

**Isaiah 47:1-15 (NKJV)**

**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 meal. Remove your veil, Take off the skirt, Uncover the thigh, Pass through the rivers.**

**3 Your nakedness shall be uncovered, Yes, your shame will be seen; I will take vengeance, And I will not arbitrate with a man."**

**4 *As for* our Redeemer, the LORD of hosts *is* His name, The Holy One of Israel.**

**5 "Sit in silence, and go into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans; For you shall no longer be called The Lady of Kingdoms.**

**6 I was angry with My people; I have profaned My inheritance, And given them into your hand. You showed them no mercy; On the elderly you laid your yoke very heavily.**

**7 And you said, 'I shall be a lady forever,' *So* that you did not take these *things* to heart, Nor remember the latter end of them.**

**8 "Therefore hear this now, *you who are* given to pleasures, Who dwell securely, Who say in your heart, 'I *am*, and *there is* no one else besides me; I shall not sit *as* a widow, Nor shall I know the loss of children';**

**9 But these two *things* shall come to you In a moment, in one day: The loss of children, and widowhood. They shall come upon you in their fullness Because of the multitude of your sorceries, For the great abundance of your enchantments.**

**10 "For you have trusted in your wickedness; You have said, 'No one sees me'; Your wisdom and your knowledge have warped you; And you have said in your heart, 'I *am*, and *there is* no one else besides me.'**

**11 Therefore evil shall come upon you; You shall not know from where it arises. And trouble shall fall upon you; You will not be able to put it off. And desolation shall come upon you suddenly, *Which* you shall not know.**

**12 "Stand now with your enchantments And the multitude of your sorceries, In which you have labored from your youth-- Perhaps you will be able to profit, Perhaps you will prevail.**

**13 You are wearied in the multitude of your counsels; Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, *And* the monthly prognosticators Stand up and save you From what shall come upon you.**

**14 Behold, they shall be as stubble, The fire shall burn them; They shall not deliver themselves From the power of the flame; *It shall not be* a coal to be warmed by, *Nor* a fire to sit before!**

**15 Thus shall they be to you With whom you have labored, Your merchants from your youth; They shall wander each one to his quarter. No one shall save you.**

Remember our outline from last week.

Chapter 46 shows the idols of Babylon.

Chapter 47 shows the fall of Babylon.

And the two are powerfully related to each other.

Our passage starts with the statement

**1 "Come down and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon**

Now in order to understand the passage it is vital that we understand who is being addressed here. When we look at the whole passage I think it is safe to say that all of Babylon is being personified as a virgin daughter. The people, as a whole, are being addressed as a virgin daughter.

This isn't at all unusual in scripture. Just like the church is the Bride of Christ even though probably half of the members are men.

So Isaiah personifies the Babylonian people as a virgin daughter. He is speaking allegorically. He is not addressing just the virgin daughters that live in Babylon. He is personifying all Babylonians as a virgin daughter.

Once we get that clear we are free to fully understand the rest of the chapter.

**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.**

What we see in this passage is what happens to a spoiled brat. This girl has had her way for a long time. She is used to being pampered. She is used to having her own way. But now she is about to experience a shock. Her way of life is about to dramatically change.

Remember last week we talked about idols of Babylon. Remember what a disappointment they were. Remember how they failed to deliver anything of value. Now we see the people who had chosen those idols. This is where the idols led them. For a while it looks like their idols were causing them to succeed. For a while they were on top of the world. Everything seemed to be working out well. The Babylonians had no idea that this was soon to end. They thought they were the center of the universe and could not imagine it being otherwise. But here is otherwise.

The nation is pictured as a pampered girl used to having everything she wants, and thinking somehow that this is owed to her. She is full of herself

and cannot see outside of herself. And she expects her status to remain forever. But it is about to change suddenly, in a single evening. Her pampered status is about to completely reverse. The one who **owned** slaves will now **become** a slave. The one who was wealthy will now become poor. The one who had power will now be **the victim** of the power of others. Are you ever tempted to envy the wicked? Our passage this morning is wonderful fuel to use in the battle in our minds. The clock is the **enemy** to the wicked and the **friend** of every believer. An end is coming to the tyranny of the wicked and the advantages gained by wickedness. The temporary benefits of wickedness will appear to be what they really were when they are seen in the light of eternity. **The benefits of wickedness have a due date.** Past that date they will be regarded as something only to be regretted. Righteousness has no expiration date. Every obedience will bring joy for eternity. We do not need to envy the wicked. In fact wisdom prohibits it. Our story this morning shows a picture of what happens to the arrogant. This story happened in human history. Much of it will only happen **at the end** of human history. But one thing is sure. There is no wisdom in envying the wicked.

**<sup>2</sup> Take the millstones and grind meal. Remove your veil, Take off the skirt, Uncover the thigh, Pass through the rivers.**

**<sup>3</sup> Your nakedness shall be uncovered, Yes, your shame will be seen; I will take vengeance, And I will not arbitrate with a man."**

We can rest assured that this self confident young woman would have never thought she would come to this end. This proud nation would not have guessed she would find herself with roles reversed.

Here is a girl that would have had others to do all this work for her. **They** would have to strive. **They** would be the ones humiliated. **They** are the ones that would be shamed. But the roles are now all reversed.

Now she is doing the hard labor. Now she is being humiliated. This is what is going to happen to Babylon the proud, Babylon the conqueror, Babylon the great. She is going to be absolutely humiliated.

Here was the greatest of all women. And now she is treated with contempt and disrespect. Now did this **just happen** to Babylon? No. God said I will take vengeance. God did it because God is doing what He tells us to **trust Him** to do in the new testament. Vengeance is mine, I will repay says the Lord. It may have looked like Babylon was getting away with evil. It may have looked like the king could do whatever he wanted to do with the remnants of Israel's temple items. But it turns out there was a price to pay.

**<sup>4</sup> As for our Redeemer, the LORD of hosts is His name, The Holy One of Israel.**

If you had lived in Babylon, you would not have guessed that the overthrow of Babylon could happen in one night. You would have thought it was impossible. It would have been hard to imagine.

If you had lived in Babylon, you would not have guessed that the God who made the heaven and earth was the **God of Israel**, this defeated people. There are the ways that **things look**. And there are the ways that **things truly are**. And we do well to **trust only God** to tell us **which are which**.

God, in this instance, was the God of the defeated Israelites. Nebuchadnezzar trusted his might and his gods. Cyrus trusted his might and his gods. But the true God was the God of the captive Israelites. How God must enjoy His job. Who would think to do it this way?

And this Lord is the redeemer. This God was going to set His people free. He was going to buy His people back. And no one in heaven and earth was going to stand in His way.

**<sup>5</sup> "Sit in silence, and go into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans; For you shall no longer be called The Lady of Kingdoms.**

**<sup>6</sup> I was angry with My people; I have profaned My inheritance, And given them into your hand. You showed them no mercy; On the elderly you laid your yoke very heavily.**

A lot of people have a lot of opinions about human history. They talk about how and why things happened as they did. It is always interesting to read the Bible because it tells the story from a different perspective, a true perspective. A person might give a **military** reason for why Israel was conquered by the Chaldeans. A person might give a **political** reason for why this happened. But God gives us **the real reason** that this happened. It happened because His people had sinned against Him and they needed to be punished. Babylon was not the **prime actor** on the stage. **Israel** was. Babylon was a useful prop. And when God was done with them, he replaced them with Cyrus.

Isn't it interesting that even though God gave His people into Babylon's hand that this did not give Babylon an excuse for mistreating them. God used **Babylon's evil** to accomplish God's good end, but Babylon did not get off the hook **for the evil they did**. They are fully responsible for what they did. And look what God notices. Babylon treated the old people badly. I think it is important that all you young people notice this. ☺ You want to be good to your old people.

Look at what we learn about God here.

God uses the evil of people to accomplish something useful.

God holds those who are doing the evil responsible for what they do.

God uses even evil for His own good purposes.

Don't ever get the idea that God is caught up in some kind of battle between good and evil. There is no struggle here. God has put us in the middle of a struggle. He has placed His obedient angels in opposition to the devil's rebellious angels. He has placed us right in the middle of this struggle **after we voted for it** by Adam's choice. But we cannot get the idea that **our God** is caught up in this struggle. He is using this struggle to accomplish His ends. Always. And when there is nothing useful left to be gained by it, it will end. Period. God uses evil for good purposes. When there is no good purpose for evil left, there will be no evil left.

Don't be deceived by how life looks. This is how **life IS** from God's perspective.

So God gave His people into the hands of Babylon. Babylon showed **Babylon's evil** in how they treated God's people.

**7 And you said, 'I shall be a lady forever,' So that you did not take these things to heart, Nor remember the latter end of them.**

What has the most power? That which is said **to us**? Or that which **we say to ourselves**?

I think the answer is obvious.

Jeremiah bought a knife when he was much younger. I told Jeremiah there was only one stipulation. He could not open that knife until he got home. It wasn't long until we heard reports of copious blood loss where Jeremiah was seated in the car.

What I said to Jeremiah had little power. I said "thou shalt not". What Jeremiah said to himself had great power. He said "I shall". That was one of those wonderful teaching moments that require very little to be said.

Here in our text Babylon says to herself- I shall be a lady forever. It is not what is said **to us** that determines what we will do. It is what we say **to ourselves** that determines that.

We do not take to heart those things that contradict what we say to ourselves. We have all experienced this. We know we are not getting through to someone. And we know we are not getting through **because** what is going through the other person's brain are all the reasons to dismiss what we are saying. **We always believe what we tell ourselves.** We don't often believe what others tell us if it goes against what we tell ourselves.

The belief here is that Babylon would always be Babylon. That was not going to change. So any message that something might change the current status could be dismissed.

There is a huge lesson to be learned here. Listen carefully to what others say to you. And don't assume your initial reaction is one of truth. It usually is not. It is usually one of fear, or pride, or mistrust. The hardest error to dispel is the one we tell ourselves. Humility will set us free to truly hear and examine what others tell us.

**<sup>8</sup> "Therefore hear this now, *you who are given to pleasures, Who dwell securely, Who say in your heart, 'I am, and there is no one else besides me; I shall not sit as a widow, Nor shall I know the loss of children';***

**<sup>9</sup> But these two *things* shall come to you In a moment, in one day: The loss of children, and widowhood. They shall come upon you in their fullness Because of the multitude of your sorceries, For the great abundance of your enchantments.**

**<sup>10</sup> "For you have trusted in your wickedness; You have said, 'No one sees me'; Your wisdom and your knowledge have warped you; And you have said in your heart, 'I am, and there is no one else besides me.'**

We need to get this good.

The Babylonians are addressed as **you who are given to pleasures, who dwell securely**. These are people who have it made. They are at the top of the food chain. Everything is going their way. They are the successful. They are unaffected by what the struggling classes are dealing with. That is how they are **living**. But the next thing is more important. We find out what they are **believing**. We see how they are **interpreting their situation**. We find they are taking credit for their wonderful position.

Look at this phrase delivered twice in this passage.

**Who say in your heart, 'I am, and there is no one else besides me**

Do you want to know one thing you should never ever say in your heart? I am and there is no one else besides me.

In Isaiah 46 we saw this:

**Remember the former things of old,**

**For I am God, and there is no other;**

**I am God, and there is none like Me,**

So God says- I am and there is none besides me. And **our God can say that** because it is true. But we cannot and must not say this. It is the pinnacle of pride. It is to put ourselves in the place of God.

Since having studied this passage I have expanded on it. The statement I am and there is no one else besides me is pregnant with meaning and application. We will look at 2 points this week and 4 points next week. The two for this morning are-

the statement **I am and is no one else besides me** emphasizes the idea of **our autonomy** and **our innate goodness**.

Look at the statement. I am and there is no one else besides me. This places ourselves as the center of the universe. It makes **us** the ultimate evaluator of all things. It puts **us** as the unit that can determine right and wrong, that can make life happen the way it should, that is the source of all knowledge. It makes man the standard. It makes us god of ourselves, not looking for anything of value from outside of ourselves.

And naturally we say, I would never ever do that. But is that true?

Look at what this figurative woman is doing. She is experiencing a painful message from outside of herself. It does not line up with what she is used to. It goes against her experience. And it offends her pride.

She does not ask herself, even though this hurts, could this be true of me? She does not humble herself to even consider that there might be things about herself that she is unaware of. At the heart of the matter do you see the only thing this woman is guilty of? She thinks that she already knows all the truth that needs to be known. She is confident of her ability to discern what is true and what is not. And there is no external source of truth that is needed.

Look where it says:

<sup>10</sup> **"For you have trusted in your wickedness; You have said, 'No one sees me'; Your wisdom and your knowledge have warped you;**

This is the picture of our insides when we begin to trust our own perceptions, our own sensing, our own passions, our own seemers, our own reactions. We trust our perceptions to tell us if something is true or not. It is not long before we allow no influence to reach inside of us to challenge what we think and believe and do. We get very defensive and nip corrections in the bud. This is how we get to the place where we think, I cannot be wrong, because **I would not do a wrong thing, I would not believe a wrong thing**. I cannot be wrong because if I was wrong **I would instinctively know it**. I would **feel** it. It is that place you get where you cannot allow yourself to be questioned. It is the place where you trust that you would **intuitively do the right thing**. You trust that if you knew the right thing you are confident that the right thing is what you would do.

When we trust our internal workings for wisdom and knowledge we will find that our wisdom and knowledge will warp us too.

There is only one human being in all human history who can say **"if I knew the right thing to do, I would do the right thing."** That was Jesus. Jesus could say, I am that I am, and He was. When we start thinking we would always do the right thing if we only knew what it was, as if our greatest

impediment to doing wrong things is information, we are kidding ourselves. When we think that we can trust our selves and our reactions and our perceptions as being right, we are lying to ourselves. When we think that our hearts can really be trusted to tell the truth about ourselves, we are deceived. Scripture tells us as much. Goodness is always a crap shoot with humans. It isn't realistic. If we tell the truth about our histories they all prove that we are **as likely to do a wrong thing as a right thing**, no matter how much we **know**, if we want the bad thing very badly. We are as likely to **believe a wrong thing as a right thing**, no matter what we are **told**, if we want to believe the wrong thing.

**Pride** overemphasizes human intention and human potential. **Humility** assumes the worst and pleads for God's help. **Pride** says I am the measure. **Humility** says God is the measure. **Pride** says I am the source of truth. **Humility** says God is the source of truth. **Pride** thinks I can. **Humility** thinks God must. **Pride** says I am. **Humility** says I am not.

So we look at Babylon and she says, **I am and there is none besides me**.

Now how do I know if that is me? How do I know if I have drifted into that mindset? How about this? If someone questions our actions or our thinking, how much time do we spend thinking about what was said to us before we come to a conclusion or reacting? That is a pretty good indicator. If we are coming from the position of "I am and there is none besides", we don't need to think about it. If I did a thing, it must have been right because I wouldn't do a wrong thing. I wouldn't have hidden motives. I wouldn't think evil thoughts. I wouldn't have a tricky heart. I wouldn't do something for selfish reasons. I wouldn't have a blindness about my own actions. So if I did it I must have been right. If I thought it, it must be true. And if that is our mindset, our response will **not be** one of **introspection**. Our response is more likely to be an attack on the questioner that says, "how dare you assume something evil of me." Pride and true introspection don't usually live in close proximity.

We can also determine if we are coming from a lofty position by how we react.

**If we are and there are none besides**, then if **I** get angry I will assume **you** have done something worthy of anger. I will not consider that maybe I am just too proud or I expect too much. If **I** get hurt I will assume **you** committed some offense against me. I will not consider that maybe I am just too self centered and too sensitive. If **I** lust I will assume that **someone else** acted or dressed immodestly. I will not consider that I have an impure heart. When we act according to our flesh, everything that is wrong about us is someone else's fault. And if we commit something that we can't deny is sin, it will be



because of what someone else did or didn't do. It won't be because we have evil hearts.

The default position of pride is **"I am and there is none besides me."** If you don't think that is true, watch yourself. See how hard it is to really look at yourself and admit the ways you deceive yourself and others. See how hard it is to receive the truth from others that makes you look bad. See how hard it is to not give yourself the benefit of the doubt in any self examination. One of the biggest problems we have is that our **internal defense attorney** is the best in his field. This is the lawyer trying to prove our innocence. He is a lawyer in a very fancy suit that will win at any cost. He is at the top of his game. But the **internal prosecuting attorney**, the guy that is supposed to bring the charges, the lawyer that the defense attorney must face, **he is asleep at the wheel**. He is a guy off the street that never studied law. And we like it that way. It is easy to sear our consciences. It is easy to grieve the Holy Spirit. It is easy to silence our rebukers. All we need to do is assume that we are good. All we need to assume is that we are always right. Truth in the inmost places will be a casualty.

There is one good thing about true humanists. They are at least honest when they say "I am and there is none besides me". And this saying really does fit them. When they say, I am and there is none besides me, they are stating what they really believe. We are aghast at such an errant belief. And then we turn around and allow ourselves to act like it is true, even though we would swear that it is not.

Can we truly humble ourselves? Can we truly love the truth? Can we really tell the truth about ourselves, especially the very ugly truth? That is what a Christian does. But it doesn't come without a fight. We need to ask God to show us what we really are, to break through our defenses and show us the truth.

**I shall not sit *as* a widow, Nor shall I know the loss of children';**

**<sup>9</sup> But these two *things* shall come to you In a moment, in one day: The loss of children, and widowhood. They shall come upon you in their fullness Because of the multitude of your sorceries, For the great abundance of your enchantments.**

**<sup>10</sup> "For you have trusted in your wickedness**

Believing a thing does not make it so.

Believing a thing does not make it so.

This Babylon woman has **predicted** her future. These are the things that will not happen. They fit into her proud world view and self image. She could never see her stooping to lower levels. She assumed she was inherently better than all the rest of the people of the world. Or she assumed she was tied in with a spiritual power that would keep her from this severe misfortune. But because she believed it with her whole heart, that **did not make it true**. And to make matters worse, it happened suddenly without notice. There was no preparing for it. I still remember the day I found out that my uncle had fallen down an elevator shaft and landed on his head. It turned our lives around. Normal life was no longer normal.

Well that is what is described here. In a single day this woman will go from status and security to humility and insecurity. Along with that she would have to mourn those she had lost.

Now, why? Why is God doing this to her? He tells us. And there is no subtlety about it.

**Because of the multitude of your sorceries, For the great abundance of your enchantments.**

<sup>10</sup> **"For you have trusted in your wickedness**

We tend to **trust the most** what **we believe in the most**. Babylon was a very magical place, and not like Disneyland. It was full of sorcery. And the sorcery was depended upon to keep them safe. They would learn of threats and respond to the threats in advance. They were getting supernatural information to keep them doing what they were doing. And they were pretty cocky about it. They depended upon their supernatural surveillance system like we depend upon our superior satellite technology. And it gave them a feeling of invincibility.

Well here we find that God did not destroy the Babylonians because their system of faith **failed**. God destroyed them because their system of faith **existed**. God truly is a jealous God. And the Babylonians never got that they had better be careful dealing with God's people. These Babylonians would have known Israel's history. They would have known all the things God had done in protecting His people. So they should have known enough to look out for the best interest of these people. How the Babylonians treated **God's people** was a direct reflection on what they thought of Israel's **God**. Based on how they treated the Jews, it is clear that they viewed the one true God as being **no threat**. That is not a smart position to take at any time for any person.

So the Babylonians were cruel to the weakest of the Jewish people, so God punished them for the religion that drove them to such arrogance.

We need to always keep this principle in our minds. God cares for His people. They are where his attention on this planet is focused. So how we treat them is always an indication of what we think of God. How do we treat each other? That is how we treat God. That is what the Bible says. So how are we doing? Are we getting cocky and complacent about the process? Or are we careful and deliberate about how we regard and serve each other?

Next week we will look deeper at the flesh's manifesto- **I am and there is no one besides me**. In preparation I think it would be good this week to ask ourselves in the sight of God, how much is this true of me? How much do I blindly trust that what I do is right because I do it? How much do I trust the internal evaluation instantly made by my feelings and perceptions without allowing the prosecuting attorney time to work? Are we brave enough to ask others what they see? When we imagine ourselves in a tempting situation, do we just assume that we will do the right thing? Or do we recognize just how likely we are to do the wrong thing?

Maybe this passage is just for me. But I am hoping that God will use it in all of our lives. Pride robs us of truth. And truth is what we need in order to change to look more like Jesus. So let's pray to our God to "bring it on".