

# ***FPFWC Christian Development***



## **God Delivers and Restores**

June 2022

Summer Quarter

**June 4, 2022**

## **Lesson #1 –God Foretells Destruction**

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Isaiah 47:10-15

### **ICE BREAKER –**

- 1. How do you guard against putting your confidence in anything or anyone other than the Lord?*
- 2. How can you encourage others to seek God, rather than to look to other sources for help?*
- 3. What actions will help you as you wait on the Lord's time?*

***Key Verse - Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast laboured, even thy merchants, from thy youth: they shall wander every one to his quarter; none shall save thee.—Isaiah 47:15***

### **LESSON BACKGROUND**

The prophet Isaiah had a lengthy ministry in Judah. (The books of Isaiah and 2 Kings contain most of the information we have about the prophet Isaiah.) Isaiah 1:1 places that ministry in the days of “Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.” The first dated event is the death of Uzziah (also called Azariah; 2 Kings 15:1, 6–8, 17, 23, 27) in about 739 BC (Isaiah 6:1), the same year Isaiah received his call (see time line to the right). The final dated event is the death of King Sennacherib of Assyria, who died in 681 BC (37:38).

Isaiah had the most direct association with two kings of Judah: Ahaz (Isaiah 7:1–17) and Hezekiah (2 Kings 19–20; Isaiah 38). Isaiah seems to have had free access to the palace. This has caused some to think that he may have been a member of the royal family.

Judah experienced great changes politically, economically, militarily, and spiritually during Isaiah's prophetic ministry. Uzziah in Judah and his contemporary Jeroboam II in Israel did well militarily. The land area under the control of the two nations was similar to what it had been in the days of David and Solomon (2 Kings 14:28).

Jotham succeeded Uzziah as king of Judah and became mighty because of his good life before the Lord. But the people were corrupt spiritually (2 Chronicles 27:1–2). Ahaz followed Jotham on the throne and became the spiritual opposite of his father. Ahaz even practiced child sacrifice (2 Kings 16:3). Ahaz and Judah were attacked by Israel, and Judah suffered greatly.

Hezekiah eventually succeeded Ahaz, and Hezekiah was a faithful follower of the Lord. Judah prospered at first, but then was devastated militarily by a king of Assyria, Sennacherib (2 Kings 18:13–16). The exile that had befallen northern Israel in 722 BC was also to befall Judah, but not at the hands of the Assyrians.

## Lesson Context: Isaiah and the Future

Isaiah 39:5–6 predicts a captivity in Babylon. (Isaiah 36–39 runs parallel to 2 Kings 18:13–20:19.) Isaiah wrote as though Babylon had already conquered Judah, but his prophecies predated Babylon's existence as an empire by about 150 years!

At the time Isaiah wrote, Babylon was a major city in the Assyrian Empire. Babylon rebelled between 700–689 BC in an attempt to overthrow Assyria, which destroyed the city in retaliation. Even so, the Babylonians ultimately destroyed and replaced the Assyrians. A key event was the destruction of Nineveh, Assyria's capital city, in 612 BC.

God had at least two plans for the Babylonian Empire: to bring about the end of the Assyrian Empire and to punish the people of Judah because of their idolatry (2 Chronicles 24:18; Isaiah 10:3–19; etc.). Babylon would take Judah into captivity in waves. This began in 598 BC (2 Kings 24:10–16) and culminated with the destruction of Jerusalem and its aftermath in 586 BC (2 Kings 25).

### LESSON COMMENTARY

Having given the reasons for Babylon's downfall, the prophet describes the specifics of God's judgment against her. Babylon did not weigh the consequences of their actions, so they will now experience the results of treating Israel harshly. God tells Babylon, the **sensual one**, to listen. He mocks Babylon's delusion of security, treating them like any other nation. Despite Babylon's boasting to the contrary, the nation will gain widows and lose children in a single day (vv. 8–9). The magical resources so crucial to the Babylonian religion will prove useless. Smith describes the various magical practices as occurring in conjunction with divination, or the attempt to determine the future (Smith, *Isaiah* 40–66, 306). Young notes, "The certainty of the coming calamities cannot be denied. Though there is an abundance (possibly referring to inherent strength) of magic and a vast array of spells, these cannot help, for the coming will be strong" (Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 3:238–239).

Rather than trusting God, Babylon has trusted in its own wicked practices (v. 10). These practices likely include the **sorceries** mentioned in v. 9, as well as the oppression of God's people and the harsh practices associated with Babylon's rule. Koole suggests that the wickedness is related to Babylon's arrogance described in vv. 6–8, noting the quotation of v. 8—**I am, and there is no one besides me**—in v. 10 (Jan L. Koole, *Isaiah III* [Leuven: Peeters, 1998], 540). The assumption that **no one sees me** (v. 10) does not necessarily suggest that the Babylonians believed that their activities would never be noticed, but that no one existed who could judge those activities. Yet again, Babylon wrongly asserts its sovereignty. Babylon's folly is rooted in its inability to recognize that its wisdom and knowledge are actually foolishness. The nation believed itself to be unique, incomparable, and eternal, but such thoughts are deceptive. They cultivated arrogance and blinded Babylon to the coming destruction (v. 11).

Babylon is challenged, with a fair bit of irony, to continue its worthless pagan and occult practices so that, perhaps, one day those practices will become effective (v. 12). Oswalt notes, "The city that has made itself the equal of God has

no alternative—it must trust its vaunted intelligence, there is nothing else. It has invested too much hard, exhausting labor for too many years ... to abandon the effort now” (Oswalt, *Isaiah 40–66*, 253). The challenge to maintain its current course “seems to mock or taunt the Babylonian effort to try to avert God’s judgment” (Smith, *Isaiah 40–66*, 308).

The **many counsels** referred to in v. 13 likely come from inside Babylon. It may refer to the continued activities related to the Babylonian cult as suggested by Young (Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 3:242). This counsel has resulted in nothing but expended energy. Mistaking foolishness for wisdom is not unique to Babylon, but is a deception to which others have also fallen prey (cf. Is 5:18–19; 8:10; 16:3; 19:3, 11; 23:8–9; 29:15; 30:1; 32:7–8; 36:5; 40:13–14; 41:28; 44:26; 45:21). The Babylonians are called to trust in **the astrologers ... who predict by the new moons** for salvation (v. 13).

This message to the Babylonians was given for the benefit of the nation of Israel. It also appears to reinforce the previous discourses related to idolatry. Israel should not believe that the Babylonians’ cultic efforts will deliver this vicious nation. Instead, Israel must again recognize that their God will come in vengeance. This vengeance is described in v. 14 as an all-consuming **fire** from which Babylon’s religious officials will not even be able to deliver themselves. Instead, the magicians of Babylon will fuel the fire (cf. 30:30; 31:9; 33:14; 66:16, 24).

The mention of the **coal** at the end of v. 14 likely refers back to the discourse concerning idol makers in 44:15–19. In that passage the idol maker uses part of his wood to construct his idol and the other part to build a fire. In Is 47:14, however, there are no coals to warm food because the material that is burning is so worthless that it cannot even be used to bake bread. **Stubble**, which represents the Babylonian astrologers and magicians, has less use than the wood used to build false idols. In the end, the only gift that the religious men of Babylon will provide is a fire that gives no heat and has no usefulness—they cannot **save** (v. 15). The fate of Babylon is tragic. The entire existence of the Babylonian people and everything that they had done to safeguard their nation and to ensure its security has been an exercise in futility. When God’s judgment comes, the wise advisors of Babylon will fall into terror and be unable to save the people of Babylon.

Despite its rich history and its fervent religious activities, Babylon will fall. Its traditions, prayers, counselors, and rituals only appeared to be connected to the nation’s success. Babylon, however, failed to recognize that it was God who had given them power over Israel. It is God who will punish Babylon for its harsh treatment of His people. For Israel, this message clarifies God’s control over Babylon. The success of the nation could have easily validated the nation’s beliefs and practices as effective. God’s declaration against the nation, however, reveals that the nation survives only by the grace of God. It was God who handed Israel over to the Babylonians and it is God who will deliver His people from their hand.

**LESSON NUGGET** – So many people who are involved in wickedness foolishly think that no one sees. They really think they are getting away with something. When Moses killed the Egyptian, he looked right and left and didn’t see anyone, so he killed the man, thinking no one would know (Exodus 2:12). But he didn’t

look up. God saw, and He always does. These Babylonians thought, “no one sees.” But they were fooled by their own arrogance.

***Sources: Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, Wiersbe Study Bible and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary***