

“GO FORTH FROM BABYLON!”

Isaiah 46-48

Introduction

- 1) The **Babylonian Empire** began with the fall of Nineveh and the Assyrian Empire in 612 BC
- 2) It lasted until the city of Babylon fell to the Persians and Medes in 539 BC
- 3) Judah and Jerusalem began to fall to the Babylonians in 605 BC and the captivity began
- 4) A proclamation was already spoken against Babylon (Isa. 13) but more is now said concerning its idolatry and coming judgment from God – the remnant will be able to go forth from Babylon!

I) Dead Idols and the Living God (46:1-13)

- A) Contrast between useless gods of the Babylonians and the power of the true God (vv. 1-4)
 - 1) **Bel** – “lord”; title given to Babylonian god Marduk, chief god of Babylonian pantheon
 - 2) **Nebo** – “interpreter”; worshiped as the son of Marduk
 - 3) Babylonian gods could not carry their people but were a burden themselves, while the God of Israel carried and delivered His people from birth to old age
- B) How can the true God be likened to dead idols which are made of precious metal, carried about, and that cannot answer or save the one worshiping it (vv. 5-7)
- C) God reveals the end from the beginning, future things not yet done; what He speaks and purposes He does – a contrast to the dead idols of men (vv. 8-11)
- D) God will bring His righteousness near and place His salvation in Zion for Israel – the stubborn-hearted need to heed! (vv. 12-13) – fulfilled in the remnant, then in the Messiah

II) The Humiliation and Destruction of Babylon (47:1-15)

- A) The divine humiliation of Babylon (personified as a woman)
 - 1) Told to come down to sit in the dust (no more throne) and grind meal at the millstone (no more privileged living) (vv. 1-2a)
 - 2) Told to remove veil and uncover nakedness (reveal leg/thigh) – shamed before all (v. 2b-3a)
 - 3) Vengeance of the Lord of hosts on ungodly Babylon (vv. 3b-4)
- B) Babylon will no more be called “The Lady of Kingdoms” (v. 5)
 - 1) God was angry with His people and gave them into Babylon’s hands, but Babylon arrogantly showed them no mercy (vv. 6-7)
- C) Babylon told that sudden tragedy will come (vv. 8-11)
 - 1) Loss of children and widowhood in “one day” (cf. Rev. 18:7-8)
 - 2) Will come because of her pride, arrogance, false security, and wickedness
 - 3) Will not be able to know when or where it will come and will not be able to prevent it
- D) The enchantments and sorceries of Babylon will fail (vv. 12-15)
 - 1) Wearied in consulting astrologers, stargazers, and prognosticators (cf. Dan. 2:2, 27; 5:7)
 - 2) These vain things will be destroyed and no one will be able to save Babylon

III) Israel’s Sin and God’s Chastening (48:1-8)

- A) Jacob/Israel claimed to be with God, but not in truth or righteousness – hypocrisy! (vv. 1-2)
- B) Because of their stiff necks and hard heads, God had spoken to them of unknown things before they came to pass – divine prophecy (vv. 3-8)
 - 1) “New, hidden things” – prophecy of the deliverance from captivity by Cyrus (44:28-45:1)
 - 2) God told them of these future things to prevent them from giving their idols credit for what God would do
- C) Their sin and stubbornness were deeply entrenched even though God showed them what would happen beforehand (vv. 6-8)

IV) The Refinement and Redemption of Israel (48:9-22)

- A) God delayed His anger for His “name’s sake” – would not cut them off completely (v. 9)
 - 1) Refined and tested them in the “furnace of affliction” for His own sake (vv. 10-11)
 - a) Served to punish the wicked nation and purify the righteous remnant
 - 2) God’s plan and purpose will be accomplished and fulfilled despite man’s failures!
- B) God is divinely powerful and able – He will be against Babylon (vv. 12-15)
- C) Had Israel heeded God’s commandments, chastening would not have been needed (vv. 16-19)
- D) “Go forth from Babylon!” – a call to the redeemed, faithful remnant (v. 20)
 - 1) Blessings will await the faithful, but there is no peace for the wicked (vv. 21-22)
 - a) Language reminiscent of the Exodus from Egypt and wilderness wanderings

Conclusion

There may be times necessary for God’s chastening, and it is for the good of God’s people. The refinement that comes through the fire of testing will either burn up the stubble of little faith or reveal the pure nature of strong faith. Only in Christ can we now come forth from the captivity of sin to be made free!