

Isaiah 47:1-15 - “No One to Save” - Sunday, February 4th, 2024

This true story took place in the icy North Atlantic 81 years ago yesterday, February 3, 1943.

Four men served as chaplains on the transport ship, the *USS Dorchester*. They were George Fox, a Methodist pastor; Alexander Goode, a Jewish rabbi; Clark Poling, a minister of the Dutch Reformed faith; and John Washington, a Roman Catholic priest.

At 12:55 AM on that fateful day, an explosion occurred as a German submarine torpedo tore open the hull of the ship that was carrying 902 persons. The lights of the ship went out, steam pipes burst, and the ship was filled with screams and panic.

The four chaplains raced to the deck and began handing out life jackets to panicked men who were jumping through blackness into the freezing water. When one sailor kept screaming “I can’t find my life jacket,” Chaplain Fox said, “Here’s one, sailor.” He took off his own life jacket and handed it to the terrified man.

All four of the chaplains preached courage and perseverance as the ship sank. All four chaplains comforted fleeing men, giving them their own safety equipment as they prayed with them as the ship listed and sank. James Eardley, was the last man known to have seen the chaplains alive. He later testified, “I was on a life raft and...when the ship rolled over...that’s when I saw the four chaplains, who had climbed up on the keel, and they were standing arm in arm...and then the *Dorchester* nosed down and they slid off...into the icy darkness.

Eight years later, dedicating the Chapel of the Four Chaplains in Philadelphia, then president Harry Truman noted the men, “were not required to give their lives as they did. They gave their lives without being asked that at least four other men might be saved.

These many months, as we’ve worked our way through the first 44 chapters of the Old Testament book “Isaiah,” we are consistently reminded that there is a living and true God. He is the Holy One of Israel. And He brings salvation to every one of the souls God the Father gave to God the Son (Jesus Christ) to save. As **Hebrews 7:25** teaches, “He is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him...”

Isaiah Chapter 47 continues the proclamation of judgment begun in **Chapter 46**, advancing from Babylon’s idols to the city itself. It is a description of God’s judgment finally coming upon Babylon. The city was the queen of the world, the mightiest of the mighty, but she would soon meet One mightier than she, Who says that she must leave her throne and sit in the dust. That’s what we see in the very first verse - let’s read it.

Isaiah 47:1-15:

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.

2 - Take the millstones and grind meal.
Remove your veil,
take off the skirt,
uncover the thigh,
pass through the rivers.

3 - Your nakedness shall be uncovered,
yes, your shame will be seen;
I will take vengeance,
and I will not arbitrate with a man.”

4 - As *for* our Redeemer, the LORD of hosts *is* His name,
the Holy One of Israel.”

5 - “Sit in silence, and go into darkness,
O daughter of the Chaldeans;
for you shall no longer be called
the Lady of Kingdoms.

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.

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.

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’;

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.

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.’

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.

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.

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.

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!

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.

The virgin daughter of Babylon and the virgin daughter of the Chaldeans mentioned in verse 1 & 5 are essentially the same. “Chaldean” in Scripture is often used synonymously with “Babylonian.”

Babylon is the most famous city from ancient times. It’s ruins lie in modern-day Iraq some 60 miles southwest of Baghdad. In the Old Testament Babylon was a city; in the New Testament Babylon is a spirit.

In the Old Testament the city of Babylon gave birth to an empire that ruled the known world and imposed a worldview upon all peoples that she conquered. She could be brutal; she could be proud and thought she would reign forever.

The story of Babylon is woven throughout the Old Testament. She is introduced to us in Genesis as “Babel,” the city where humans decided to make a name for themselves in defiance of the word of God. Later she becomes the empire that destroys Jerusalem, burns the temple and takes the people of God into exile. She is the beast that almost swallowed the bride; but in the end, she is judged, despoiled and thrown down.

Her destruction is announced in **Isaiah 47:11**. In response to her wickedness, arrogance, self-indulgence and brutality towards the people of God, the Lord pronounced a message of sudden doom - “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.”

History tells us that the Babylonian Empire fell suddenly (verse 9 says it was “in a moment, in one day.”) and unpleasantly to the Persians under Cyrus in 539 BC. The once great city – verse 5 calls her “the Lady of Kingdoms” – was defeated and devastated.

Just like God said.

But, what was it that Babylon was guilty of that incited God’s anger so explosively?

- Verse 10 says the Babylonians “trusted in their wickedness” (they did not trust in the trustworthy God);
- Verses 8 and 10 reveal the Babylonians’ deadly pride - mocking Him “they said in their hearts “I am (the name of the true God), and (they said) there is no one else besides *me!*” The Babylonians put themselves in God’s place - the very nature of killer pride!
- Verses 9 & 12 reveals the Babylonians relied upon their “enchantments (their spells), and the multitude of their sorceries.” The Babylonians were intelligent and devoted that intelligence to mastering magical arts, so they are sure that they can ward off any calamities.
- Verse 13 identifies their counselors to be astrologers, stargazers, and monthly prognosticators. *You do realize that the use of horoscopes is an unbiblical practice?* Oh, you may say, horoscopes are harmless! *Are they really?* If you are using, or even tempted to use, horoscopes *are you willing to tell God at the judgment that your use of horoscopes was nothing?*

God’s word is very clear concerning such things. This is **Deuteronomy 18:9-14**:

“When you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. **10** There shall not be found among you *anyone* who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, *or one* who practices witchcraft, *or a* soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, **11** or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. **12** For all who do these things *are* an abomination to the LORD, and because of these abominations the LORD your God drives them out from before you. **13** You shall be blameless before the LORD your God. **14** For these nations which you will dispossess listened to soothsayers and diviners; but as for you, the LORD your God has not appointed such for you.”

This is **Deuteronomy 28:49 and 50**:

49 The LORD will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, *as swift* as the eagle flies, a nation whose language you will not understand, **50** a nation of fierce countenance, which does not respect the elderly nor show favor to the young.”

And this was Isaiah's prophecy as mentioned in **Isaiah 8:19-22**:

19 And when they say to you, "Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter," should not a people seek their God? *Should they seek* the dead on behalf of the living? **20** To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, *it is* because *there is* no light in them."

21 They will pass through it hard-pressed and hungry; and it shall happen, when they are hungry, that they will be enraged and curse their king and their God, and look upward. **22** Then they will look to the earth, and see trouble and darkness, gloom of anguish; and *they will be* driven into darkness."

Isaiah's last line in today's text puts it bluntly - **"No one shall save you."** That could be translated "Your savior does not exist." Ray Ortlund commenting on this passage notes, "Everyone needs to be saved, and every one of us is trusting in some savior or other. Does your savior exist? What do you really have going for you? Will anything about you last? Does anything about you deserve to?"

But there is a real Savior. He has no standing in the eyes of this present age, but this is what he offers: "Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." That's **Matthew 11:28**.

No one has ever come to Him and not been saved.