

# *The Millennium Forecast*

*The Book of Isaiah*

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Text

Isaiah 47:1-15

Topic

Babylon calls herself "The Lady of Kingdoms," but Isaiah predicted they would be conquered and their "nakedness uncovered"

Title

**"My Bare Lady"**

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## **"Is there hope for America?"**

Here are three responses from experts:

#1 "It is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favors."

#2 "The God who gave us life gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the gift of God?"

#3 "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."

The experts, in order, were George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams.

## **So... How are we doing as a nation?**

*It's like the Days of Noah out there! Weird marriages... a near total disrespect for biblical morality... seemingly unrestrained violence everywhere.*

One thing that we have discovered as we've studied Isaiah is that God deals with nations, not just individuals. It has given us opportunity to talk about our own nation in the plans and purposes of God. And yes, we are in trouble.

Isaiah predicts the demise of the Kingdom of Babylon. He does so with a poignant illustration. He starts off calling her "O virgin daughter of Babylon." But He quickly adds, "Take the millstones and grind meal. Remove your veil, Take off the skirt, Uncover the thigh, Pass through the rivers. Your nakedness shall be uncovered, Yes, your shame will be seen."

Human history is littered with conquered empires. In every case, though we may not know the details, it is in accordance with God's plan that redemption for everyone would come through the nation of Israel.

Before we ever answer the question, "Is there hope for America?" there are two preliminary questions. I'll organize my comments around them. **#1 Are We A Daughter That Comes To Dust?** and **#2 Are We Daughters Who Consort With Devils?**

### **#1 - Are We A Daughter That Comes To Dust? (v1-8)**

"Don't think of it as dust. Think of it as the soil of some great past civilization. Maybe the soil of ancient Babylon. It staggers the imagination." Pigpen says that in the timeless classic, *A Charlie Brown Christmas*.

Our text explains the "dust" of Babylon.

Isa 47:1 "Come down and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon; Sit on the ground without a throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans! For you shall no more be called Tender and delicate.

The "Chaldeans" were an aggressive people-group in Babylon. Over time their name came to be synonymous with Babylon.

When the Bible refers to a "daughter," singular, she represents the entire nation. "Daughters," plural, refers to individual citizens (both male & female).

**God was about to bring them to dust; from *virginal* to *violated*.**

Isa 47:2 Take the millstones and grind meal. Remove your veil, Take off the skirt, Uncover the thigh, Pass through the rivers.

Isa 47:3 Your nakedness shall be uncovered, Yes, your shame will be seen; I will take vengeance, And I will not arbitrate with a man."

Babylon would be conquered and instead of the tender virgin they would become common slaves.

God "will not arbitrate" means that this judgment was final. Once it began, He wouldn't relent.

Yes, God is the God of second chances. We sometimes say, "It is never too late to come to Jesus and be saved." We see this in God's dealings with the Assyrian Empire. God relented when Nineveh repented!

At times it becomes too late. You cannot be saved after you die, for example.

One commentator writes, *"Our Creator blesses each nation with a span of time so it might prosper and do well, but this blessing ends when a nation becomes degenerate, rebellious, and unfit for self-rule. When God determines that extended mercy for a nation has no redeeming effect, He marginalizes or destroys that nation."*

Isa 47:4 *As for our Redeemer, the LORD of hosts is His name, The Holy One of Israel.*

The Jews would be taken captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. They would be slaves in his realm. Slaves need to be redeemed. They need someone to purchase them and set them free.

Their slave-status in Babylon lasted 70 years. With help from the new reigning world empire, Medo-Persia, the Jews would return to Jerusalem to rebuild its walls and its Temple.

Isa 47:5 "Sit in silence, and go into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans; For you shall no longer be called The Lady of Kingdoms.

Albert Barnes commented, *"The appellation, 'Lady of kingdoms' is equivalent to... 'the mistress of the world;' and the idea is, that Babylon [was the] mistress, and that all other cities were regarded as servants, or as subordinate."*

Isa 47:6 I was angry with My people; I have profaned My inheritance, And given them into your hand. You showed them no mercy; On the elderly you laid your yoke very heavily.

The LORD gets angry. I don't think we can comprehend His anger until we, too, are in glorified bodies that cannot sin.

God decided to ruin (profane) Jerusalem and the Temple - a truly big deal to Him. He *must* secure the repentance of His chosen people.

There is a pretty common TV & movie trope in which the antagonist tells one of his stooges to teach someone a lesson. The stooge then kills the person, much to the disliking of his boss. He didn't mean for him to kill the guy.

Babylon was the stooge who went too far disciplining the Jews for the LORD. The Chaldeans showed them no mercy. For an example the LORD accused them of elder abuse.

Before the defense of Helm's Deep Aragorn stirred the forces of Rohan by shouting, "Show them no mercy, for you shall receive none."

Isa 47:7 And you said, 'I shall be a lady forever,' So that you did not take these *things* to heart, Nor remember the latter end of them.

Joseph Benson reminds us of the sheer fortitude of the city:

*If we consider that the city of Babylon had no less than one hundred gates made of solid brass; that its walls were two hundred feet high, and fifty broad, according to the lowest account given of them by historians, and, according to some, three hundred and fifty feet in height, and eighty-seven in thickness, so that six chariots could go abreast upon them; that it was defended by the river Euphrates, and supplied with provisions for many years; it might well be deemed impregnable: and such a city as this might, with less vanity than any other, boast that she should continue forever, if any thing human could continue forever.*

To give you a little perspective, the Statue of Liberty is 305' tall. The Persians devised a plan whereby they diverted the course of the Euphrates River so that they could go in *under* the wall. While the residents of the city were distracted, i.e., *drunk*, the Persian

army marched under the walls of Babylon unnoticed. It was claimed the city was taken without a fight.

### **I think the LORD gave them this strategy.**

You know who else has strategies? The Devil. He wants to work them on you. The fall of Babylon can be a lesson for us. The lesson isn't "Don't drink," although that's not such a bad idea. The lesson is, "Don't do anything that makes you vulnerable."

*Get your guard up and keep it up!!* There will *never* be a time in your life that you can escape spiritual warfare. There are no furloughs, not even bereavement leave. The devil is a psychopathic liar and murderer. He will pile-on in the worst of times.

Isa 47:8 "Therefore hear this now, *you who are given to pleasures, Who dwell securely, Who say in your heart, 'I am, and there is no one else besides me; I shall not sit as a widow, Nor shall I know the loss of children'*

Verse eight captures the general opinion of Babylon's population. They believed themselves invulnerable and possessing wisdom superior to that of any other culture.

King Nebuchadnezzar set the tone. One fine day he said, "*Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?"*

While the word *was still* in the king's mouth, a voice fell from heaven: "King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoke: the kingdom has departed from you! And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling *shall be* with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses" (Daniel 4:31-32).

His humbling resulted in his conversion as per chapter four of Daniel.

**T**he illustration God uses, the "virgin daughter," is how the Babylonians thought of themselves. It's nothing new for people to think highly, but wrongly, of themselves. In the Book of the Revelation we see this in the church of the Laodiceans. The gap between how they saw themselves and how Jesus saw them was a Grand Canyon. If you think they are not a good comparison because they were not saved, substitute the church at Ephesus. With everything they had going on there's no way they thought of themselves as having left their first love.

There is no "how to" here, no *Humility for Dummies*. Jesus spoke to the Laodiceans and the Ephesians directly by his Word. We assume that some received it, and that some did not. From studying the men and women in the Bible, and godly men and women throughout the church age, it seems to come down to this. Like the apostle Paul you should be able to declare that you are the chief of sinners (First Timothy 1:15). Simultaneously you praise God's amazing grace in your life. The result ought to be joy unspeakable and full of glory.

## **#2 - Are We Daughters Who Consort With Devils? (v9-15)**

The remaining verses emphasize the occult. Mentioned are "sorceries" (2x), "enchantments" (also 2x), "astrologers," "stargazers," and "prognosticators."

Babylon depended heavily on the "wisdom," "knowledge," and "counsels" of the occult. Aren't you glad we don't do that in America?

I wish that were true. By all metrics, the occult and occult practices are on the rise:

- According to a survey conducted in 2021, about two in ten Americans believe in spells or witchcraft.
- In an October 2022 article, nbcnews commented, "Witchcraft, which includes Wicca, paganism, folk magic and other New Age traditions, is one of the fastest-growing spiritual paths in America."
- In 2018 NBC posted an article titled, *Number Of Witches Rises Dramatically Across US As Millennials Reject Christianity*.

Isa 47:9 But these two *things* shall come to you In a moment, in one day: The loss of children, and widowhood. They shall come upon you in their fullness Because of the multitude of your sorceries, For the great abundance of your enchantments.

I should mention that their astronomy was considered by some more like science. After all, the Persian Magi correctly identified the star that (somehow) led them to find and worship "He who would be born as King of the Jews."

Church father Origen<sup>1</sup>, stated that the Magi had a copy of the prophecy of Balaam (found in Numbers 24) about the star coming out of Jacob. It was revealed to them by

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<sup>1</sup> Against Celsus 1:60

Daniel. Tertullian, circa AD 190-210, stated<sup>2</sup> that astrology is idolatry, but he believed that the science of the Magi was totally different from the pagan form of astrology.

Isa 47:10 "For you have trusted in your wickedness; You have said, 'No one sees me'; Your wisdom and your knowledge have warped you; And you have said in your heart, 'I am, and *there is* no one else besides me.'

God calls their occult "wisdom and knowledge"- "wickedness." A side-effect of their practices was it "warped" them into thinking they were like God. They "said in [their] heart, I am." They had the "I" trouble that led to Satan's rebellion and fall.

Add to that they said, "No one sees me." This likely refers to them thinking that, since they were like God there was no deity who could judge them.

Isa 47:11 Therefore evil shall come upon you; You shall not know from where it arises. And trouble shall fall upon you; You will not be able to put it off. And desolation shall come upon you suddenly, *Which* you shall not know.

Daniel describes the feast which took place on the night Babylon fell. We explained how King Cyrus took Babylon effortlessly.

The chapter ends with obvious sarcasm. The LORD shows how pitiful was their wisdom and knowledge compared to His omniscience; how puny was their might compared to His omnipotence; how precious was and is His omnipresence compared to their magicians being as vulnerable as stubble is to flame.

There is one more 'omni' that isn't listed. God is omnibenevolent, meaning perfectly & powerfully good. It may not have seemed that way to the Chaldeans, but they had opportunity to obey Him and know His goodness. The choice was theirs.

Isa 47:12 "Stand now with your enchantments And the multitude of your sorceries, In which you have labored from your youth - Perhaps you will be able to profit, Perhaps you will prevail.

Isa 47:13 You are wearied in the multitude of your counsels; Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, *And* the monthly prognosticators Stand up and save you From what shall come upon you.

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<sup>2</sup> Idolatry 1.9

Isa 47:14 Behold, they shall be as stubble, The fire shall burn them; They shall not deliver themselves From the power of the flame; *It shall not be* a coal to be warmed by, *Nor* a fire to sit before!

Isa 47:15 Thus shall they be to you With whom you have labored, Your merchants from your youth; They shall wander each one to his quarter. No one shall save you.

Interesting, this reference to “merchants.” We are made aware in the Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ that there will be a Babylon in the Last Days. It will be the capital of the Earth ruled by the antichrist.

We read, “The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.’ And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore” (18:9-11).

I doubt you get together with friends and break-out a Ouija (WEE-je) Board. Somebody is; or I should say 25m somebodies (based on sales).

Just because we’re not conducting pagan rituals it doesn’t mean there might not be some things that we would be better off avoiding. After all, the world around us is a spiritual Babylon.

**W**ill some future Pigpen say, “Don’t think of it as dust. Think of it as the soil of some great past civilization. Maybe the soil of ancient America.”

We can ask one additional ‘expert,’ Abraham Lincoln:

*We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving Grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us!*

I want to take a bi-partisan approach here. You pick the slogan that best aligns with your vote:



- We need to *Build Back Spiritually*.
- We need to *Make America Repent Again*.

In the end we will agree that the nation of Israel is, for lack of a better word, the greatest nation ever. Of the myriads of reasons we could cite, I like what the apostle Paul said. Speaking of ethnic Jews in chapter nine of the Book of Romans he describes Israel as "to whom *pertain* the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service *of God*, and the promises; of whom *are* the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ *came*, who is over all, *the* eternally blessed God. Amen."

Simply put, the Savior of the world was born through the nation of Israel. Can anything be greater?

Every other nation is thereby called to a support role in furthering God's plan and in anticipating His rule.