers and “wise men” were quite flummoxed with the Divine handwriting on the wall, which pronounced the fatal sentence (Dan. 5:8). In contrast, how happy are those who – by faith and prayer – deal with One Who is and always will be a very present help in time of trouble!

The various particulars that are here given concerning Babylon’s sin, folly, pride, vain confidence, and usage of enchantments and sorceries – these are some of the characteristics which mark the enemies of Jesus and His Church, in all ages. Like Babylon of old, they shall not stand against the Lord Almighty; they may promise themselves safety and security in their tyranny, but they shall likewise be brought to the dust!

Lord, we give You thanks that although the enemies of Christ and His Church rage and battle against the cause of the Gospel, the battle has already been won by our risen Savior! Amen.