

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

**DHW BIBLE CLASS**

**LESSON 47**

**ISAIAH**

**CHAPTER 47**

**Theme:** "Babylon shall Be Destroyed"

**THEME VERSES**

**Isaiah 47:6** (KJV) "I was wroth with my people, I have polluted mine inheritance, and given them into thine hand: thou didst shew them no mercy; upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke."

**INTRODUCTION**

When God sends Gentile nations as His instruments of chastisement on Israel, there is a line drawn where chastisement must not become devastation or destruction. The people of Babylon were God's instruments against Judah just as the Assyrians were against Israel, the Northern Kingdom. Judah was idolatrous and her sins were full. She had to be exiled from the Land of Promise just as the LORD promised He would do if Judah continued in sin. Judah refused to repent of her sins despite the many attempts by the LORD to stop her from sinning. The LORD sent prophets to rebuke Judah but to no avail. The sin of idolatry became worse and worse. The sin of idolatry does not stop at bowing to

idols of gold, silver or wood but a life of superstition and immorality followed.

Babylon was the rod of correction used by the LORD to bring Judah back to the narrow path of truth and righteousness. This included exile. Babylon was sent by God to destroy the cities of Judah culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple built by Solomon. Despite being sent by the LORD to do God's will, Babylon was not given the liberty to exact on Judah all forms of cruelty and devastation. In short, Babylon cannot over punish. If Babylon does, God would punish her too. God can use any nation to do His will and punish that nation in the process after the nation has completed God's will, especially when that nation sinned against God!

The amazing thing about this chapter is that these prophecies were given by God to Isaiah, who ministered during the destruction of Israel and not Judah. Judah would not be destroyed by the Babylonians until the year 586 B.C. nearly one hundred and forty years after the destruction of Israel in 722 B.C. In other words, Judah would know that she would be destroyed in the future by God through the hands of the Babylonians who were only a small and weak nation at this juncture. Babylon was not a super power at all during Isaiah's time. She was just one of many small nations that existed in the Middle East at that time. Yet she would become such a powerful and great empire in the near future.

Why would the nations like Babylon not learn even after God had

prophesied that she would be used as God's instrument of chastisement against Judah and would be punished if she over punished Judah! Why would Judah not learn too after Israel's destruction and prophecies such as revealed by God in this chapter of Isaiah regarding her demise and exile?

### OUTLINE

1. The Price for Showing No Mercy! (vv.1-6);
2. The Price for Haughtiness (vv. 7-10);
3. None Shall Save Babylon! (vv. 11-15).

### COMMENTARY

#### The Price for Showing No Mercy! – 47:1-6

**Verse 1** – The command of the LORD over a Gentile nation like Babylon was to bring her down from her position of exaltation. Note that at this time, the nation of Babylon was not the superpower, the Assyrians were. Babylon will replace Assyria in the near future. However, this prophecy of God to Isaiah was very much in the future. It will be when Babylon is at the height of her superpower status, believing that she is invincible and will rule for eternity. While Babylon is in this state of glory, the LORD declared emphatically by using a series of nine imperatives in the first two verses to this chapter to cut her down.

The LORD began with "come down" and "sit" in the dust. Babylon must come down from her high horse and sit down, not on a throne, but in the dust! Who sits in the dust? The beggars and sick and destitute men like Job would sit in the dust. It is a position of total abject humility to sit in the dust. From the highest position on earth as king of an empire to the lowest place of earth was basically what the LORD declared Babylon must do. There will be no throne for Babylon's kings. They will be soundly defeated and disgraced.

Firstly, the LORD called them "O virgin daughter of Babylon". Then He called them "O daughter of the Chaldeans." Babylon seems to be the new name of the nation whereas Chaldeans is a more localized or tribal name that finds its first occurrences in Genesis 11:28 which states that Abram was called out of Ur of the Chaldees. Perhaps the LORD wanted to highlight the growth and progress of Babylon from a small and insignificant nation to a glorious empire. In the height of her power (as Babylon), she will be humble and sit in dust. As Chaldeans, she was small and longed to sit on thrones in order to become a super power. Her hopes and dreams will come to naught. The terms "virgin" and "daughter" denote symbols of a fine, soft and luxurious life. The words "tender and delicate" confirm this understanding. But the days of fine living and dining will come to an end.

**Verse 2** – Instead, Babylon was commanded by the LORD to take the millstones and grind meal. Such

menial tasks befit slaves, not the delicate and tender Babylonian virgins and daughters. Yet this will be their ignoble end when the LORD punishes. They will be in deep disgrace and shame from living in palaces and being served to doing servile work that only slaves and the beggarly would be found doing!

Next, they were commanded to uncover their locks, which mean that their hair would not be tied up neatly and nicely. Instead, they would look disheveled and untidy. The messy and unkempt disposition reflects the life of mourners or captives. Their legs would be made bare up to their thighs as they pass over rivers. This would imply that they would be shamelessly embarrassed and no longer find themselves crossing rivers on raised chairs or platforms. Such luxury and honours would become a thing of the past. Commoners with no money or harlots are the ones who would raise their garments to expose their legs up to their thighs as they cross rivers. They will receive no help even in their state of shameful humiliation.

**Verse 3** – This will not be done in secret where no one sees but they would be publicly shamed and others would see their nakedness. The LORD will take vengeance. He will avenge those who are His enemies. The sins of these enemies of the LORD will be revealed in later verses. The word "uncovered" means to advertise. The LORD would advertise the nakedness i.e. nudity of the Babylonians. This occurred when the Medo-Persian Empire toppled the Babylonians.

The phrase "I will not meet thee as a man" simply means that the LORD would not come as a weakling or at par with the Babylonians. There will be no peace treaty with the Babylonians. The LORD will come to judge and destroy Babylon and there is nothing any man can do to prevent it from occurring.

**Verse 4** – Isaiah said that Israel's Redeemer i.e. next to kin is The LORD of hosts. This is His Name. He is also called the Holy One of Israel. The concept of kinsmen redeemer is emphasized here. The concept of kinsmen redeemer was instituted by God (see Deuteronomy 25:5-10) to ensure that Israel will not perish because the lineage of Israel is cut off due to the death of the firstborn or the loss of property due to poor management. The line of the many tribes and clans and families in Israel are protected by God to ensure that Israel as a nation does not die so that the Messiah would surely come through Israel.

Therefore the use of the term Redeemer here is to reveal that although Israel or rather Judah would be devastated by Babylon in days to come, she will not be utterly cast down. Her Kinsman would come and redeem her. The Name of this Kinsman is the LORD of hosts. The emphasis is in the covenantal relationship rather than the power of God. God has a personal and covenantal relationship that ensures Israel's survival. This is the basis for the kinsman "redeemership." The Holy One of Israel is mentioned here to let

Babylon know that this is the standard of God that was used to judge His own people which resulted in their rebellion and exile and defeat by the Babylonians. This attribute of God's holiness is the key to rejection and reconciliation between God and man. When man accepts Christ as Lord and Saviour, he is declared holy by God instantaneously by being baptized with the Holy Spirit which is the work of Christ. He will restore Judah back to holiness when the time comes.

**Verse 5** – Using two imperatives here, the daughter of the Chaldeans (as if they were nothing and nobodies by the use of their original name before they became Babylon) was commanded to sit silently and get into darkness i.e. into ignominy, either into prison or shameful mourning. Nothing can protect and prevent this from happening to Babylon. She will rise and she will surely fall.

Babylon will no longer be called "the Lady of kingdoms". Lady is a term of dignity and pompous distinction like a queen in a kingdom. The plural "kingdoms" is not unnoticed as it surely describes the Babylonian Empire, which is made on many nations such as the Assyrians, Egyptians, Israelites, Moabites, Ammonites, etc. These were all captured by Nebuchadnezzar in the days of Daniel, and Ezekiel. Babylon's fame and fortune would come and go, never to rise again. Today, Babylon (present day Iraq) is like any other nation that once shined but it is shining no more as a super power.

**Verse 6** – The reason for Judah's defeat in the hand of the Babylonians is explained here. The reason for the punishment of the LORD upon Babylon is also explained here. In the case of God's people, the LORD was angry with them. Because of this anger, the LORD polluted Israel whom He called His inheritance and gave her into the hand of the Babylonians. The LORD was angry with Judah because of her continuous sins of idolatry resulting in many immoral and sinful acts. Despite the many attempts by the LORD to turn Judah around through the ministries of His prophets, Judah refused to obey. The LORD had to scatter Judah. The instrument He used to scatter Judah was the Babylonians. The LORD used the word "pollution" to describe the destruction of Judah, Jerusalem, the Temple of Solomon as well as the killings of thousands under the hand of the Babylonians.

Due to the LORD's anger with Judah, He handed Judah into the hand of the Babylonians. It was not because of Babylon's power or gods that defeated Judah. It was the LORD who gave Judah to Babylon as a gift! However, in the course of punishing Judah, the Babylonians did not show mercy. The ancient refers to the elderly or aged and infirmed old people in Judah. The Babylonians laid a very heavy yoke on them. The yoke refers to slavery or captivity. It was one thing to take the young and strong men but when they took the old men and made them into slaves, Babylon had overstepped its boundaries. Now the LORD will exact revenge on them for

not showing mercy to these helpless old men. The Babylonians did not allow the old men to die peacefully in the Land.

### **The Price for Haughtiness – 47:7-10**

**Verse 7** – Babylon boasts that she will be a lady forever enjoying her prestigious and luxurious lifestyle. She will be lost in her high opinion of herself as she surrounds herself with her mighty military might and wealth untold. The city of Babylon was known as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was not only vast but enjoyed air-conditioned comfort in the hanging gardens of Babylon in a time when electricity was not yet discovered. The engineering skill of the Babylonian engineers was extraordinary to be able to design and construct such a phenomenal garden for the king to enjoy.

Blinded by these material surroundings, it is no wonder that the conclusion of the LORD is that Babylon would not lay these things to their heart. Neither will they remember how they will end by the mighty hand of God. They will carry on in their evil ways as if the revelations of God had not been given at all.

**Verse 8** – If anyone were to tell the Babylonians about their demise and destruction because the LORD God of Israel had prophesied so, the Babylonians would say, "I am and none else beside me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children." In other words, they would rebuff the prophecies of the LORD. They would not believe or care what the LORD says.

In this verse, the LORD further revealed that he knows what was in their heart even before they were born. He also warned them in this verse to listen to what He has declared concerning their end. Using the imperative in the word "hear", the LORD highlights the urgency of the matter to the wayward Babylonians. They are given to pleasures, which include all sorts of sexual sins including sodomy, fornication and adultery. Gluttony and all sorts of appetites are included in this word "pleasures".

**Verse 9** – Whether or not they acknowledge the prophecies of the LORD, the inevitable that the LORD had prophesied would surely come to pass. The LORD does not need Babylon's permission before He destroys her. Therefore the LORD used the adversative "but" to contrast what He had prophesied and what the Babylonians had chosen to ignore. These two things will come to pass very suddenly and rapidly i.e. in a moment and in one day—the loss of children and widowhood. The children of the Babylon will die or be sent into slavery. The husbands of many Babylonian women would be killed in battle.

Babylon would become so weak that they could not delay or slow down the Medo-Persians when they surrounded and captured Babylon. These two calamities would come upon the Babylonians in its perfection i.e. completeness. There will be no half measures when their children are killed or forcibly taken away from them.

The husbands will die quickly. Not only did the pleasures of this life dull the sense of the hearts of the Babylonians, the spiritual darkness that had snared them will bind them deeper in their sins. These include their sorceries i.e. witchcraft and the great abundance of their enchantments i.e. casting spells. Satan will blind the Babylonians by way of their false gods and prophets and priests. Black magic and spells have been effective means employed by Satan to deceive millions throughout the ages. These are still very successful even in this age of technological advancement.

**Verse 10** – The LORD further charged Babylon for trusting in her wickedness i.e. evil. The wickedness and deceit of sorcery and witchcraft is that one thinks no one sees when they hide their sins and commit wickedness in secret. Hiding one's sin is a deadly exercise that has destroyed many lives and innumerable relationships. Deceiving one into thinking that as long as no man sees my heart or secret sins, I can continue to indulge in them. This is a lie of Satan. Man tends to want other men to think well of them when the only Person whom they ought to regard if He thinks well of them is God.

In her deception, Babylon sincerely believes that they are wise and they are right. But the LORD's retort and condemnation against them is that their wisdom and knowledge have perverted them i.e. led them away enticingly. This evidence is that Babylon will bear the fruit of their belief i.e. they will say in their heart, "I am

and none else beside me" such haughtiness must be brought down by the LORD. The worship of idols will bear the fruit of haughtiness.

### **None Shall Save Babylon!**

**– 47:11-15**

**Verse 11** – For all the reasons mentioned above, evil shall come upon Babylon. Babylon will not be able to stop the destruction that the LORD had prophesied would surely befall her. Babylon will not know from when it will rise up. Babylon was a large city. When the Persians invaded her, Aristotle said that some parts of Babylon were not even aware that the Persians have entered and destroyed part of her.

Mischief i.e. ruin shall fall upon her and Babylon will not be able to put it off i.e. appease. There is nothing Babylon can do and no payment of any tribute will prevent this ruin from occurring. Desolation i.e. wasteness will come upon Babylon suddenly which she will not know. When the Medo-Persians surrounded Babylon, the king was feasting inside foolishly believing that he and his kingdom were still safe. Destruction came upon Babylon very quickly.

**Verse 12** – The LORD challenged Babylon with a little sense of sarcasm calling on Babylon to stand now with her enchantments and the multitude of her sorceries. Babylon had been standing with them since her youth if she thinks that she can profit from it and if she thinks that she can prevail over her enemies with them. Following the LORD cannot be forced or done at gunpoint! Obedience and

accepting Christ as Lord and Saviour has to be from the heart and not from some external enticement or threat.

The LORD wants Babylon to see and understand the futility of following idols because these idols can never help Babylon stop her enemies from destroying her. Babylon will not profit at all from these idols. They have eyes that are completely blind. They have ears that are totally deaf. They have hands that are paralyzed since the beginning of its creation. They have feet that are dead as stones and will never be able to walk. How can such useless objects help Babylon! But Babylon must experience it herself before she learns her lessons and turn from her foolishness.

**Verse 13** – Babylon is tired i.e. made disgusted by the many voices from her so called advisers. They gave all kinds of counsel. These included the astrologers (i.e. read horoscopes through the heavens), the stargazers (i.e. tell fortune by aligning the stars), and the monthly prognosticators (i.e. giver of knowledge based upon the months such as which month is good for what and so on). The LORD called on Babylon to cry to these "counselors" to stand up and save her from these prophecies that the LORD had declared!

These "counselors" are like their idols that they worship and consult. They are dead like them. They are blind and deaf like the idols they call gods. Tell them to stand up and help the Babylonians!

**Verse 14** – These "counselors" are like stubble i.e. dry straw very

easily burned up. The fire shall burn them like stubble. Stubble has no resistance against the flames. The moment the flame comes into contact with them, they burn immediately. If the heat of the fire is strong enough, the stubble might catch fire even before any contact with the flame. This is how useless these counselors are.

They shall have no power at all to deliver themselves from the power of the flame. The flame of the stubble is quick and useless to lit coals. It will not keep any fire burning and give heat to benefit anyone. The LORD said that these "counselors" are like the stubble that will be destroyed themselves. Their advice will not help at all and will not bring any comfort. It is utterly useless and will not be able to prevent the prophecies from coming to pass. Babylon will surely be destroyed as prophesied.

**Verse 15** – These counselors are like the stubble to Babylon. Babylon had paid them as they assembled in Babylon supposedly to help and guide Babylon, but they are useless to help. Babylon had paid them and many have come into Babylon to make a living from their trade. If they cannot even help themselves, how can they help Babylon! Those that are not killed will wander back to their own quarters. No one will come to save Babylon. Babylon is doomed for destruction if the LORD of hosts of Israel has sanctioned it to be so.

Isaiah was preaching more to Judah than to Babylon. Judah was given the Word of God. Judah also

bowed to idols. Israel was destroyed because of it. Judah must not repeat the same folly of her northern neighbour. Sadly, Judah did not listen and Babylon had to come and destroy her and remove her from the land. Amen.

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**DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**Daily Readings**

**MONDAY:** Isaiah 47:1-6

**TUESDAY:** Isaiah 47:1-10

**WEDNESDAY:** Isaiah 47:1-15

**THURSDAY:** Isaiah 47:1-15

**FRIDAY:** Isaiah 47:1-15

3. What are the three elements that make a nation? Can we say that Israel was a Christian nation? Can we say that America was or is a Christian nation? Please explain.

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**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Do you think that Singapore will continue her fine dining and living? Do you think that CPBPC or any sound local church would continue in her spiritual "fine dining and living"? Is there such a thing as "spiritual fine dining and living"?

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4. Is it true to say that every nation is given a time to shine like the sun for a moment and then fall into ignominy never to rise again, except Israel? Please elaborate.

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2. Is taking vengeance sinful and wrong? Please explain.



5. Will America be different from past superpowers and will not fall like the past superpowers including Great Britain? Please explain.

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6. What is it that prevents sinful men from turning to God and stop sinning against Him? Can we reason that since the LORD had prophesied that Babylon would be punished by God for their cruelty against God's people, they have no choice but to obey and be punished in the end? Please explain.

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8. Do you think that the Charismatics who preach that believing in Christ means that one would never fall ill and will always be rich are sincere and teach this from their hearts? Do you believe that those who teach that there are mistakes in the Bible are sincere and that they are on God's side and doing God's will? Do you think that those who teach evolution or theistic evolution are sincere and that man really evolved over billions of years? What is your take on these?

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7. Are you conscious of the principalities that confront you daily? What evidence have you shown to demonstrate that you are conscious of the spiritual warfare that you are in constantly? How do you defeat Satan?

9. Are you a haughty person?

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10. What lessons have you learnt from this chapter about God's Word and about yourself?

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