

Review

One of the things that really fascinates me about Bible study is that when you take the time to learn where places are, you find out that there are modern cities and countries being spoken of with ancient names.

For example, when you read aboutu Babylon, Assyria, Nineveh, Ur of the Chaldeans, and the River Euphrates, these are all located in moder-day Iraq.

Tonight, we'll be talking about the city of Babylon - about both its past and future.

At the end of Isaiah chapter 44, and through chapter 45, God had foretold of a man named Cyrus. God would raise this man up as His shepherd, who would deliver the Jews out of their 70-year captivity in Babylon. Cyrus would be powerful, a man who would conquer nations and kings.

Now, as we pick up in chapter 46, God continues on the subject, talking specifically about the fall of the Babylonian Empire.

46:1-2 Bel And Nebo Defeated

Bel (Bale) and Nebo (Neb-O) were Babylonian deities. In the Babylonian's language, Bel meant "Lord." He was the chief god. Nebo, meaning "prophet," was the god of learning and education.

God says to the Israelites, "The Babylonians' chief god is bowing down, kneeling before Me. I have brought him low. Nebo stoops down before My superior knowledge. All these idols are is a burden for you and your pack animals to carry around. They are a burden, and can't rescue your burden. You will walk into captivity, but they have to be carried with you into captivity."

46:3-4 I Will Bear You

God tells the Jews, "You're carrying these idols around, but I've been carrying you." I have and will continue to bear you. And when your time is up in Babylon, I will deliver you out of there, too."

46:5-6 To Whom Would You Liken Me?

God again tells the Israelites how inconceivable it is that they would liken a carved or molded image to God Himself! If you make a god that looks like a cross between a lion and an eagle, is your god so small that he is like two dumb animals? Does gold make the god better?

46:7 They Lift It

Idols have to be carried. And if you want to bow down before it at the altar, someone has to set it on the altar. So what good is it going to do to cry to it? It can't answer!

46:8-11 There Is No Other God

God is the only God. Even though thousands - even millions - of idols have been created by human beings throughout history, God is still the only God.

Again, the Lord points out that fulfilled prophecy is the proof of His deity. He has declared the end from the beginning.

But not only has He foretold the future, but He says that the future is His purpose. The future is planned for His good pleasure! Even the kingdoms which arise are God's plan and purpose. Like Cyrus who would come like a bird of prey from the east, and conquer Babylon. Cyrus wouldn't know God at that time, but would still be accomplishing God's good pleasure.

Take refuge in that fact. Even the most unrighteous decisions that get made, and the most ungodly things that seem to happen are all working towards God's plan.

Rom. 8:28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

If it's part of God's good plan, it will happen.

46:12-13 Listen To Me You Stubborn-Minded

God is going to accomplish everything He's promised to do. And He's promised to bring near His righteousness. The Lord tells those who are too stubborn to walk in righteousness, "Do you think it's not going to

happen? It will! I'm bringing it soon!"

47:1-3 The Virgin Daughter Of Babylon

Babylon was a very proud empire. But God was going to bring them down into humility. He describes Babylon as a young woman who will be brought low.

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.

Babylon would not be called the queen of kingdoms any longer.

47:4-11 The Queen Who Will Fall

Now the analogy switches from a virgin daughter of Babylon to the queen of kingdoms. This is not simply a small change, for it projects us from the future events that would take place two hundred years from Isaiah's day and then to more than 2,500 years beyond that. Isaiah is writing of the day that is yet future even to us, when Babylon will fall for good.

But is Babylon even around anymore to fall? In 1978, Saddam Hussein, who referred to himself often as "the new Nebuchadnezzar," took on the project of rebuilding Babylon. His intention was to restore it to its former glory. About 56 miles south of Baghdad, it can be visited today. You can see the palaces of King Nebuchadnezzar II, a Ziggurat, and the Ishtar Gate, among other things.

But Babylon will not remain a simple tourist attraction. In the future, it will become the financial center of the world. It may be so close that the United States' efforts to rebuild Iraq may lay the very foundations of this transition.

But after it once again becomes a great city, it will be destroyed beyond recognition, in a way that it has never fallen in history.

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 Isa-

iah 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.

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 Rev-

elation 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.'

47:12-15 Many Sorceries

Babylon is personified as a woman with astrology, spells, and sorceries, having labored in them since her youth. This becomes understandable when you see the beginning of Babylon, which was Nimrod's kingdom at Babel. Genesis 10 and 11 describes that era, when men turned to the false gods of astrology, divination, and idolatry. Every false religious system ever created by man had its beginnings back in Babylon. That's why she is called "the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth" (Rev. 17:5).

In these verses of Isaiah, God tells her to stand fast in her spells and sorceries. To let her astrologers try and save her from God's judgment being poured out. They won't even be able to deliver themselves. No one will be able to save Babylon on that day.