

Sermon Notes & References

Defeat of the Enemy
Isaiah 47:1-15

May 8, 2011

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^D Habakkuk 2:3
^E 2 Peter 3:3-4, 9-10
^F Hebrews 2:3, Isaiah 49:8, 2 Corinthians 6:2

A. Introduction: A Chapter of Judgement

1. the Historic City

- a. the first reference to Babylon, or, in Hebrew, Babel, is found in Genesis 11:2ff, '2 It came about as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. 3 They said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly." And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar. 4 They said, "Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth." ... (then God confused their languages, so that they were indeed scattered over the earth) 9 Therefore its name was called Babel'
- b. in Isaiah's time it was peopled by the Chaldeans and after his death became the successor to the Assyrians as the ruler of the Mesopotamian empire
- c. it was Nebuchadnezzar, ruler of Babylon, who was God's means of punishing Judah for her sins, taking her into exile
- d. Cyrus, came against this city, and in a single night entered and captured it, so that the Medes and Persians ruled the empire for 200 years, and Babylon started to crumble
- e. After Alexander the Great died, one of his successors used the stones of Babylon to build a new city to himself further up the river, called Seleucia; and after that time references to Babylon were more to the general area than the city
- f. destruction of the city of Babylon was complete
- g. Babylon, the enemy of the OT people of God
- h. and behind Babylon, Satan, the enemy of God

2. the Mystic City

- a. but there is also a mystic (or spiritual) Babylon to which reference is particularly made in Revelation 17 and 18 but which is drawn from this chapter in Isaiah
- b. Let me read some verses from Revelation 18
 - (A) you will see how it expands on Isaiah 47 as we read it
 - (B) I won't attempt to tickle your ears by interpreting these except in the most general way

- c. '1 ¶ After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illumined with his glory. 2 And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird. 3 For 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." 4 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; 5 for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. 6 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. 7 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.' 8 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.'
- d. '9 ¶ "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, 10 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.' 11 And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their cargoes any more — 12 cargoes of gold and silver and ... 15 The merchants of these things, who became rich from her, will stand at a distance because of the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning, 16 saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, she who was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls; 17 for in one hour such great wealth has been laid waste!' ...20 Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced judgment for you against her." 21 Then a strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "So will Babylon, the great city, be thrown down with violence, and will not be found any longer. 22 And the sound of harpists and musicians and flute-players and trumpeters will not be heard in you any longer; and no craftsman of any craft will be found in you any longer; and the sound of a mill will not be heard in you any longer; 23 and the light of a lamp will not shine in you any longer; and the voice of the bridegroom and bride will not be heard in you any longer; for your merchants were the great men of the earth, because all the nations were deceived by

your sorcery. 24 And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth.”

- e. I think you will already have noticed some of the allusions to Isaiah 47 in these verses
- f. over the years, this mystic or spiritual Babylon has been identified with various kingdoms and empires
 - (A) the earliest, perhaps, was the Roman empire
 - (B) and other empires and kingdoms that followed
 - (C) another was the apostate church
 - (D) and even the League of Nations and United Nations
 - (E) and the most recent probably being the European Union or Common market
- g. but it probably best understood as typifying all that is in this world system that is opposed to God, with the things I just mentioned only being specific instances.
- h. behind this mystic or spiritual Babylon, which is the enemy of the NT people of God, is Satan, the enemy of God
- i. this is a terrible picture we just read; full of terror; frightful
- j. and, as Isaiah did in this chapter, so also we need to do when we come face to face with the message of God’s coming judgement – we need to turn out thoughts to this fact, found in Isaiah 47:4:

B. The Lord is Our Redeemer 47:4

- 1. verse 4: [Our Redeemer, the Lord of hosts is His name, The Holy One of Israel](#)
 - a. the act of judgement against the historic Babylon was one in which the Lord of hosts brought salvation to the Jews
 - b. by Cyrus, God delivered exiled Jews out of bondage
- 2. The Lord Jesus Christ is Our Redeemer – and knowing that a great judgement day is coming, we can take refuge in these verses, [18 knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, 19 but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.](#) (1 Peter 1:18-19)
 - a. Christ has provided deliverance from that judgement
 - b. remember this as we look at ...

- C. Queen Babylon Dethroned 47:1-3, 5
1. Her Fall: verse 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 longer be called tender and delicate.'
 - a. the city Babylon is personified as a woman; the word used in verse 5 is Gebereth, the female equivalent of Gibbor (a term used of God): mighty woman; lady; Queen
 - b. Babylon is called a virgin not for her moral purity – indeed the opposite was the case – but because she has previously been immune from attacks by her protective walls
 - c. she has lived a pampered existence: tender, delicate
 - d. but now she is thrown down from the throne to the dust
 2. Her Degradation: verse 2: 'Take the millstones and grind meal. Remove your veil, strip off the skirt, Uncover the leg, cross the rivers.'
 - a. grinding grain was the work of draught animals – oxen, donkeys – hard work; hot work; menial work
 - b. it was work for a slave, a female slave
 - c. all the signs of modesty and position are removed
 - (A) the veil so her hair hangs down as a commoners
 - (B) the skirt, robe or train removed
 - (C) having to wade through streams rather than carried
 3. Her Humiliation: verse 3a: 'Your nakedness will be uncovered, Your shame also will be exposed; ...'
 - a. remember this is personification of a city
 - b. the humiliation she suffers is likened to that of the greatest shame to a woman, that of forced nakedness
 - c. her humiliation will be that all will see what Babylon is really like, her true nature and character
 4. Her Destruction: verse 3b: '... I will take vengeance and will not spare (meet) a man.'
 - a. God is taking vengeance on behalf of His people
 - b. no one meet this God with impunity
 5. Her Impoverishment: verse 5: 'Sit silently, and go into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans, For you will no longer be called The queen of kingdoms.'

- a. from the light and activity of the palace
- b. this queen sits in dusty obscurity
- c. the kings of the earth that bowed to Babylon as their ruler are no longer there to give their tribute to her

6. Queen Babylon, the enemy of the people of God is defeated

D. The Case Against Queen Babylon 47:6-8, 10

1. Her Treatment of God's People, verse 6: *'I was angry with My people, I profaned My heritage And gave them into your hand. You did not show mercy to them, On the aged you made your yoke very heavy.'*
 - a. Babylon, like Assyria before her, was only an instrument for God's use in order to bring corrective punishment upon His people, so that they might repent and return to Him
 - b. but they overstepped their bounds, and for this they'll pay

2. Her False Assurance, verse 7: *'Yet you said, "I will be a queen forever." These things you did not consider Nor remember the outcome of them.'*
 - a. her experience was 'it has never happened to me'
 - b. so her conclusion was, 'it will never happen to me'
 - c. from this it is but a short step to ...

3. Her False Security, verse 8: *'Now, then, hear this, you sensual one, Who dwells securely, Who says in your heart, "I am, and there is no one besides me. I will not sit as a widow, Nor know loss of children."'*
 - a. she is sensual or given to pleasure: this arises from her riches, her imagined safety, her power
 - b. Queen Babylon thinks that she will still be empress, with the kings of the earth courting her; that she will have her children: her citizens and servants

4. Her Godlessness, verse 10a: *'You felt secure in your wickedness and said, "No one sees me," ...'*
 - a. even in the midst of her wickedness, she trusted that she was safe from any reprisal or punishment
 - b. when she says that *'no one sees me'* it wasn't that people did not see all that she did, but that no one saw who could do anything about it

c. it was a godless attitude, a seared conscience that many in the world around us have today: there is no God who can intervene and dispense judgement and punishment; hence,

5. Her Pride, verse 10b: ‘... Your wisdom and your knowledge, they have deluded you; For you have said in your heart, ‘I am, and there is no one besides me.’”

a. that describes Babylon; doesn’t it describe our world, too?

b. the words she utters are the words that only Yahweh, the one true God can utter: the ultimate in pride, the worship of self, the religion of humanism; thus we see that ...

6. The judicial case against Queen Babylon, enemy of the people of God, is complete; and she is found guilty

E. Queen Babylon Faces Certain Judgement 47:9, 11-15

1. It Will Be Sudden and Unexpected, verse 9a, 11b: ‘But these two things will come on you suddenly in one day: ... 11b ... And destruction about which you do not know (or, of which you are unaware) Will come on you suddenly.’

a. in one day – they spent that evening revelling until the hand wrote the words on the wall: numbered; weighed in the balances and found wanting; kingdom divided

b. and the Chaldean king was slain that night; suddenly

2. It Will Be in Kind, verse 9b: ‘... Loss of children and widowhood. They will come on you in full measure ...’

a. the cruelty that Babylon meted out to the nations that it conquered, as exemplified by their treatment of the aged men of Judah, will be likewise suffered from others

b. the justice of God will out – the wrongs done to others will be righted when God’s judgement falls

c. and that judgement will be complete – as Longfellow translated a poem by Friedrich von Logau, ‘Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small; Though with patience He stands waiting, with exactness grinds He all.’

3. It Will Not Be Preventable, verse 9d, 11a: ‘... In spite of your many sorceries, In spite of the great power of your spells. ... 11a But evil will come on you Which you will not know how to charm away; And disaster will fall on you For which you cannot atone; ...’

- a. Daniel shows that Babylon was known for its magicians
- b. but they were helpless to answer Nebuchadnezzar's question about his dream
- c. they will be helpless against Cyrus and God's use of him
- d. Isaiah then enlarges on this truth: '12 Stand fast now in your spells And in your many sorceries With which you have laboured from your youth; Perhaps you will be able to profit, Perhaps you may cause trembling. 13 You are wearied with your many counsels; Let now the astrologers, Those who prophesy by the stars, Those who predict by the new moons, Stand up and save you from what will come upon you. 14 Behold, they have become like stubble, Fire burns them; They cannot deliver themselves from the power of the flame; There will be no coal to warm by Nor a fire to sit before! 15 So have those become to you with whom you have laboured, Who have trafficked with you from your youth; Each has wandered in his own way; There is none to save you.'

4. The judgement that will fall on Queen Babylon, enemy of the people of God is certain; just as it is certain to fall upon Satan, the enemy of God, and upon all those who follow him.

F. Conclusion

1. think: how God describes the city of Babylon
 - a. in her attitude and in her actions
 - b. as well as in her judgement
 - (A) in its severity
 - (B) and in its certainty: though they were spoken of God's judgement against Judah, yet Habakkuk's words apply equally well to Babylon: "For the vision is yet for the appointed time; It hastens toward the goal and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; For it will certainly come, it will not delay." (Habakkuk 2:3)
2. is a description of the unbelieving world in which we live ('Mystic Babylon')
 - a. in its attitude and in its actions
 - b. and in its ultimate judgement
 - (A) both the severity of God's wrath upon it
 - (B) as well as its certainty, though man scoffs at it as Peter prophesies: '3 Know this first of all, that

in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, 4 and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation." ... 9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. 10a But the day of the Lord will come ...' (2 Peter 3:3-4, 9-10a)

3. small wonder, then that
 - a. the writer of Hebrews says, 'how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? ...' (Hebrews 2:3 NAS)
 - b. & Paul quotes Isaiah 49:8, 'for He says, "at the acceptable time I listened to you, and on the day of salvation I helped you"; behold, now is "the acceptable time," behold, now is "the day of salvation"' (2 Corinthians 6:2)
 - c. let us close with a song of praise to our eternal King for this salvation

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ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
ERV	The Revised Version of 1885
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NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
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