

Your Sorcerers & Astrologers will Perish with You!**Isaiah 47:1-15****Facilitator: Alfreda Chandler****I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND BIBLICAL CONTEXT****A. Historical Background.**

The Israelites have been exiled in Babylon for a span of seventy years. A lifetime for many and for some this was all that they knew. How ironic that the captives were doing what the Babylonians had been doing in their own country, which was worshiping idols. God had called or warned His people to repent and turn back to Him. But they ignored Him. The place that was supposed to be a beacon to the world on how to worship, show compassion and justice, had started to look like the neighboring countries. Just as the prophets foretold, judgment came to pass for Israel. In last week lesson, Isaiah prophesied hope to God's people. God is letting the Israelites know He has not forgotten them. In this chapter the focus is on the Babylonians who are treating the Israelites very brutally. He sees what they are doing to His people. Isaiah is presenting this as a mocking funeral song and aimed at discouraging Babylon and encouraging Israel.

Spiritually, Babylon primarily represents a corrupt, anti-God world system or a false religious system that oppose God's authority and lead people into sin. The city of Babylon served as historical proof of these characteristics, including pride, idolatry which also included sorcerers and astrology and oppression, ultimately leading to its downfall and becoming a symbol of worldly power and corruption in the Book of Revelation (Rev.14:8),

B. Biblical Context

Babylon was certainly one of the biggest and most important nations in the ancient biblical world. In the OT., it is depicted as one of Israel archenemy. At times it was used to punish Israel when they were unfaithful. Babylon is first mentioned in Gen.10:10, as one of the four cities founded by Nimrod who was Ham's son and the grandson of Noah. It was there where the Tower of Babel was said to be built. This nation represented forces that opposed God. They became a major part the Bible which can be found in Habakkuk; Jer.50-51; during Isaiah time.

God was angry with His people because they had exhibited in the land of Israel the same pride and arrogance found in the people of Babylon. Israel's exile did have a humbling effect on them; causing them to turn their hearts to God and call upon Him (Jer.29:12-14a). His intention was to break The Israelites stubborn pride by using the very thing which they sought after, being held by them in captivity. The Babylonians were supposed to help bring them into correction and repentance, but they went overboard in their treatment. It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb.10:31). God will have vengeance for her arrogance and her treatment of His Children.

II. Lesson: Your Sorcerers & Astrologers Will Perish with You!

1. vv.1-4. Humble yourself before the Lord

The great empire of Babylon is portrayed as a beautiful queen who is brought to disgrace and humiliation. The Lord issues the command, "Come down (from your lofty throne of power and prestige) and sit in the dust, virgin daughter of Babylon. This indicates a nation that had never known defeat in battle. A nation that at His command will be put to shame and deprived of her glory. They will no longer be called tender and delicate: this once beautiful nation, known for its splendor and luxury, shall be reduced to shame and disgrace. The great queen is now reduced to the status of a slave girl, who is assigned the hard task of grinding grain for bread. She must remove her royal garment and conduct herself in the most un-lady-like manner, splashing across a stream like a common peasant girl instead of being carried by servants. The Lord declares that He shall reduce this great world power to nakedness and humiliation as an act of righteous vengeance and judgment. She will be exposed to all to see.

Earlier in Babylon's history, King Nebuchadnezzar, had to learn the lesson that the Lord rules the kingdom of men and that He can abase those who walk in pride.

Prov.16:18: Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Let us acknowledge with humble gratitude that whatever abilities and opportunities we possess have been graciously given to us by the Lord.

2. vv. 5-15. Attitudes that Offend God

The Lord consigns this mighty empire of Babylon to silence and darkness—for ex; judgment and complete obscurity (v.5). When one has been granted a position of power and prestige, one must be on guard against the temptation

that accompanies such a position namely the temptation to entertain and exhibit ungodly attitudes that are highly offensive to God.

Such attitudes resided in the heart of Babylon and were displayed in her life. She was merciless (v.6). She had no pity on the weak and helpless, no compassion for such; rather than using her power for the benefit of the needy, it was used to crush them and to do it with delight. She viewed herself as unconquerable, secure, immune to disaster. She displayed arrogant confidence (v.7), she said “I will be queen forever”. She was a nation with a false sense of security who had vast military power and thought herself to be invulnerable. She was confident that she would not be a widow or childless. Meaning that she would never know a time when she will not have protection and provision. But the Lord declared that her desolation would come “in a moment” and “in full measure” (v.9). Do we see ourselves being in complete control of our lives or do we recognize that all we have is under God sovereign control and at His disposal? 1Cor.10:31:” Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God”.

Furthermore, and worst of all, Babylon deified herself (v.8), she viewed herself as being at the center of life and being the chief end of life. It all begins and ends with her; in her heart and thinking she assumed the identity of the Lord, declaring, “I am and there is none besides me”. Babylon was devoted to her own pleasures, and she sought to create a form of Eden that was centered on her ambitions. She viewed herself as being hidden from God (Ps.139 & Pro.15:3); she entertained false confidence that she could continue to practice wickedness and rely on evil measures to advance her own agenda without fear of retribution. But the message from the “Lord All Powerful”, declares disaster will come upon you and when that day come all their superstition and magic will not be able to drive away the calamity sent by the Lord of heaven. God challenged them to stand against Him and use their sorceries and astrologers to save the nation (Vs.11-13). In Is..46:1-2, Isaiah began by portraying the gods being carried away in exile and concluded with the inability of her wise men, astrologers and diviners to be able to help them out of their trouble. Her whole system will completely be closed or of no use.

What does the Bible say about Astrology and Sorcery?

God created the stars to show His handiwork (Ps.8:3; 19:1) and He has all of them numbered and named (Ps.147:4). They along with the moon and sun were given for signs and seasons (Gen.1:14). Plus, they were used for navigational indicators. Astrology as a form of divination is expressly forbidden

(Deut.18:10-14) and not to be served or worshipped as a host of heaven (Deut.4:19).

Sorcery, the use of spells, divination, or speaking to spirits is clearly condemned. It is an attempt to bypass God's wisdom and power so the glory can go to Satan. Deuteronomy 18:10-12 speaks of the sinful practices of nations surrounding Israel and He called it an abomination.

Malachi 3:5: "Then I will draw near to you for judgment, I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, says the Lord.

She will not be a match for the Redeemer-the Lord Almighty- the Holy One of Israel (v.4). She will be stubble or straw (useless) in a flaming fire of the Lord's judgment (v.14). God warns the nation that all the unholy and ungodly things they have trusted in will not save them (v.15).

III. Conclusion

Babylon is not gone even now. Spiritual Babylon is a biblical concept that we can see in the Book of Revelation, symbolizing a self-centered and corrupt spirit that rebel against God, and His kingdom. It is characterized by lust for power, greed, idolatry, spiritual confusion and the elevation of self over God. These leads people away from the truth and righteousness. This spirit is not limited to the ancient city but is seen throughout history and in contemporary society through various forms of corruption. Spiritual Babylon, also represent the false religious system of the last days, that will deceive "all nations" with sorcery (Rev.18:23) before judgment falls. The book of Revelation also says that sorcerers "will be in the lake that burns with sulfur, which is the second death" (Rev.22:15). Sorcery is clearly sinful and should not be a part of Christian living. There is a wisdom that is "earthly", unspiritual, of the devil" (Jas.3:15) and this is what sorcery offers. Our wisdom comes from God (Jas.3:17), not from deceiving spirits. The stars should remind us of God's faithfulness and all the while, we acknowledge the He is the Creator of the heavens and not worship the heavenly bodies. Seek guidance from the Word of God from the Bible, Book of Instructions Before leaving Earth.