

Book of Isaiah



Chapter 47

Theme: The decline and fall of Babylon

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THEME: The decline and fall of Babylon

This is the third time in this book (chs. 13 -- 14; 21) that we have considered the prediction of the doom of Babylon. There was also a suggestion of the fall of Babylon in chapter 46, which opened with God's judgment upon the idols. The time given to this subject is remarkable in view of the fact that Babylon at this time was a very small and insignificant kingdom. It was almost a century before it would become a world power. It had been in existence since the days of the Tower of Babel and had influenced the world religiously. Babylon was the fountainhead and the mother of all idolatry. Again I recommend for your study Alexander Hislop's book, *The Two Babylons*. All through the Old Testament books of prophecy a great deal is said about drunkenness and idolatry. These are the two things that will bring the downfall of any nation. There is a spiritual meaning for us of the present who have nothing to do with Babylon of the past or of the future. The Babylon of the past lies under the rubble and ruin of judgment. Its glory is diminished by the accumulated dust of the centuries. We can see this Babylonian tendency today in the political realm as represented in the United Nations. Babel is the place where all the political power of the world comes together, which will finally be under the willful king, the Antichrist. We see the commercial combine coming to pass in the breaking down of economic barriers among the nations of Europe. We see the religious combine in both Romanism and the World Council of Churches. We will see all of this prefigured in ancient Babylon.¹

The humiliation and exile of Babylon's gods (ch. 46) left Babylon's inhabitants exposed to the same fate. Isaiah predicted Babylon's fall in a mocking funeral song aimed at discouraging Babylon and encouraging Israel. The poem has four stanzas (vv. 1-4, 5-7, 8-11, 12-15).²

The nation to be judged ch. 47

This section of Isaiah on "The Lord's redemption of His servant [Israel]" (44:23—47:15) has so far included: an announcement of redemption (44:23-28), the identification of the instrument of redemption—Cyrus (45:1-13), and a reminder of the uniqueness of the God of redemption (45:14—46:13). It now concludes, by depicting Babylon—the nation from which the Lord would redeem His people from captivity—as a proud woman full of selfconfidence.

In her case, as in so many others, pride goes before a fall. This section is another oracle against a foreign nation (cf. chs. 13—23; Jer. 46—51; Ezek. 25—31) and an oracle of salvation for Zion (cf. 45:14—46:13). The main point of this chapter is not primarily to predict Babylon's fall, however, but to glorify the power and grace of Yahweh, using the destruction of Babylon as a backdrop.³

¹ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

² The Nelsn Study Bible

³ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

A once rich virgin daughter, wearing her veil, and considered a delicate treasure, will be thrown to the dust. She will become a slave - subjected to harsh labor, and her nakedness exposed.

A mock lament over Babylon, or Babylonia (the Heb term "bavel" is used for Babylon, the capital city, and for Babylonia, the country). This poem personifies Babylon as a haughty young woman of great wealth and prestige who has suddenly lost everything. It focuses on the surprising reversal of fortune meted out to the seemingly invincible empire that tormented the Judeans. Taunting songs directed against enemies appear several times in the Bible; see Isa. ch 14; Ezek. chs 27-28.⁴

¹Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground: *there is no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate.*

Babylon, more than the local, also the pride of the Chaldeans.

[sit in the dust] Babylon is pictured here as a proud female, accustomed to luxury and ease, suddenly made poor and brought down to the lowest condition, compelled to be a slave. She is commanded to come down from the throne (or from the seat of lordship over the nations) and sit in the dust -- an expression of humiliation and mourning (Josh. 8:6; Job 2:12; 10:9; Ps. 22:15).⁵

[virgin daughter of Babylon] Cities and nations are commonly spoken of as a woman (Isa. 1:8; 37:22; Jer. 31:21; Ezek. 16).⁶

"Come down" is the command of God to Babylon, the same as a dog is called to obedience. It is like saying, "Down Rover, down Fido." That is the way God is going to talk to the great world power Babylon when the time comes for it to be brought low. God will say, "Down Fido, down Babylon." That is the way the Lord Jesus dealt with the storm on the little sea of Galilee. When the Lord spoke to the waves and the wind, He literally said, "Be muzzled," like you would muzzle a dog. The same thought is here in Isaiah.

Babylon is called a virgin because she had not yet been captured by an enemy. Babylon was just now coming to power although it had a very ancient history, going back to Nimrod (see Gen. 10) and to Babel where the Tower of Babel (see Gen. 11) was located. All the ziggurats in that valley were patterned after the Tower of Babel.⁷

⁴ Jewish Study Bible Notes

⁵ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible:

⁶ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible:

⁷ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

Here Isaiah predicted the fall of Babylon more than 150 years before it happened. At this time, Babylon had not yet emerged as the mightiest force on earth, the proud empire that would destroy Judah and Jerusalem. But the Babylonians, Judah's captors, would become captives themselves in 539 B.C. God, not Babylon, has the ultimate power. He used Babylon to punish his sinful people; he would use Medo-Persia to destroy Babylon and free his people.⁸

O virgin daughter of Babylon: The language is sarcastic. Babylon had acted as though she were "God's daughter." She was about to discover that she was the daughter of the Chaldeans. No longer would she be thought of as a heavenly princess—tender and delicate.⁹

1-3 When conquered, Babylon would become a humbled servant, sitting in the dust, an act depicting great mourning (cf. Jonah 3:6). The words Virgin Daughter personify the people of a city as a young, innocent girl (cf. Isa. 23:12; 37:22), probably meaning that the city's walls had never been breached. The people would no longer be tender and delicate like a virgin because of the hardships they would face. As servants of the conquerors, they would have to grind the flour, unable to worry about their clothing or modesty. Some of them would have to flee across streams. Many of them would be raped and abused (47:3).¹⁰

Come down and sit in the dust: Isaiah pictures proud Babylon as a humiliated woman, who shall no more be called tender and delicate. She is stripped of her fine clothing, and is forced to march in a forced relocation (pass through the rivers).

Bultema calls this "The bold image of a rich, frivolous and sensual young woman who, as a prisoner, is doomed to the despicable state of a slave and in every respect is treated like a Near-Eastern slave woman."

I will take vengeance, and I will not arbitrate with a man: The humiliation God will impose on Babylon is exactly the humiliation she put upon Judah and Jerusalem. When God humbles Babylon, He is taking vengeance and cannot be talked out of His judgment.¹¹

No throne: This chapter continues the material in chapter 46. The assurance that Babylon which will have been a great oppressor of the Jewish nation shall at last be punished and go into decline and finally extinction.¹²

God depicted Babylon here as a rather prissy virgin. The city, representing the kingdom of Babylon, had, like a virgin, thus far not experienced the breaching of her walls by invaders. The Lord summoned her to sit on the ground, rather than on the throne that she intended to occupy. Sitting in the dust was an act that depicted great mourning (cf. Jon. 3:6). She thought that she would be a queen, but in reality she would become a common, even a humiliated, beggar. Other peoples had regarded her as superior, but she would no longer be that. The Chaldeans were the residents of southern Mesopotamia, who had been the leaders in throwing off Assyrian dominance, and had provided the leadership for Neo-Babylonia.¹³

⁸ Life Application Study Bible

⁹ The Nelsn Study Bible

¹⁰ The Bible Knowledge Commentary:

¹¹ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-47.cfm?a=726001

¹² <http://www.moellerhaus.com/isa46-47.htm>

¹³ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

The virgin daughter of Babylon . . . tender and delicate is Babylon itself, portrayed as a self-indulgent girl now subjected to the harsh realities of judgment. Babylon came to symbolize world culture in contempt of God (cf. Revelation 18).¹⁴

²Take the millstones, and grind meal: uncover thy locks, make bare the leg, uncover the thigh, pass over the rivers.

[Take the millstones, and grind meal] These verses (Isa. 47:2-3) picture the daughter of Babylon humbled from her place as a queen and a lady of luxury to the place of a slave girl grinding at the mill, humiliated in nakedness and shame. Grinding meal was often a punishment for slaves.

[uncover thy locks] To uncover the locks means to remove the veil, uncovering the face and hair; this would be a disgrace.

[bare the leg, uncover the thigh, pass over the rivers] The idea here is that of lifting up the long train of the royal robe in order to pass through the rivers going into slavery and captivity. She would be ashamed to bare her legs to cross the streams, for she would be exposed to public view as a common person (Isa. 47:3).¹⁵

This depicts the indescribable humiliation to which Babylon was finally subjected. She had mistreated the people of Israel, and the day came when she was brought low.

Nudity is becoming rather popular today. Men play with the subject like a child playing with a new toy, but it degrades humanity. It was no accident that God clothed mankind. A person who wants to go without clothes has a hangup -- a real hangup. For Babylon nudity was part of her humiliation.¹⁶

2-3 Grinding meal was a usually work for female slaves (Ex. 11:5). Uncover the thigh suggests doing menial labor with overtones of the shame of indecent exposure. Babylon would lose its status and privilege. Nakedness indicates disgrace, impropriety, lack of dignity, and vulnerability (Gen. 9:22, 23).¹⁷

2-5 Babylon your Shame shall be seen...while we have a Redeemer. The assurance of Babylonian destruction is again mentioned in detail and specifically to grant to the captive remnant the hope which will keep their spirits alive during the period of captivity and the later rebuilding of the nation.¹⁸

Babylon would need to do servile work, grinding meal by rotating a millstone (cf. Exod. 11:5; Job 31:10; Matt. 24:41). She should remove her veil, which she, as an upper-class lady, had worn previously to hide her beauty from commoners. Removing her veil would disgrace her. She

¹⁴ ESV Study Bible Notes

¹⁵ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

¹⁶ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

¹⁷ The Nelson Study Bible

¹⁸ <http://www.moellerhaus.com/isa46-47.htm>

should also take off her long skirt and uncover her legs, so she could work in the fields, and wade through the irrigation ditches of the rivers. She would become not only a beggar (v. 1), but a servant.¹⁹

³Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen: I will take vengeance, and I will not meet *thee* as a man.

Idioms seem strange without Rev 17, 18 which describes Babylon as the harlot.

[I will not meet thee as a man] The idea here seems to be that Babylon won't be allowed to stop or oppose the divine vengeance.²⁰

In the ancient world, people regarded nakedness as a shame because it left them open to the gaze of others, and so rendered them defenseless. People seen naked were often taken advantage of. Thus to be uncovered was to be shamefully exposed. Babylon had regarded herself as someone special and superior, but now it would become clear that she was just like every other nation. God promised to take vengeance on Babylon for exalting herself to a place that He alone deserves. He would not spare anyone deserving humiliation.²¹

⁴As for our redeemer, the LORD of hosts is his name, the Holy One of Israel.

[As for our redeemer, the LORD of hosts is his name, the Holy One of Israel] Isaiah acknowledged the true God of Israel right in the midst of the prediction of Babylon's destruction, as if to say: We have a Redeemer, but you have none.²²

This verse records the response of Israel when they would sense the relief coming to them because of Babylon's defeat. Seeing God's vengeance on their captors (v. 3b), they would praise the Lord for they would recognize that release from exile would come from God, not themselves. So they would call God their Redeemer (cf. comments on 43:14), the Lord Almighty, and the Holy One of Israel (cf. comments on 1:4).²³

In contrast to the humiliated Babylon, Israel had a Redeemer (41:14). The Lord of hosts (1:9) would deliver the nation of Israel.

As for our Redeemer: Seemingly, Isaiah cannot help himself - when he sees how God will take vengeance on this enemy of God's people, he praises God and boasts in his redeemer.

Bultema on the Hebrew word for Redeemer: "A gaal had to be a close relative. Christ is this too, for according to His humanity He came forth from the Jews. A gaal had to be able to deliver. The Holy One of Israel does not lack this ability. Sometimes a gaal had to exercise bloody

¹⁹ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

²⁰ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

²¹ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

²² Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

²³ The Bible Knowledge Commentary:

vengeance. Christ will work bloody vengeance upon Babylon for its oppression of His people. Frequently a gaal had to pay a ransom to free a prisoner. The Lord Jesus paid with his blood on Golgotha to ransom His people. On the basis of these considerations, to which could be added many more, it is evident that the name Gaal is very fitting for the Savior."²⁴

The foregoing description of God humbling Babylon, for essentially the same reason He humbled Egypt in the Exodus, drew an exclamation of praise from Isaiah. Almighty Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel, would again redeem His people from a nation that had lifted up itself in pride and had oppressed God's chosen people. These verses assert two principles which lie at the heart of divine providential government of the world: retribution and the centrality of the people of God.²⁵

⁵Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called, The lady of kingdoms.

“Lady of kingdoms” - Rev 18:7, note plural kingdoms (Cf. Isa 13:19).

Here Babylon is pictured as sitting in the silence of darkness (a sign of mourning) in sorrow and humiliation instead of having the distinction of being "the lady of kingdoms."²⁶

The similar structure of vv. 1, 5 link the first stanza (vv. 1–4) with the second stanza (vv. 5–8).

5-7 The Lord had used Babylon to judge Judah, but that ruthless nation, like Assyria (cf. Isa. 10), had abused its power (cf. Hab. 1:6-11). So God's sentence was pronounced on Babylon: no longer would she be... queen of kingdoms (cf. "eternal queen" in Isa. 47:7). Babylon was considered nearly impregnable.

Babylon had been able to conquer Judah, God's inheritance (see comments on Deut. 4:20), only because God allowed it (Isa. 47:6). Merciless, the Babylonians even treated the aged Jewish captives harshly. Therefore God would treat everyone in Babylon harshly (v. 3b). The Babylonians never considered the possibility that they would not be in a position of power forever (v. 7). Babylon thought she was the eternal queen (cf. v. 5).²⁷

I was angry with My people: Babylon thought that she conquered Judah and Jerusalem through her own power. But Babylon didn't see that she really conquered them because God was angry with His people, and therefore used Babylon as an instrument of His work. God says, "You didn't know that I had given them into your hand."

You showed them no mercy: As an instrument in God's hand, Babylon was too enthusiastic in their attack on God's people. Even though God allowed it and used it, they still should have showed mercy to God's people. We are always safe when we take the path of mercy!

²⁴ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-47.cfm?a=726001

²⁵ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

²⁶ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

²⁷ The Bible Knowledge Commentary

And you said, "I shall be a lady forever." Babylon was blind, Babylon was cruel, and now Babylon is shown to be proud and presumptuous. For all these reasons, God promises to humble Babylon.

Bultema applies the sense of Isaiah 47:5-11 to the corrupt Church: "In her self-satisfaction and frivolous self-deception she says, I shall be a lady. She claims royal riches, power and honor for herself for ever. A queen feels she must reign, and that was also the Church's goal quite early. Soon it placed a cross on its steeple instead of on its shoulders. With all its veneration of the cross, it hated the cross in a spiritual sense and reached for the crown of the world." (Bultema)²⁸

5-7 Sit in silence. Babylon is left with nothing to say. God used the Babylonians to discipline his own people, as he said he would (cf. Deut. 28:49-50), but God still held Babylon accountable for their cruel abuses and unthinking arrogance (cf. Isa. 10:5-19).²⁹

¶I was wroth with my people, I have polluted mine inheritance, and given them into thine hand: thou didst show them no mercy; upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke.

Three acts of God humbling Judah:

1. I was angry with My people.
2. I have polluted Mine inheritance.
3. I have given them into the hand of Babylon to punish them.³⁰

God is making it clear to them that the reason Babylon was able to take His people was because He permitted it and not because Babylon was so superior. They had a great sense of power, and they gave themselves credit for overthrowing Israel. They were wrong. God delivered His people into the hands of Babylon because they had sinned against Him. He was judging His own people. This is the message of the little prophecy of Habakkuk.³¹

6-7 Babylon's cruel abuse of Israel when the Lord had given them into Babylon's hand would be avenged, as in the case of the Assyrians (10:1-19; 49:25). a lady forever: Babylon was arrogantly boasting that it would remain an empire, "the Lady of Kingdoms" (see v. 5; compare Dan. 4:30), throughout all time. This amounted to blasphemy.³²

I have polluted my inheritance: God holds the Babylonians accountable for the harsh treatment they have given to Israel as well as to other captive nations. Ruthless destruction of human life which was a part of Babylonian warfare learned from the Assyrians was to be punished. The last end ought to be in the mind of any nation that designs evil against another. There is a day of reckoning and evil will not go unpunished forever.

The word translated "heavily laid" here is the same word as "hikbiyd" without the yod or "y." The word [Hikbadte] is a 5th stem verb and corresponds exactly to the 5th stem participle that is

²⁸ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-47.cfm?a=726001

²⁹ ESV Study Bible Notes

³⁰ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible:

³¹ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

³² The Nelson Study Bible

used in Isaiah 9:1. There is no way that "honor" or "glory" could be a possible meaning of this word in this context. Thus the same word in 9:1 refers to the heavy affliction which would be administered to the region of Galilee when the Messiah struck the region with the "rod of his mouth and the breath of his lips."³³

Babylon had not been kind to the Israelites whom Yahweh had handed over to her. She had not really conquered Judah; God had given the Judahites over to the Babylonians. The Babylonians had been unmerciful toward the Israelites and had made life hard even for their elderly, those who deserved mercy simply because of their age. The Babylonians were not as hard on the Israelites as the Egyptians and the Assyrians had been. It was their arrogance more than their physical cruelty that made them unmerciful.³⁴

⁷And thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever: so that thou didst not lay these *things* to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it.

God's judgment of His people deceived Babylon. They thought it was by their might and power that they had taken God's people.

The mark of Babylon's arrogance was that she assumed that she would continue to rule the world forever. She had defeated Assyria, which had been the most powerful world ruler for 300 years, and there was no power on the horizon that Babylon could see that would threaten her sovereignty. She had not considered that all nations are subject to Yahweh's sovereignty, that no nation is self-sufficient or self-existent. She had failed to consider that someone more powerful than herself could call her to account for her treatment of the people she had conquered.³⁵

⁸Therefore hear now this, *thou that art given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children:*

Babylon was arrogant, lifted up, and careless, not believing that a frightful fall was coming. Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king, looked over the beautiful and glorious city of Babylon, and said, "This is great Babylon that I have built," giving no credit to God. God sent him out to the field like an ox to eat grass, having a form of amnesia -- probably the psychiatrist would call it hysteria today. For a long time he did not know who he was, and he lived like an animal. It was God's judgment upon him.³⁶

Hear is addressed to the wicked "daughter," Babylon (vv. 1, 5; see 1:8). Babylon had deified itself with the statement I am (v. 10). They had tried to usurp the Lord's unique attribute: Only the Almighty has an existence that is not dependent on another (45:5, 6, 18, 21, 22; 46:9). This wicked self-deification mirrors the boasting of the king of Tyre (Ezek. 28:11-19). Babylon is no

³³ <http://www.moellerhaus.com/isa46-47.htm>

³⁴ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

³⁵ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

³⁶ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

longer considered a virgin (v. 1), but instead is a widow. The imagery of the loss of children suggests the loss of hope in the future. Contrast Babylon's fate with that of Zion (49:21–23; 54:1–6).³⁷

8-9 Caught up in the pursuit of power and pleasure, Babylon believed in its own greatness and claimed to be the only power on earth. Babylon felt completely secure, and Nebuchadnezzar, its king, exalted himself as a "god." But the true God taught Nebuchadnezzar a powerful lesson by taking everything away from him (Daniel 4:28-37). Our society is addicted to pleasure and power, but these can quickly vanish. Look at your own life and ask yourself how you can be more responsible with the talents and possessions God has given you. How can you use your life for God's honor rather than your own?³⁸

8-9 Hear this now, you who are given to pleasures, who dwell securely: In the midst of her pride and arrogance (I am, and there is no one else besides me; I shall not sit as a widow), God brings another charge against Babylon. Judgment also comes because of the multitude of your sorceries, for the great abundance of your enchantments. Babylon was famous as a founding place and breeding ground for occultic arts and practices.³⁹

Babylon was sensual (a lover of luxury) in that she assumed that what she enjoyed were her rights by virtue of her superiority. Her present condition had led her to think that she would always enjoy provision, protection, status, and security. But she could not avert the doom that would come on her because she had exalted herself to God's place. The pleasure-loving lady of leisure would become a childless widow.⁴⁰

8-11 Babylon thought that she could never be defeated (v. 8). But the Lord said that she would lose her children and become a widow.... on a single day, speaking figuratively of her desolation from defeat (cf. Jerusalem as a widow, Lam. 1:1). Though Babylon thought she was unique—I am, and there is none besides me (Isa. 47:8, 10)—she was wrong; God is the One who is unique, as Isaiah had stated repeatedly (43:11; 44:6; 45:5-6, 14, 18, 21-22; 46:9).

Babylon prided herself in her sorcerers who supposedly "told the future" and cast spells to influence others (cf. 47:12). Sorceries (vv. 9, 12) translates *kešāpm*, a word used in the Old Testament only here and in 2 Kings 9:22; Micah 5:12; Nahum 3:4. It suggests seeking information about the future by means of demonic forces. Such supposed knowledge, however, was unreliable, for the sorcerers could not foresee Babylon's forthcoming calamity and would not be able to conjure it away.⁴¹

³⁷ The Nelson Study Bible

³⁸ Life Application Study Bible.

³⁹ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-47.cfm?a=726001

⁴⁰ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

⁴¹ The Bible Knowledge Commentary

⁹But these two *things* shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their perfection for the multitude of thy sorceries, *and* for the great abundance of thine enchantments.

Mystery Babylon read: Rev 17, 18, Isa 13, 14, Jer 50, 51, and Isa 47. Seventieth Week of Daniel, The Day of the Lord detailed: Rev 6 thru 19. Rev 17, 18 details the judgment of Mystery Babylon. Rev 18:4 echoes letter to Thyratira. Rev 18:7 describes her boast that she is not a widow contrasted with Isa 47:8. Babylonian religious system started in Gen 11 at the tower of Babel and can be tracked throughout history and into our society. Mystery Babylon appears to be more than the religious system. In Revelation she brags, "I am no widow" and in Isa 47:8 she claims not to know the loss of children. Could this be a post-rapture brag? Rev 18 describes three groups of people that bemoan her judgment: kings, merchants and shipcaptains. She must be a world trade center. She is the harlot which rides the beast and it consumes her!⁴²

Two things to happen to Babylon:

1. Loss of children
2. Widowhood

Here Babylon is pictured as a married woman with children, being deprived of her husband and children, while in Isa. 47:1 the city is pictured as a virgin (Isa. 47:8-9).

[in a moment in one day] The suddenness of the judgment on Babylon indicates a latter-day fulfillment when God Himself will destroy her under the seventh vial at the second coming of Christ. It was to be done "in a moment in one day" (Isa. 47:9) and "suddenly" (Isa. 47:11). This has never happened in any past capture of Babylon; it took many days in every case to take the city, and even then it wasn't destroyed as pictured here. In Isa. 13:19-22; Jer. 50:40; 51:8; Rev. 14:8; 16:17-21; 18:8,10,17 there are many latter-day references to the sudden, complete, total, and eternal destruction of Babylon.

[perfection] Babylon's destruction was to be complete -- perfect and entire -- something which has yet to come to pass, so it remains to be fulfilled in the future (Rev. 14:8; 16:17-21; 18:1-24). The multitude of sorceries and enchantments will be one of the greatest causes of the doom of Babylon in the day of the Lord (Isa. 47:9,12-13; Rev. 18:2,23).⁴³

She would lose her empire and her population with unexpected suddenness. In spite of the sorcery and magic that Babylon relied on for protection, God would bring judgment on her. Babylon was proverbial in the ancient world for its development of the magical arts. So firm was this association that in Daniel, 'Chaldean' is a term for magician (1:20; 2:2, 27, etc. . . .). The great Babylonian interest in astronomy was prompted by an even greater interest in astrology. The names given to the astrological constellations today are translations of the ones originated by the Babylonians. More than anything else, magic is engaged in to ensure good fortune and prevent misfortune.⁴⁴

⁴² Chuck Missler, Notes on Isaiah, k-house.org

⁴³ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible:

⁴⁴ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

¹⁰For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness: thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me.

Six things said in the heart:

1. Babylon -- None like me (Isa. 47:10).
2. Lucifer -- I will exalt myself to heaven and be like the Most High (Isa. 14:12-14).
3. God -- I will not again curse the ground for man's sake, or kill all creatures as I have done (Gen. 8:21).
4. Esau -- I will kill my brother (Gen. 27:41).
5. Zion -- Who has begotten all these? Or, How is it that we are so blessed with children? (Isa. 49:21)
6. The fool -- I have much goods laid up for many years ... eat, drink, and be merry (Lk. 12:17-19; Ps. 14:1).⁴⁵

There is always a grave danger of a nation or a man being lifted up by pride and feeling that he is able to make it on his own. We are living in a country today where men can become rich, not by doing some great service or by making a contribution to mankind, but by being in an industry that brings men down -- degrades them instead of building them up. Think of the millions of dollars that are being made through entertainment and the multitudes who are getting rich through the sale of liquor. We are in many questionable businesses as a nation, and our methods of business are not always honorable. We attempt to cover up these things, but God sees, and He will judge as He judged Babylon.⁴⁶

Wickedness, wisdom, and knowledge refer to the same idea as “sorceries” and “enchantments” in v. 9 (Dan. 2; 5; contrast with 11:2). No one sees me: The selfish pride of the wicked is based in part on believing that there is not an all-knowing, all-seeing God in the universe.⁴⁷

10-11 You have trusted in your wickedness: This is a searching insight into the heart of the proud sinner. They trust in their continuing wickedness to cover the tracks of their previous sin. They are clever, but their wisdom in wickedness has warped them (Your wisdom and your knowledge have warped you).

Therefore evil shall come upon you: And it did for Babylon, which was suddenly conquered in one night, when they believed all was safe and secure (as recorded in Daniel 5).

The rebuke of Babylon's pride is a simple fulfillment of a principle repeated three times in the Scripture: God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. (Proverbs 3:34, James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5).⁴⁸

Stand now with your enchantments and the multitude of your sorceries: God challenges the sorcerers of Babylon to save them from His judgment. After all, if they have real spiritual power, they should be able to. But their weakness in the face of the LORD's judgment will be exposed.

⁴⁵ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible:

⁴⁶ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁴⁷ The Nelson Study Bible

⁴⁸ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-47.cfm?a=726001

"For the Babylonians, sorcery also included a mood of complacency (v. 10), because the people relied on their magicians to predict the coming of the enemy and to defeat him. In Babylonia the intellectual and the magical were intertwined, the wise man being instructed in all the arts of the supernatural." (Grogan)

Behold, they shall be as stubble, the fire shall burn them: Not only can the sorcerers of Babylon not deliver others from God's judgment, they can't even deliver themselves. The fire of judgment that comes upon them will be severe; it will not be a coal to be warmed by, nor a fire to sit before!

"False religion may seem to offer the warmth of 'helpfulness', but it is not a fire to sit by, rather a fire which will burn up, a furnace of destruction." (Motyer)

How many greatly underestimate the blazing strength of God's judgment! We see the same tragic thinking among those who say, "I won't mind going to hell. I'll party there with all my friends!" Some have even said that they will ski on the lake of fire! They think the fires of judgment will somehow be useful or comforting, but they are making a deadly mistake. Can there be a more dangerous sin?

No one shall save you: What a final sentence! And if we will not find our salvation in the LORD; if we will not look to Him and be saved, then certainly no one shall save you.⁴⁹

Babylon felt secure in mistreating people because her great learning and wisdom in the magical arts had led her to conclude that she was superior and invulnerable. Knowledge puffs up, and one of the delusions it spawns is that people who know more are as morally and ethically responsible as everyone else, since they are not. A corollary is that if I can get away with something, it's all right. Such thinking forgets that there is a sovereign and righteous God in heaven to whom we are responsible. Chaldean Babylon . . . combined the practical atheism of the freethinker with astrology, necromancy, and crass superstition.⁵⁰

¹¹Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth: and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, *which* thou shalt not know.

The word therefore links Babylon's pretensions of "knowledge" (v. 10) with the just judgment that the nation did not know.

You shall not know: The Babylonians shall be ignorant of the prophetic scriptures concerning their destruction at the hands of Cyrus but those of the Remnant will have knowledge of them. When Daniel was interpreting the hand writing on the wall of Belshazzar's feasting hall, he no doubt was inspired, but current events in his time and the writings of Isaiah would have given him enough information for him to be able name the "Medes and the Persians" as the successors of the Babylonian Empire. Cyrus would have been a household name by that time and the Jews knew his name was in Isaiah's writings⁵¹

⁴⁹ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-47.cfm?a=726001

⁵⁰ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

⁵¹ <http://www.moellerhaus.com/isa46-47.htm>

In spite of how the Babylonians thought, God would bring judgment on them suddenly that incantations would not affect, sacrifices could not deflect, and magic could not anticipate. Daniel 5 describes Belshazzar's feast, which took place on the night Babylon fell. Cyrus took the Babylonian king and his city completely by surprise, and the empire fell suddenly.

Cyrus took Babylon effortlessly, and by morning every citizen of the empire was not a Babylonian but a Persian.⁵²

¹²Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail.

The Qumran text adds "to this day" and omits the rest of the verse. "Wearied" is omitted from the next verse and the thought is run together with verse 12.

[if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail] This shows the mercy of God and His grace even to the corrupt cities of the heathen, if they will only profit by their mistakes and give heed to God's dealings with them. Nineveh profited for a long while by heeding the message of God (Jonah 3).⁵³

God satirically urges Babylon to turn to the witchcraft in which she has trusted and which has gotten her into trouble. In substance God asks, "You thought it was so great, why don't you trust it to get you out of trouble?"⁵⁴

The command to stand matches the Lord's introductory commands in vv. 1, 5. The word sorceries links the final stanza with the earlier ones (vv. 9, 10).

12-15 The people of Babylon sought advice and help from astrologers and stargazers. But like the idols of wood or gold, astrologers could not even deliver themselves from what was to come from the hand of God. Why rely on those who are powerless? The helpless cannot help us. Alternatives to God are destined to fail. If you want help, find it in God, who has proven his power in creation and in history.⁵⁵

12-15 The Lord mockingly urged the Babylonians to keep on in their spells and sorceries (cf. v. 9), which the city had been involved in since childhood (cf. v. 15), that is, since the nation was founded. In sarcasm He suggested the astrologers and stargazers... save them. Astrology was common in Babylon (cf. Dan. 2:2, 4-5). But their work was worthless, like mere stubble, the dried stalks of grain that burn quickly. Those religious leaders could not save even themselves, let alone Babylon. Yet they persisted in their error.⁵⁶

⁵² <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

⁵³ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible:

⁵⁴ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁵⁵ Life Application Study Bible.

⁵⁶ The Bible Knowledge Commentary

12-13 Your enchantments: The futility of the astrologers in Babylon is continued from the last verse because the Jews knew by the scriptures the means of Babylonian destruction and the outcome of the Persian - Babylonian conflict. This again emphasizes the foolishness of being impressed by the Babylonian gods and religion.⁵⁷

12-13 God sarcastically challenged the Babylonians to continue to trust in their mediums and horoscopes, as though they might be able to deliver them from the fate He announced. They were not about to humble themselves, as the Ninevites did in Jonah's day. If there was any time the Babylonians needed help from their wise men, it was before the Lord visited them with judgment.⁵⁸

13Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from *these things* that shall come upon thee.

[astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators]

Three Classes of Babylonian Scientists

1. Astrologers -- dividers of the heavens for the purpose of prophecy and divination, or to make a horoscope. Astrology professes to discover certain connections between the position and movements of the planets and events which occur on earth. This was practiced early by the Babylonians, Egyptians, Libyans, Ethiopians, Indians, Arabians, and Chinese. From the rising and setting of the planets, their orbits and color, diviners predicted storms, heat, rain, comets, eclipses, earthquakes and ordinary human affairs affecting both nations and individuals. To assist astrologers in making calculations from the planets, the heavens were divided into twelve equal parts called houses; and the various things affecting man were placed therein -- marriage, life, death, religion, etc. From the position of stars in these houses the calculations were made.
2. Star-gazers -- those who endeavored to tell the future by the relative position of the stars.
3. Monthly prognosticators -- those that told what might occur within the month by the various positions and phases of the moon.

[stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee] The challenge here was for the wise men to save Babylon from the coming judgment (Isa. 47:12-13). Judgment was to reach the wise men as well as the merchants, and none would be able to save the city; all would go to their own places and forsake Babylon (Isa. 47:14-15).⁵⁹

Confusion characterizes Babylon at this time. The city lives up to its name -- Babylon means "confusion," and confusion besets them. That great city depended upon its economic strength and its total gross product. But something happened to that nation, and it was dying within. We are living in a country today that depends upon its economic strength, but something is also wrong with us, and we won't face up to it. Our problem is moral. As a nation we have departed

⁵⁷ <http://www.moellerhaus.com/isa46-47.htm>

⁵⁸ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

⁵⁹ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible:

from the living and true God. The ancient city of Babylon, which at first glance seems so unrelated to us, has a message for us. The stones of the debris of Babylon are crying out a warning to us.⁶⁰

¹⁴Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: *there shall not be* a coal to warm at, *nor* fire to sit before it.

¹⁵Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast laboured, *even* thy merchants, from thy youth: they shall wander every one to his quarter; none shall save thee.

Babylon's fate would also overtake those with whom it had labored, its ancient merchants, on whose trade it depended for its wealth. Compare the arrogance of the king of Tyre based on Tyre's successful trading (Ezek. 28:16, 18).⁶¹

However, their powers would be no match for the consuming judgment of God that was coming on them like a fire. It would sweep everything in its path away, the astrologers as well as their predictions. They would become the fuel for this fire that would be like a wild forest fire, not a comfortable campfire.

They [the astrologers] do not even have the enduring power of wood in the fire, for they are consumed instantly [as stubble], and are not able to save themselves from the flame that devours them. If they cannot save themselves it is foolish to look to them to save Babylon.

False religion offers the comfort of a fire, but it turns into a furnace of destruction. The philosophical leaders of Babylon would not be saviors in that day of judgment. In fact, there would be none to save them.

These few words at the end of v. 15 capture the whole argument of chs. 40—47: everybody needs a savior; the gods and the magical worldview on which they rest cannot save; the Lord who stands outside the cosmos and directs it according to his good purposes can save; which shall we choose?

The fulfillment of this prophecy came when Cyrus invaded Babylon in 539 B.C. But the similarities between this chapter and Revelation 17 and 18 remind us that a future eschatological destruction of Babylon is also coming.

Those who have turned from the living God to the daily horoscope in our own society would do well to heed this passage.

The point of chapters 41—47 is that the entire structure and system of the Babylonian Empire (represented by her idols) was developed by humans [cf. the Tower of Babel, Gen. 11]; Babylon had no lasting divine sanction. Just as an idol is of human fabrication, with no autonomous power or usefulness of its own, so the entire Babylonian system of society, economics, and politics was a human fabrication which in time would collapse. Israel, then, must reserve her worship, her ultimate commitment, for YHWH. This commitment must stand above all other systems and values. YHWH may grant these systems (including Assyria, Persia) temporary

⁶⁰ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁶¹ The Nelson Study Bible

sanction to do his will, but he also reserves the right to repudiate and destroy them. Only YHWH deserves worship.⁶²

Babylon's Complete, One-Day Destruction

Now, in order to fully understand this, we really need to take the time to read seven chapters of the Bible. Not just Isaiah 47, but Isaiah 13 and 14, Jeremiah 50 and 51, and Revelation 17-18. As we read through these chapters, one thing becomes abundantly clear: the Lord plans to bring judgment upon Babylon with complete and permanent destruction. But since we don't have the time tonight to do this, let me give you a quick skimming of highlights:

Is. 13:5-6 They are coming from a far country, from the farthest horizons, the LORD and His instruments of indignation, to destroy the whole land. Wail, for the day of the LORD is near! It will come as destruction from the Almighty.

Is. 13:8-11 ...They will look at one another in astonishment, their faces aflame. Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, cruel, with fury and burning anger, to make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners from it. For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not flash forth their light; The sun will be dark when it rises and the moon will not shed its light. Thus I will punish the world for its evil...

Is. 13:13 Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken from its place at the fury of the LORD of hosts in the day of His burning anger.

Is. 13:19 And Babylon, the beauty of kingdoms, the glory of the Chaldeans' pride, will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah

Jer. 50:3 "...it will make her land an object of horror, and there will be no inhabitant in it.."

Jer. 50:13 "...she will be completely desolate; Everyone who passes by Babylon will be horrified..."

Jer. 50:39-40 ...it will never again be inhabited or dwelt in from generation to generation. "As when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah with its neighbors," declares the LORD, no man will live there..."

Jer. 51:6-7 Flee from the midst of Babylon, and each of you save his life! Do not be destroyed in her punishment, for this is the LORD'S time of vengeance; He is going to render recompense to her. Babylon has been a golden cup in the hand of the LORD, intoxicating all the earth. The nations have drunk of her wine; Therefore the nations are going mad.

Jer. 51:9 ...Forsake her and let us each go to his own country, for her judgment has reached to heaven and towers up to the very skies.

⁶² <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

Jer. 51:25-26 “Behold, I am against you, O destroying mountain, who destroys the whole earth,” declares the LORD, and I will stretch out My hand against you, and roll you down from the crags, and I will make you a burnt out mountain. They will not take from you even a stone for a corner nor a stone for foundations, but you will be desolate forever,” declares the LORD.

Jer. 51:29 ...the purposes of the LORD against Babylon stand, to make the land of Babylon a desolation without inhabitants.

Jer. 51:43 “Her cities have become an object of horror, a parched land and a desert, a land in which no man lives and through which no son of man passes.”

Jer. 51:62 ...“You, O LORD, have promised concerning this place to cut it off, so that there will be nothing dwelling in it, whether man or beast, but it will be a perpetual desolation.”

We definitely get the idea that when Babylon is judged, it will never be inhabited. In one hour, the whole land will be destroyed, and the fire will be like a tower that reaches the skies. People will be horrified of the place and will be afraid to go anywhere near there.

This, of course, did not happen when Cyrus took the city of Babylon. There was no judgment of destruction - it was one of the quietest conquerings of all time!

And so we see, as it says here in Isaiah 47:9 and 47:11, that this destruction will come upon them suddenly, in one day.

The Queen

But why the analogy of Babylon as a queen, who says, "I will not sit as a widow, nor know loss of children"? Babylon is described throughout the Scriptures as a woman - a queen and a prostitute. The book of Revelation describes Babylon as a woman...

Rev. 17:2 with whom the kings of the earth committed acts of immorality, and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality.”

Rev. 17:3-5 ...a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns. The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality, and on her forehead a name was written, a mystery, “BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”

Rev. 18:3-10 “...all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality.” I heard another voice from heaven, saying, “Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues; for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. Pay her back even as she has paid, and give back to her double according to her deeds; in the cup which she has mixed, mix twice as much for her. To the degree that she glorified herself and lived sensuously, to the same degree give her torment and mourning; for she says in her heart, ‘I

SIT as A QUEEN AND I AM NOT A WIDOW, and will never see mourning.' For this reason in one day her plagues will come, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for the Lord God who judges her is strong. And the kings of the earth, who committed acts of immorality and lived sensuously with her, will weep and lament over her when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance because of the fear of her torment, saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour your judgment has come.'