

Babylon's Gods and Glory vs. Zion's

Isaiah 46:1 – 47:15

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Introduction:

Have you ever seen one of those Sci-fi movies where a star-ship is flying around through the galaxies visiting different planets,

- and one of the crew members falls in love with a beautiful woman and decides to stay behind on her planet so he can live with her...
- He leaves everything and closes the door behind him for this girl of his dreams...
 - But then as soon as his comrades fly away and reaches out to take his lady,
 - she is transformed into an old hag, wrinkled and wretched?

That is something like the picture that we are given of Babylon in the Scripture.

- It is the picture we are given in our text from Isaiah today,
 - and it is the picture that is given to us in Revelation 17-19, a portion of which we covered our reading today.
- Babylon, as we have seen before, represents the city of man.
 - And it is a very glorious city with riches and beauty.
 - It is a city that seems secure and safe.
 - It is easy to see Babylon and think that Babylon has it all.
 - We are constantly told of the perfections of Babylon.
 - And Zion, the City of God, is looked on with contempt by Babylon.
 - Babylon has it all! But what does Zion have?
 - God is said to give Zion righteousness,
 - but what is that compared to the beauty and wealth of Babylon?
- Our Lord knows that we do not yet have eyes to see the glory of the Kingdom of Righteousness that He is establishing...
 - He knows that there remains much corruption in us so that we are easily dazzled by the glory of Babylon.
 - He knows that we look upon her with admiration and longing.
 - And so our gracious LORD is very kind to us...
 - Over and over He reveals to us in His Word that the glory of Babylon is but a passing dream.
 - That soon this beautiful queen will be seen as what she truly is—a wretched hag, foolish and undesirable.
 - He gives us clear instruction about this so that we will not be deceived.
 - So that we will wait upon Him to renew our strength, even when Zion has been reduced to dust and rubble.

And so as we come to Isaiah 46 & 47 today,

- I want you to consider the great contrast our Lord sets before us here...
 - between the glory of Babylon and the Glory of Zion...
- You need so see this more clearly so that you may put away all your side long glances at Babylon and her delicacies
 - and so that you will be enamoured with the far greater excellencies of the city whose builder and maker is God.
 - Though she is at times reduced to little more than dust and rubble in this world,
 - God's hand is upon her and even now there is a glory that is being formed in her—a glory that will be revealed at the last day when His work is complete.

TRANS> So as we get underway, I want you to see first of all that:

I. Babylon's gods are not at all like our God!

A. Babylon's gods are (or at least prove to be) nothing more than a burden to their worshippers.

1. You see in Isaiah 46:1 & 2 that the gods of Babylon are being carried away in dishonour on weary beasts.

a. The names of these gods are mentioned here—Bel and Nebo.

- Bel was the principle deity of Babylon.
 - The title Bel means lord and is related to Baal, the god of the Canaanites.
 - His name is Marduk (Mar-dook).
- And Marduk had a son whose name was Nebo.
 - Nebo's dwelling place was in nearby Borsippa.
 - Nebo is the god of wisdom and academics who was carried to Babylon each year to accompany his father Marduk in the New Year Processions.

b. But this is no glorious procession that is in view here!

- These gods are being hauled off from their places of honour on beasts of burden—
 - not a team of strong beasts carrying them on a wagon, but the equivalent of an old truck taking them away in dishonour.
 - They are laid on their sides—thrown on the wagon, as that which is being taken away for their metal.
 - And the emphasis is laid on their heaviness as they are hauled away.

- Isaiah here speaks of the soul (*nephesh*) of these gods in distinction from their images.
 - In the phrase translated, “But have themselves gone into captivity,”
 - the word “themselves” is the word “soul”—the Hebrew word *nephesh*.
 - So Isaiah is speaking of the demons, the numina or divinity that was represented by these golden images that are being hauled off.
 - These gods have been found to be worthless, so their images are being removed from their places of honour.
 - And their worthlessness is all the more demonstrated in that the soul of these gods cannot save their own images.
- c. The picture here is not a literal description of what happened at the fall of Babylon...
- Cyrus the Persian who conquered Babylon was himself as worshipper of Marduk and Nebo.
 - So he did not haul them off in dishonour...
 - This is rather a depiction of what these gods were with reference to Babylon when Babylon fell...
 - And even more of what all idols will be when Christ appears.
 - Wherever His kingdom is established, idols and the demons that are represented by them will be brought to shame.
 - Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
 - and all idols will then become nothing more than a burden to be hauled away in dishonour on a weary beast.

TRANS> Idols are not only a burden to these beasts that carry them away,

2. They prove to be nothing more than a burden to their worshippers as well!
 - a. In verse 6 & 7, Isaiah once again describes all the trouble that is expended to make them and to care for them...
 - There is great expense as gold is brought forth...
 - And then there is the labour expended by the idol maker...
 - And then these idols have to be carried about and set up by their worshippers in special shrines.
 - b. There is all this trouble, but then when prayers are offered up to them, the prayers are not answered.

- In the time of need, they are not there to help their worshippers who have expended so much trouble for them.
 - At the end of verse 7 it says:
 - Isa 46:7: “Though One cries out to it, yet it cannot answer nor save him out of his trouble.”
 - When God’s judgement comes, they are rendered nothing but a heavy burden.

3. What a sad picture this is!

a. People will go to so much effort to avoid the true God...

- They have these substitute gods and they go to a lot of trouble to have them.
 - They have to produce them and then they have to defend them...
- Remember that the idol is anything that is put in the place of god...
 - And when it is given that place it makes demands of its subjects.
 - A man gives himself to immorality as an idol and soon he will have to deal with unwanted babies—they will have to be sacrificed.
 - Think of those poor scientists who weary themselves in hours of study in the desperate effort to deny the true God...
 - to try to account for the world without Him
 - to dream up and defend evolution and big bangs and pretend that it is all obvious.
 - They sacrifice integrity and even reason.
 - And think of those Muslims who weary themselves with their fasting and their prayers and their rules and regulations—all to no avail!
 - Think of the lovers of pleasure who try to drown their thoughts of God with diversions—who wreck their health and their families in pursuit of their wine and recreation.
 - And think of those who make up their own versions of Jesus and weary themselves in serving Him...
 - but then when God’s judgement falls, they have nothing.
 - They are like the Egyptians with all their gods who have no way to avert his judgement when the plagues come.

b. Idols at last prove to be nothing but a burden to their worshippers.

- They demand sacrifices, but then when the hour of need comes, they are not there for their worshippers.
- Their whole purpose is to “protect” their worshippers from the true God, but when the day of judgement comes, they are worthless.

TRANS> But how different is the true and living God for His people!

B. The LORD of Zion is the one who bears the burdens of His people.

1. See how He calls for us to consider this in verse 3-4!

- Isa 46:3-4: “Listen to Me, O house of Jacob, And all the remnant of the house of Israel, Who have been upheld *by Me* from birth, Who have been carried from the womb: Even to *your* old age, I *am* He, And *even* to gray hairs I will carry *you*! I have made, and I will bear; Even I will carry, and will deliver *you*.”

2. Our gracious Lord cares for His elect people from birth until death!

a. Notice how keeps saying that He bears us and carries us—

- “upheld by me...carried from the womb... I will carry you... I will bear, even I will carry and will deliver you.”
- far different from the idols that are carried about by their worshippers and then do not carry them in their time of need!
 - We are not the ones who make Him and look after Him, but He is the One who makes us and looks after us.

b. If you are His, it is because He has shaped your life from the womb.

- He has been with you in the changes of life from your birth, working, to bring about His redemptive purposes in you.
 - He has done that personally... leading you into those experiences of life to bring together for you a new heart by His grace so that you would respond to Him...
 - He is the one who humbled you so that you would admit your need of a Saviour—of righteousness from outside yourself...
 - and so that you would turn to Him for that righteousness and salvation.
 - And then once faith was borne in you, He has carried you along,
 - so that you have been kept by His power through faith.
 - Even though a million temptations have come,
 - He has given you grace so that you have overcome them all and continued in His grace...

c. But this is even more a description of His care for His people as a corporate unity—as a whole body...

- That He came to them and called them and formed them into a people...
 - And then preserved them over the years, preparing every step of the way until Jesus came...

- And then that He brought Jesus, just as promised, to redeem them!
- And I say that here, as nowhere else, we see Him as the burden bearing God for His people!
 - Jesus on the cross bears the very curse of the law for His people!
 - He does what no idol would dream of doing
 - He does what makes idol worshippers mock and scoff!
 - It is sheer foolishness to them that a god should die for the sins of His people...
 - that He should become the sacrifice for them!
 - that He should bear their ultimate burden!

TRANS> It is after declaring Himself to be the God who bears our burdens that the great question of verse 5 is asked!

3. To whom will you liken me, and make Me equal and compare Me, that we should be alike?
 - There is no comparison between our burden-bearing God and those gods who prove to be a burden to their worshippers!
 - He takes the initiative to save His people, but these gods do not even answer the cries of their worshippers.
 - There is none like Him!

II. And so Christian, you are called to pay careful attention to what your God does!

- In verse 8 and 9 He calls you to remember and to recall what He has done...
 - and in verse 12 He calls you to listen to Him when He tells you what He is going to do.
 - We are to give our attention to God and what He does to save us!
 - If you do not regard His salvation, you cannot be saved!
 - And so He urges us to consider it well...

A. Verse 8-11 is basically a call to us to remember what He has done to redeem us.

1. When He tells us in verse 8 to “show yourselves men”
 - the meaning is likely that we are to do what human beings would be expected to do—as human beings, namely...
 - to call to mind what He has done!
 - This would be the natural thing for a human being to do if we were not so twisted by our sin.

- He goes on to call us “transgressors” in the phrase the follows
 - because we give so little consideration to what we know about God and because it has so little effect on us!
 - Instead of remembering and recalling to mind all that He is to us in comparison to idols,
 - We become dull to God’s salvation and we turn our eyes to the very idols that this world is resting in.
 - You know how often you look with envy at the world’s idols.
 - These idols that do not compare with God!
 - These idols that are nothing but a burden to their worshippers!
 - We forget that God is the one who bears our burden!
 - It is not human!
 - We have been given brains—how can we forget such things?
2. The LORD declares Himself to be the God who carries out His plan—who does all that He says.
- a. He told us that He would save us—from Egypt—and then from Babylon—
 - And He has a record that He always does what He has said, even when it has the all appearances to us of being impossible.
 - He is the God who does the impossible things that He has promised!
 - He has done it over and over—
 - Not just Egypt and Babylon,
 - but in the wilderness
 - in the conquest of Canaan
 - in the victory over Midian
 - we could go on and on...
 - But most of all for us, there is the cross—
 - All through the ages,
 - He said that He would provide a sacrifice to atone for our sins—and though it seemed impossible...
 - He has done it!
 - We are to look back and remember these things and then we will know that He is God.
 - We will know that He is God and that there is no other!
 - We will stop gazing dreamily at Babylon’s idols that cannot save!
 - What is it that you have set your eyes on instead of God?

- What is it that makes you so hesitant to serve Him?
 - He is the one who has declared what he will do in the earth and then has done it!
- b. His plan is the plan that is accomplished!
 - 1) Just recently, He had told His people through Isaiah that He is going to call a ravenous bird from the east.
 - You see mentioned in verse 11.
 - This bird from the east is Cyrus...
 - God is raising him up as promised to free them from Babylon.
 - And He will!
 - It seemed so impossible to them because they had forgotten who He is—
 - But He is the God who has *always* done what He has planned.
 - His counsel, spoken by the prophets, always stands.
 - Why should it be any different now?
 - 2) And to us He declares that the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of Christ—and they will—they truly will!
- c. See how emphatically He drives home the point to our dull ears that He will do what He has said?
 - Look at the end of verse 11...
 - “Indeed I have spoken it:
I will also bring it to pass
I have purposed it;
I will also do it.”

TRANS> Nothing could be more straightforward than this!

- But He knows us.
 - He knows how we doubt and how we waver.

B. And so in verse 12-13 He urges us to listen when He tells us what He is going to do!

1. Look at how He describes us in v. 12...
 - He says two things about us...
 - “Stubborn hearted...
 - “Far from righteousness!”
 - This is not what He says about Babylon.

- This is what He says to His people who are so slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!
- Think about this!
 - We would be a very different people if we fully grasped what He has done for us and what that means for us and what He has promised!
 - All our pettiness and all our doubting and all our covetousness and idolatry and pride would be far gone!
- What a description!
 - *Stubborn hearted*—literally, “strong of heart” or what we would call “headstrong”
 - always wanting to have it our way—to go our own way instead of submitting to our dear Lord.
 - *Far from righteousness!*
 - Not just *unrighteous*, but *far from righteousness*—not even close to it as we like to dream that we are.
 - What games we play, trying to justify our bitterness, our lusts, our pride, our selfishness—
 - our lack of love for God and zeal for His service...
 - But here is the truth—we are *far from righteousness*, and we are so stubborn-hearted that sometimes we don’t even care.

TRANS> But just look what our gracious God promises to do for us!

- Look at v. 13!
2. He promises to bring *His righteousness* near!
- a. We may be *far from righteousness*, but His righteousness will not be far from us!
 - Do you see what He is saying?
 - We don’t have any righteousness—we are far from it—so He brings His own righteousness to us!
- 1) He goes on to call it *His salvation that will not linger...*
 - And to tell us that He will *place it in Zion!*
 - In the city where He reveals His glory!
 - He is going to bring salvation to Zion—for “Israel my glory” as He calls it.
 - He will put His salvation among them!

2) Isn't this amazing?

- These ones who are stubborn hearted and far from righteousness...
 - Who on their own will not turn to Him...
 - Who on their own have no righteousness at all.
- This stubborn-hearted people who are far from righteousness are going to be His glory!
 - because He is going to give them His own righteousness!

b. How would He bring this about?

1) At this stage in redemptive history, He was going to bring salvation to them by sending Cyrus to release them from Babylon...

- But the language here goes far beyond that!
 - Deliverance from Babylon is but a piece of God's great redemptive work that will culminate in bringing His righteousness to His people!

2) And we who live in these last days know what He has done!

- He has sent our Lord Jesus Christ!
 - Christ is His righteousness for people who are far from righteousness...
 - Christ is His salvation that He has placed in Zion!

3) This salvation has come to Zion!

- The Son of God came down from heaven and He brought righteousness where there was no righteousness.
 - He lived as every person ought to live and He did this for us!
 - And then because of our sins, He also went to the cross to bear the wrath and curse of God due to our sins.
 - He was offered up at Jerusalem, the place of sacrifice.
- God accepted His work and declared Him and all those He came to represent righteous...
 - And those He came to represent are given His Spirit so that they will come to Him for His righteousness.
 - So that they will see that they don't have any righteousness...
 - And that Babylon does not have any real glory...
 - They come to Christ who is God's provision of His own righteousness for people who are far from it.

- So it doesn't matter how stubborn you may have been or how far from righteousness...
 - Here is the world's only saviour,
 - And He calls you to come to Him and He promises that if you do, you will not be turned away but you will be saved.
 - He is the bread of God who came down from heaven to give righteousness to the world.
- Listen all you stubborn hearted, you who are far from righteousness!
 - Look to Him and be saved!
 - This is where glory is to be found!
 - The glory of Israel is Jesus Christ, provided for their righteousness and salvation.
 - And all people from all nations are commanded to come to Him for this righteousness that He has provided in Zion, even in David's Son.
 - Come and feast upon Him!
 - Live in Him forever!

TRANS> Ah, but there is still Babylon with Babylon's glory...

- And Babylon is attractive...it is still far too attractive for you.
- You must come to see Babylon for what it is...
 - You must see that...

III. Babylon's glory is not at all like our glory!

- In Chapter 47, the Lord shows us how inglorious Babylon's glory really is so that we will not be enticed by it.
 - There is a great danger for us—
 - that we will be enticed by Babylon's glory so that we seek Babylon instead of God's kingdom of righteousness.
 - Babylon has very little regard for righteousness, and is easy for us to be influenced by Babylon and to embrace their attitude that righteousness does not matter.
- But we have just seen that righteousness is the very thing that God brings His people when He comes to save them!
 - We are to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, not all the things the Babylon seeks.

- The beauty we are to crave is that we should be conformed to God's calling, that we should become like Christ,
 - having the same love, the same devotion to God, the same spirit of service, the same obedience.
 - Not that we are justified by this, for ours is far from perfect...
 - It is the righteousness of Christ that justifies us...
 - but if we are among those who are justified, we are also those who seek first God's kingdom and righteousness.
 - We are among those who have turned from Babylon to follow Jesus Christ.
 - We have been, by the grace of God, given a new heart that delights in the law of God after the inner man.
 - We want to be like our Father and like His Son.
 - This is the glory we seek, and it is not like the glory of Babylon.

TRANS> We are given three characteristics of Babylon's glory in chapter 47...

- Three characteristics that are pointed out to us to keep us from becoming enamoured with all the glory that Babylon has...
 - Let's look at these with the goal that they will help us to think soberly about Babylon's glory so that we will not be enticed.

A. First, see that Babylon's glory is a glory that will turn to ashes

1. We are given a graphic picture in Isa 47:1-3 of Babylon's dethronement.
 - a. She was a queen sitting on a throne, but now she is a beggar sitting in the dust.
 - She had whatever she wanted, but now she does not even have what she needs.
 - She was pampered, tender and delicate, as a gentlewoman,
 - but now her veil is exchanged for the hard service of a lowly slave...
 - grinding at the millstone, which was the task of the lowliest servant...
 - and having to lift her skirts as she treads back and forth across the steams in the course of her daily work.

TRANS> What a change in her condition!

- b. Now her shame is exposed.
 - 1) She who was the envy and the desire of nations has become the wretched hag.

- Her shame that was concealed behind her riches and power is now fully exposed...
 - She is really seen to be what she always was...
 - Though surrounded with glory, she is full of unrighteousness.
- 2) God's justice meets her so that His vengeance poured out on her.
- You see that in verse 3...
 - The sentence of condemnation is passed and there is no way for anyone to arbitrate.
 - Babylon is wretched and there is no way to deny it.
 - Her sin that she had ignored and denied in her prosperity is now brought to full exposure.
 - The best of lawyers cannot make a case to save her.
- 3) It is our redeemer, the LORD of Hosts, the Holy one of Israel who exposes Babylon.
- He is mentioned in verse 4...
 - He who is Lord of all is also holy and does not accept sin.
 - He uncovers the lie of the city of man.
 - They wanted to say that sin is not sinful, that sin is not a problem!
 - He exposes the vileness and the wretchedness of men in their sin when the glory of His judgement appears.
 - Everything is brought to light...
 - His holiness reveals man's wretchedness in his fallen estate...
 - Babylon scoffed at and made light of sin, but no more!
- c. You see that there is something very opposite about the glory Babylon and Zion...
- 1) Zion is inglorious in the world because she is humbled for her sin.
- She sees her sin and she is always seeking God's kingdom of righteousness.
 - She is confessing her sin and she is relying on the extreme sacrifice of Christ.
 - She does not strut proudly before God, but rests humbly in her saviour as her only righteousness.
 - Babylon laughs at her because to Babylon, righteousness does not matter.

- What need does she have of righteousness?
 - Why not enjoy the pleasures of fornication and covetousness?
 - What is all this talk of righteousness in the city of God?
 - God (Babylon's gods) do not care about righteousness...
 - The glory of Babylon proves it!
- 2) And Babylon's attitude often makes us ashamed to seek righteousness and talk of sin and of our need of forgiveness.
- Sometimes, the church even begins to look at Christ as the means to gaining what Babylon seeks...
 - instead of a way of obtaining righteousness.
 - Christ is made a priest of Babylon instead of a priest to our holy Father in heaven.
- 3) But we must not be taken in by Babylon...
- Though there may not be much glory in pursuing the kingdom of God and His righteousness now,
 - The day will come when all the glory of Babylon will be lost...
 - And in that day, the sons of righteousness who have betaken themselves to Christ will shine with Him in His glorious kingdom...
 - a kingdom where righteousness dwells!
 - A kingdom where men love each other and where their chief desire and delight is to serve God.
 - That is what you are to seek.
 - This is the glory that will shine forever.
 - This is the glory that God brings to His people in Christ.
 - Babylon will exchange her glory for ashes—she will become the hag...
 - But Zion will exchange her ashes for glory—she will become like a bright and shining star.

TRANS> Now let's consider the second characteristic of Babylon's glory

B. It is a glory that is given by God until His purposes are accomplished.

1. Babylon thinks that she has this glory in herself, but it is not so.

a. The Lord is the one who raised Babylon up for a time to carry out His redemptive purposes for His elect people.

- It is like it was with Pharaoh of whom God said,
 - “For this cause have I raised you up...”
 - Pharaoh and Babylon think they have climbed up on their own,
 - but the truth is that God has raised them up for His purposes.

- b. This is brought out clearly in verses 5-7.
 - Here the LORD explains that He raised Babylon up because He was angry with His people and wanted to chasten them.
 - Babylon thought of Zion as just one among the many nations they had conquered...
 - But the truth was that Zion was the reason that Babylon was given all her success and all her power in the earth.
 - It was God’s purpose to bury His people in Babylon just as He had buried them in Egypt years before—to humble them...
 - And then to bring them forth by His mighty arm.

- c. You see that Babylon will be taken by surprise when God brings her down.
 - She thinks that she is a lady who is established in her seat forever!
 - She thinks that she is like God...
 - Look at the boast in v. 8:
 - She says in her heart, “I am, there is no one else besides me.”
 - She is so lifted up that she actually thinks no one can bring her down and that no one can judge her.
 - You know how much men in the city of Babylon hate it when God’s judgement is proclaimed...
 - It infuriates them because they think themselves to be above all judgement...
 - They have deluded themselves to think that they are alone and that, as verse 10 says,
 - “no one sees me.”
 - She thinks she is alone with no one to judge her...
 - “I am and there is no one else besides me.”
 - This causes Babylon to oppress those witnesses of the true God who speak according to His righteousness and who pursue His righteousness.
 - Babylon oppresses them and kills them and Babylon throws them into the fiery furnace because they will not acknowledge the lie of Babylon.
 - You see in verse 6 that although God raised up Babylon to chasten His people,

- Babylon showed no mercy and would have completely wiped them out if the LORD had not restrained them...
 - There was no regard even for the aged—there was no fear of God in their eyes.
 - So there is this pride and this cruelty in Babylon...
 - And that is the reason that God’s judgement falls.
 - The great wickedness of Babylon is first of all that she has put herself in the place of God and does not acknowledge Him...
 - And secondly that she is cruel to His people and oppresses them without restraint.
 - The result is expressed in verse 11...
 - Evil comes upon Babylon very suddenly and she does not know where it has come from...
 - She does not know that it has come from the LORD, the living God who made heaven and earth.
 - What she thought could never happen happens.
2. And this is why you ought not to fear Babylon in her power and glory.
- a. She claims that her success is from her own resources, but she is only given her prosperity from the hand of the LORD...
 - And when He is through with her, He will bring her to ruin.
 - Don’t buy into the lie.
 - Babylon is deluded and she really believes that she is immune to any judgement but her own...
 - She thinks that she can trample over God’s commandments and that no consequences will come.
 - But it is all an empty lie.
 - b. So instead of fearing Babylon when Babylon is raised to power, fear God!
 - He raised Babylon up to humble us—the church.
 - He raised Babylon up because we were not seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness.
 - It is not Babylon, but the God who raised up Babylon that you are to fear.
 - If you fear Babylon, you do the opposite of what you ought to do.
 - Your prosperity and your destiny is not in Babylon’s hands, it is in the hands of the LORD who raised up Babylon.
 - It is not Babylon’s favour that you need, but the favour of the Lord.

- So don't seek to please Babylon... seek Christ—follow Him...
- Seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness.
- If you put your hope in Babylon, your hopes will be dashed because Babylon will be dashed...
 - Her glory is but an instrument in the hand of God to restore His elect people to Him.
 - If you are indeed among His elect, you will seek His face when Babylon is raised up.
 - If you are not among His elect, you will seek the favour of Babylon and you will crash when she crashes.

TRANS> And that brings us to our last attribute of Babylon's glory...

C. It is a glory that cannot withstand God's judgement

1. This has already been stated in the sections above where we have seen that God's vengeance will fall on Babylon and bring her down from her heights,
 - But in 12-15 we see that all of Babylon's sources of protection—her supposed saviours—will fail her.
 - a. She has spent much energy and effort in astrology and sorcery...
 - And now that God's judgement is coming, she is called to gather all her wise men and all her stargazers and enchanters together to help her!
 - Let them all come and stand up with her now!
 - Perhaps they will be able to do something!
 - Surely all their training and all the effort will not amount to nothing!
 - Look at Babylon today...
 - We have our priests who teach us their own versions of God...
 - We have our technology to save us...
 - We have our military and our wealth...
 - We have our wisdom and our education and our philosophy...
 - but all of these are mere delusions against the day of God's wrath.
 - b. But indeed they all amount to nothing when His judgement comes!
 - 1) In verse 14, they are said to be all together like stubble...before fire...
 - Stubble that can't even endure the flames as long as wood.
 - They cannot even save themselves in the day of God's wrath, much less the nation they are supposed to protect.
 - 2) God's judgement is like a raging, consuming fire...
 - For that is His nature when He is brought together with sinful men...

- A consuming fire that burns them to ashes!
 - Do not be deceived!
 - He is not the god of the contemporary church who never hurts anyone—who is sweet and delicate.
 - Isaiah makes fun of such ideas!
 - This is not a fire to sit beside to warm yourself...
 - This is a terrible fire of judgement and indignation that renders all who have ignored God helpless...
- 3) And notice that Babylon's merchants do not come to help her in her need.
- They were only there to make a profit—to sell their wares to her...
 - But they will not come to help her in her hour of need.
 - They will look on with pity, but they will not come to help—they will go to their own place.
 - No one will come to save her.
 - She will be consumed with no one to help.
2. If you have not come to Christ for the righteousness that God has placed in Zion
- This fire will destroy you also because you are part of Babylon.
 - But there is no need for it!
 - Remember what we saw at the end of chapter 46?
 - God has placed His salvation in Zion.
 - He has brought His righteousness near to those who had no righteousness in themselves...
 - And this righteousness is for you if you will come and take it.
 - Jesus Christ is the source of this righteousness...
 - If you will turn from your pride and self-sufficiency and look to Him, you will be saved.
 - The kingdom of God and His righteousness will remain forever because God's judgement will pass over it.
 - It will pass over because Jesus has already borne that judgement!
 - The burden-bearing God has borne the burden of His people's sins.
 - It is a great folly for you to seek the glory of Babylon that will turn to ashes, that is only a temporary glory given by God, and that will have no protection from His judgement...
 - When there is the glory of Zion and of the righteousness that the LORD has given to her through Christ!
 - Turn your eyes upon the LORD Jesus.
 - All else is vanity.

