
Observations from Isaiah

LESSON XXXVIII : THE FALL OF BABYLON (47:1-15)

General outline (from Oswalt's *Isaiah*):

- I. INTRODUCTION: THE PRESENT AND FUTURE OF GOD'S PEOPLE (1-5)
- II. A CALL TO SERVANTHOOD (6)
- III. BASIS FOR SERVANTHOOD: WHOM SHALL WE TRUST? (7-39)
- IV. THE VOCATION OF SERVANTHOOD (40-55)
 - A. MOTIVE FOR SERVANTHOOD: GRACE (40-48)
 - 1. The Servant's Lord (40)
 - 2. The Servant of the Lord (41-44)
 - 3. The Lord Redeems His Servant (44:23-47:15)
 - a. Announcement of salvation (44:23-28)
 - b. God's choice of a deliverer (45:1-13)
 - c. God's superiority over the idols (45:14-46:13)
 - d. God's arraigns proud Babylon (47:1-15)
 - (1) Babylon's humiliation (47:1-4)
 - (2) Babylon's false pride (47:5-11)
 - (3) Babylon's helplessness (47:12-15)

God's arraigns proud Babylon (47:1-15)

Babylon's humiliation (47:1-4)

Go down, sit in the dust, Virgin Daughter of Babylon; sit on the ground without a throne, Daughter of the Babylonians. No more will you be called tender or delicate. Take millstones and grind flour; take off your veil. Lift up your skirts, bare your legs, and wade through the streams. Your nakedness will be exposed and your shame uncovered. I will take vengeance; I will spare no one. Our Redeemer — the LORD Almighty is his name — is the Holy One of Israel. (NIV)

Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground: there is no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate. Take the millstones, and grind meal: uncover thy locks, make bare the leg, uncover the thigh, pass over the rivers. Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen: I will take vengeance, and I will not meet thee as a man. As for our redeemer, the LORD of hosts is his name, the Holy One of Israel. (KJV)

Come down, and sit on the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, Sit on the earth, there is no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans, For no more do they cry to thee, 'O tender and delicate one.' Take millstones, and grind flour, Remove thy veil, draw up the skirt, Uncover the leg, pass over the floods. Revealed is thy nakedness, yea, seen is thy reproach, Vengeance I take, and I meet not a man. Our redeemer [is] Jehovah of Hosts, His name [is] the Holy One of Israel. (YLT)

“Having already illustrated God’s uniqueness and sovereignty by reference to the gods of Babylon, the prophet now turns to Babylon itself. He represents the city and its empire as a beautiful and arrogant woman who is forced to abandon her pretensions and take the place of a slave. *All the things on which she relied, not the least of which was her own self-confidence, will be shown to have been a false hope. The nations of earth have no hope, except in Israel’s God (cf. 45:21-23). Having refused him by insisting that she is self-existent (vv. 7,8,10), Babylon has no possibility of deliverance.*” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*]

POEM — Most commentators take chap 47 as a complete unit. *The chapter is a poem, some would call it a dirge and a taunt song.* Oswalt classifies it as the other oracles against foreign nations, similar as to what is found in chapters 13-23 of Isaiah. Since Babylon is the direct opposite of Israel and godliness, this chapter must be considered in light of salvation for Zion as well as destruction for Babylon. The first four verses are typically taken as the introduction to the poem, but there is disagreement about how to divide the rest of the poem.

REMEMBER THE THEME — It is important here to remind ourselves of the theme of Isaiah 40-48. *The theme is not the destruction of Babylon; rather the theme is “God’s absolute power and grace.” The point is one of emphasis. Isaiah is not centering upon the fact that God will destroy Babylon to bring out the Israelites; rather it is upon the power of God to be able to control all historic events, including the destruction of Babylon. God is supreme and no nation can stand against Him, regardless of its power and glory.*

CASTING DOWN THE VIRGIN OF BABYLON — *“The language of the poem is harsh, almost brutal. Babylon has lorded it over the world as though it were somehow her right, but now she must come face-to-face with reality.... Although Babylon thought itself destined for a throne, its rightful place is the dust.”* [Oswalt, *Isaiah*] The city is described as a delicate and tender young virgin, one brought up in luxury and unfamiliar with the harsh side of life. That has ended and none will ever describe her in those terms again.

THE SLAVE AT THE MILL STONE — “Work at the millstones was considered the lowest form of slavery (Exod. 11:5; Job 31:10; Matt. 24:41). The lower stone, with a concave surface, had a peg fixed in the middle. The upper stone, with a convex surface, had a hole drilled in its center through which the peg of the lower stone protruded. Grain was poured into the hole while the upper stone was turned. A groove from the center to the circumference of the lower stone allowed the ground meal to work its way out. As a slave, the woman could no longer wear the veil and long gown characteristic of an upper-class woman. The idea that her beauty was too precious for common people to see was now ludicrous. There was no longer anything special about her. Furthermore, such finery would only get in the way of what was now her sole reason for living: work for the slave owner.” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*]

HUMILIATED AND DEFENSELESS — “uncovering nakedness” has at the least the connotation of extreme humiliation and in some cases may imply rape (Lev 18; Jer 13:26; Lam 1:8; Ezek 16:37; 23:10,29; Nah 3:5). The picture is the once-proud and mighty Babylon is now humiliated and defenseless. *Isaiah makes sure to add the reason for this: not by chance but by the direct intervention of the Lord for His people. “The Lord declares all this to be an expression of his impartial punitive justice, and the prophet follows this by asserting that the judgment is to be understood in the context of his holy and redemptive purpose for Israel.”* [Grogan, *Isaiah*]

OUTBURST OF PRAISE — Interrupting the flow of the poem, the prophet seems forced to break forth in an outburst of praise. The previous chapter promises salvation for Israel but that is an empty promise if mighty Babylon remains on the throne. *“This is the basis of praise: the Holy One of Israel, who was shown in chs. 1-39 to be the sovereign God of the nations, who was shown to be the Lord of all the Hosts of heaven, a position of unimaginable power, is also the Redeemer. It is not only that God can deliver a trusting Israel from the hands of any nation to whom he may have sold them as captives. Here is power, power almost beyond comprehension: power to defend, power to deliver, power to revive, power to renew. Yes, he is the Holy One of Israel in regard to Assyria, and he is also the Holy One of Israel in regard to Babylon. Circumstances may change; he changes never. Praise his name!”* [Oswalt, Isaiah] *“Our Redeemer, exclaims the church in joyfully exalted self-consciousness, He is Jehovah of Hosts, the Holy One of Israel! The one name affirms that He possesses the all-conquering might; the other that He possesses the will to carry on the work of redemption — a will influenced and constrained by both love and wrath.”* [K&D, Isaiah]

God’s arraigns proud Babylon (47:1-15)

Babylon’s false pride (47:5-11)

Sit in silence, go into darkness, Daughter of the Babylonians; no more will you be called queen of kingdoms. I was angry with my people and desecrated my inheritance; I gave them into your hand, and you showed them no mercy. Even on the aged you laid a very heavy yoke. You said, ‘I will continue forever — the eternal queen!’ But you did not consider these things or reflect on what might happen. Now then, listen, you wanton creature, lounging in your security and saying to yourself, ‘I am, and there is none besides me. I will never be a widow or suffer the loss of children.’ Both of these will overtake you in a moment, on a single day: loss of children and widowhood. They will come upon you in full measure, in spite of your many sorceries and all your potent spells.

Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called, The lady of kingdoms. I was wroth with my people, I have polluted mine inheritance, and given them into thine hand: thou didst shew them no mercy; upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke. And thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever: so that thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it. Therefore hear now this, thou that art given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children: But these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their perfection for the multitude of thy sorceries, and for the great abundance of thine

Sit silent, and go into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans, For no more do they cry to thee, ‘Mistress of kingdoms.’ I have been wroth against My people, I have polluted Mine inheritance And I give them into thy hand, Thou hast not appointed for them mercies, On the aged thou hast made thy yoke very heavy, And thou sayest, ‘To the age I am mistress,’ While thou hast not laid these things to thy heart, Thou hast not remembered the latter end of it. And now, hear this, O luxurious one, Who is sitting confidently — Who is saying in her heart, ‘I [am], and none else, I sit not a widow, nor know bereavement.’ And come in to thee do these two things, In a moment, in one day, childlessness and widowhood, According to their perfection they have come upon thee, In the multitude of thy sorceries, In the exceeding might of thy

You have trusted in your enchantments. For thou hast charms. And thou art wickedness and have said, 'No one sees me.' Your wisdom and knowledge mislead you when you say to yourself, 'I am, and there is none besides me.' Disaster will come upon you, and you will not know how to conjure it away. A calamity will fall upon you that you cannot ward off with a ransom; a catastrophe you cannot foresee will suddenly come upon you. (NIV)

trusted in thy wickedness: thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me. Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth: and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know. (KJV)

confident in thy wickedness, Thou hast said, 'There is none seeing me,' Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, It is turning thee back, And thou sayest in thy heart, 'I [am], and none else.' And come in on thee hath evil, Thou knowest not its rising, And fall on thee doth mischief, Thou art not able to pacify it, And come on thee suddenly doth desolation, Thou knowest not. (YLT)

TRUE WISDOM IS SUBMISSION TO THE LORD — This section might be further divided into vv. 5-7, 8-9, and 10-11. It covers the Lord's charges against Babylon. *"Above everything else, her fault is the claim to be immortal and self-existent (vv. 7,8,10), something no part of creation can rightfully claim.* Not taking her own contingency into account, she has behaved with unpardonable arrogance toward her subject nations (vv. 6-7). She has thought that, if nothing else, her fabled skill in magic would keep her from undergoing the fate of others (vv. 9-10). But her assumptions will not save her in the day of judgement. In fact, she is no different from anything else in creation. *All of us are subject to the same limitations and prone to the same ends. The wisest thing I can do as a creature is to acknowledge that if there is someone immortal and independent, it is not me. 'The beginning of knowledge is the fear of the Lord' (Prov 1:7)."* [Oswalt, *Isaiah*] We will stand before God one day. It is foolish to live as if that won't happen.

DESCRIPTION OF FURTHER HUMILIATION — Not only does the 'great queen' sit on the ground (v. 1) but she also sits in silence and darkness (v. 5). Although the general sense of this is easily understood, the specific meaning is not quite so plain. Some state it means captivity and prison; others suggest death and the underworld. Quite possibly Isaiah had nothing specific in mind when he gave the prophecy and all he is referring to is Babylon's despair and humiliation. "Babylon shall sit down in silent, brooding sorrow, and take herself away into darkness, just as those who have fallen into disgrace shrink from the eyes of men. She is looked upon as an empress (Isa 13:9; the king of Babylon called himself the king of kings, Ezek 26:7), who has been reduced to the condition of a slave, and durst not show herself for shame. This would happen to her, because at the time when Jehovah made use of her as His instrument for punishing His people, she went beyond the bounds of her authority, showing no pity, and ill-treating even defenseless old men.... *Babylon also says still further (like the Babylon of the last days in Rev 18:7): 'I shall not sit as a widow (viz., mourning thus in solitude, Lam 1:1; 3:28; and secluded from the world, Gen 38:11), nor experience the loss of children.'* She would become a widow, if she should lose the different nations, and 'the kings of the earth who committed fornication with her' (Rev 18:9); for her relation to her own king cannot possibly be thought of, inasmuch as the relation in which a nation stands to its temporal king is never thought of as marriage, like that of Jehovah to Israel. She would also be a mother bereaved of her children, if war and captivity robbed her of her population." [K&D, *Isaiah*]

GOD RAISES AND PUTS DOWN THE NATIONS — Without doubt Babylon boasted of her many conquest, but at least in the case of Judah this pride was misplaced. God here gives the reason for their being conquered: not due to the might and majesty of Babylon (if that were the case, there is no reason for Jerusalem not falling at the siege of the Assyrians, chaps 36,37) but rather by the direct guidance and permission of the Lord. ***“Babylon was not the mistress of her own fate, let alone Judah’s. God alone is the master of all fates. Babylon’s conquests were part of God’s plan for world redemption through Israel.*** God had chosen this people as his heritage (Deut 4:20; 1 Sam 10:1; 1 Kings 8:51,53; Jer 12:7). They were to be holy, completely dedicated to him so that their character was like his (Exod 19:6; Lev 10:10,11); to touch them was to touch God (Jer 2:3). Had they fulfilled God’s plan for them, neither Assyria nor Babylon nor any other nation with pretensions of world dominion could have hurt them. ***The only reason Babylon had been able to desecrate Jerusalem was that God had already done so. He had removed his holiness from them (cf. Ezek 11:23) with the result that their protection was gone, and the wild animals were swiftly in among the vines (Isa 5:5,6). Babylon’s mistake, like Assyria’s before (10:12-14), was in believing that she had conquered God’s people in spite of God, thus establishing that she was superior to God. Isaiah cries out in both cases, it was because of God that they did what they did, and that this fact establishes God’s superiority over them.”*** [Oswalt, Isaiah] We cannot read this without thinking of our own beloved country. ***We do not stand in our own might and power but rather in the mercies of God. If and when the time comes for final judgement to fall on our country, it will not be because of the might of another nation but rather God bringing His hand of judgement upon us for forgetting Him.*** We cannot be thrilled about that prospect but at least we can submit to the sovereign hand of God who does all thing right. What else can we do other than put ourselves into His hands for the future?

Another practical observation from Isaiah’s comments relate to the world situation as a whole. Read Oswalt’s comments again: ***“God alone is the master of all fates. Babylon’s conquests were part of God’s plan for world redemption through Israel.”*** Why is this world so close to World War III? Why is the world’s attention focused on the Middle East? ***World events do not occur in a vacuum but are rather under the providential guidance of the Sovereign God of the Universe. All these events are merely preparation work for the return of Christ.***

PRIDE COMES BEFORE THE FALL — “You did not show compassion” with the added mention of the aged (v. 6) might imply an unusual cruelty towards the weak and elderly. “The words are to be understood literally, like Lam 4:16; 5:12: even upon old men, Babylon had placed the heavy yoke of prisoners and slaves. But in spite of this inhumanity, it flattered itself that it would last for ever.” [K&D, Isaiah] ***But Babylon’s real problem (and the emphasis here by Isaiah) is her assumption of being all-powerful in her conquests.*** If Babylon had conquered the known world in her own strength then who would call her to task for anything she does? After all, she had destroyed Assyria which had ruled the world for 300 years. Who was more powerful than Babylon? Babylon’s overriding sin therefore was not cruelty but arrogance and pride. “The prophecy recognizes that the Babylonian destruction of Judah and the exile of its people was to be understood as a divine punishment. Babylon, however, went too far, and it has been suggested that the condition of the exiles may have worsened toward the close of their captivity. It is characteristic of Isaiah to underline not only man’s inhumanity to man, in which Amos had anticipated him (cf. Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 13; 2:1, 6-8; 4:1; 5:11; 8:4-6), but also pride as a major cause of Babylon's judgment (v. 7; cf. esp. 13:19; 14:13-15).” [Grogan, Isaiah] ***We often see this on a personal level. It is when men succeed in getting their goals that they often sit in pride as they consider their accomplishments. The higher man lifts himself up in his own mind, the more of a sin***

it is before God, the true Author of all successes and even failures. As pride stiffens the neck, judgement falls from the Lord and often the fall is great. ***“Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.”*** (Prov 16:18) ***“A man who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed — without remedy.”*** (Prov 29:1)

FROM ARROGANCE TO HUMILIATION — “The prophet now contrasts Babylon’s arrogant self-confidence with the sudden and complete humiliation that will come on her. He does so in an interesting interlocked structure. Vv. 8 and 9 contrast with one another, as do vv. 10 and 11. At the same time v. 10 repeats key elements of v. 8, especially the line, ‘I am, and there is no one else besides,’ and v. 11 repeats from v. 9 the element of suddenness.... Whatever might be the pretensions of Babylon, they cannot avert the doom that will come. In many ways, of course, it is precisely because of these pretensions that the doom is coming. It is because she has dared to style herself as God that she cannot help but fall. It is clear that this is the prophet’s point when we remember that the words coming from Babylon’s mouth, I am, and there is no one else besides, are the words spoken by God in 45:5,6,18,22; 46:9. ***He alone is incomparable; he alone is self-existent; he alone is sovereign over all. By arrogating these attributes to herself, Babylon and all the human enterprises like her have set themselves on a collision course with God. In order to justify her claims, they must attack God himself and defy his will.***” [Oswalt, Isaiah]

JUDGEMENT ON THE “LOVERS OF PLEASURE” — ***“Lover of luxury (NRSV ‘lover of pleasures,’ NIV ‘wanton creature,’ JPSV ‘pampered one’) conveys the air of thoughtless self-indulgence on the part of one who assumes that luxury is her right by reason of incomparable eminence.*** She does not prepare for any other eventuality because she cannot imagine it. Whatever might have happened to other empires cannot happen to her, because she is different. She will never be in a position of being completely without support (widow), or of being alone in the world (bereavement of children).... Having imagined Babylon as a woman, Isaiah is simply being consistent with the image, choosing the worst things that could happen to a woman in the ancient Near East to convey the character of Babylon’s coming loss. She insists that she is above whatever the common herd might be liable to. The prophet says she is not.” [Oswalt, Isaiah] The Apostle Paul writes a similar warning to our generation: ***“But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God — having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.”*** (2 Tim 3:1-5)

AN UNWINNABLE WAR — as Isaiah describes the sudden destruction of Babylon, it does not demand the fulfilment to be instantaneous. The sense is the judgement of God comes quickly and powerfully, without anything they can do about it. ***“The point is simply that any time we joust with God, any time we claim equality with him, we should be prepared for devastating results, for the contest is monumentally unequal. This is especially true when we begin to say what it is impossible for God to do.”*** [Oswalt, Isaiah] Isaiah continues by describing the judgement as happening ***“in the multitude of thy sorceries, in the exceeding might of thy charms”*** (YLT). According to Oswalt, the Hebrew preposition has a wide range of meaning. The sense is probably not the judgement coming *because* of Babylon’s sorceries; Isaiah already gave the main reason for judgement as being Babylon’s pride. ***“The most likely choice here is ‘in the midst of’ with the sense of ‘in spite of.’ In the very midst of all the magical rituals designed to prevent loss and humiliation, they will come anyway.”*** [Oswalt, Isaiah] For that reason the NIV correctly

translates it as follows: “*They will come upon you in full measure, in spite of your many sorceries and all your potent spells.*” Delitzsch translates the verse as follows: “*And these two will come upon thee suddenly in one day: bereavement of children and widowhood; they come upon thee in fullest measure, in spite of the multitude of thy sorceries, in spite of the great abundance of thy witchcrafts.*” “But both of these would happen to her suddenly in one day, so that she would succumb to the weight of the double sorrow. Both of them would come upon her ... so that she would come to learn what the loss of men and the loss of children signified in all its extent and in all its depth, and that in spite of the multitude of its incantations, and the very great mass of its witchcrafts.” [K&D, *Isaiah*] Isaiah’s comments reminds us of the Psalmist’s prophecy: “***Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One. ‘Let us break their chains,’ they say, ‘and throw off their fetters.’ The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them.***” (Psalm 2:1-4)

THE SINS OF ASTROLOGY AND OCCULTISM — It would be good at this point to remind ourselves of God’s hatred for occult practices, including horoscopes, palm readers, Ouija boards, Tarot cards, and yes, *even Harry Potter books!* Babylon was the center of many occult practices, some of what we would call today astrology. “The names given to the astrological constellations today are translations of the ones originated by the Babylonians. More than anything else, magic is engages in to ensure good fortune and prevent misfortune. The prophet says that however great Babylonian skill and knowledge in the magical arts might be, it will be helpless to avert the disaster that comes from having tried to usurp the place of God. The very things magic was designed to do it cannot do when confronted with the power of the transcendent God.” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*] “Isaiah has already made it plain that sorcery and other ways of trafficking with the forbidden supernatural realm were a cause of God’s judgment on his people (v. 9; 2:6; 8:19). For the Babylonians, sorcery also induced a mood of complacency (v. 10), because the people relied on their magicians to predict the coming of the enemy and to defeat him. In Babylonia the intellectual and the magical were intertwined, the wise man being instructed in all the arts of the supernatural.” [Grogan, *Isaiah*] “Babylonia was the birth-place of astrology, from which sprang the twelve-fold division of the day, the horoscope and sun-dial; but it was also the home of magic, which pretended to bind the course of events, and even the power of the gods, and to direct them in whatever way it pleased. Thus had Babylon trusted in her wickedness (Isa 13:11), viz., in the tyranny and cunning by which she hoped to ensure perpetual duration, with the notion that she was exalted above the reach of any earthly calamity.” [K&D, *Isaiah*]

God’s arraigns proud Babylon (47:1-15)

Babylon’s helplessness (47:12-15)

<i>Keep on, then, with your magic spells and with your many sorceries, which you have labored at since childhood. Perhaps you will succeed, perhaps you will cause terror. All the counsel you have received has only worn you out! Let your</i>	<i>Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast labored from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the</i>	<i>Stand, I pray thee, in thy charms, And in the multitude of thy sorceries, In which thou hast laboured from thy youth, It may be thou art able to profit, It may be thou dost terrify! Thou hast been wearied in the multitude of thy</i>
<i>counsels. Let now the</i>	<i>counsels, Stand up, I pray</i>	

astrologers come forward, those stargazers who make predictions month by month, let them save you from what is coming upon you. Surely they are like stubble; the fire will burn them up. They cannot even save themselves from the power of the flame. Here are no coals to warm anyone; here is no fire to sit by. That is all they can do for you — these you have labored with and trafficked with since childhood. Each of them goes on in his error; there is not one that can save you. (NIV)

astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee. Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it. Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast labored, even thy merchants, from thy youth: they shall wander every one to his quarter; none shall save thee. (KJV)

thee, and save thee, Let the charmers of the heavens, Those looking on the stars, Those teaching concerning the months, From those things that come on thee! Lo, they have been as stubble! Fire hath burned them, They deliver not themselves from the power of the flame, There is not a coal to warm them, a light to sit before it. So have they been to thee with whom thou hast laboured, Thy merchants from thy youth, Each to his passage they have wandered, Thy saviour is not! (YLT)

“In these final four verses the denunciation of Babylon comes to a powerful climax. Following on the attack on sorcery that appeared in vv. 9-11, the prophet calls on Babylon to see what all her magical wisdom can do for her in the hour of crisis. In fact, he says, it will all be for naught. The astrologers and the enchanters will be helpless: all the ancient wisdom that fostered Babylon’s belief that she was the ‘I Am’ (vv. 8,10) will fail. In that moment it will be apparent that she is not independent and self-existent; she needs a savior. Unfortunately, she will have none.” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*]

MOCKING BABYLON’S FALSE RELIANCE — “Commentators are divided over whether the invitation contained in these verses is mocking or serious. Both sides agree that the prophet knows Babylon’s hope to be a false one; the only question is whether he is sincerely wishing the Babylonians to put their faith to a test. Since he has said forcefully in the immediately preceding verses (9-11) that destruction will come in spite of all the magical wisdom, however, it seems most likely that he intends sarcasm here. It is as though the prophet is saying, ‘If you don’t believe me, go ahead and put your trust in this foolishness. Who knows, maybe it will help you?’” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*]

DEPENDENCE ON THE WORLD BRINGS DESTRUCTION — “In these verses Isaiah reveals the outcome of Babylon’s dependence on the magical sciences: complete disaster. The magicians were no more substantial than stubble. When the fire of trouble comes, they will be devoured in an instant, unable to save even themselves, let alone anyone else, from the hand (power) of the flame. Make no mistake, the prophet says, the fire that is coming on proud Babylon will be no pleasant little campfire, warm and inviting. It will be a thundering, racing brushfire, devouring everything in its path. The magicians will not have a chance of stopping it; indeed, far from stopping it, they will become fuel for it.” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*] *“The whole history of Babylon’s long flirtation with astrology is bluntly dismissed in v. 15. All this effort, all this expenditure, and at the end — nothing! Those who have turned from the living God to the daily horoscope in our own society would do well to heed this passage.”* [Grogan, *Isaiah*] “But these very wise men cannot save themselves, to say nothing of others, out of the power of that flame, which is no

comforting coal-fire to warm one's self by, no hearth-fire (Isa 44:16) to sit in front of, but a devouring, eternal, i.e., peremptory flame (Isa 33:14)." [K&D, *Isaiah*]

“Our Redeemer — the LORD Almighty is his
name — is the Holy One of Israel.”

— Isaiah 47:4 NIV