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## Isaiah 47.

(2015)

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But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

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## Isaiah 47.

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### Topics.

- Naked and disgraced virgin daughter of Babylon you shall sit in the dust.
- The daughter of Chaldeans shall no longer be called mistress of kingdoms.
- You who said, “no one sees my wickedness,” evil shall come upon you.
- Your many counsellors are stubble that cannot save you or themselves.
- The history of Israel and Assyria and Judah and Babylon.

**FOR INFORMATION:** concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: “Map Locations and People of the Bible,” and the title: “Bible Dictionary” on Website Menu.

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**INTRODUCTION:** Isaiah is the exciting story of the Old Testament and the New Testament compacted into one book. It covers the wonder and splendour of Bible prophecy and echoes of the Lord Jesus Christ resound throughout Isaiah’s visions and his messages. It teaches history as it affects God’s people and constantly points to a future age when righteousness, justice, joy and peace will be established on earth. Isaiah prophesied about 740–700 B.C.

He lived during the decline of Israel in the shadow of the powerful Assyrian Empire. He spoke the word of God to a people who were “deaf and blind” (Isaiah 6:10) who refused to listen to his warnings of looming disaster.

Isaiah warned the people of Judah’s that their sin would bring God’s judgment (i.e., seventy-years captivity) and declared that God is sovereign and would use Cyrus the Persian to return the people from exile. He spoke also of a servant and man of sorrows who would be wounded for our transgressions faithfully accomplishing God’s purposes of salvation (Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12). The final chapters give a beautiful description of a new creation in which Christ will rule as King, judging the wicked and establishing God’s Kingdom on earth. Following are four points that will help the reader understand the book of Isaiah as they travel through it: -

1. The history of Israel and Judah. At this time in the story Assyria has taken the ten tribes of Israel in the land of Samaria into captivity and marched up to Jerusalem (the two tribes of Judah) to destroy it, but failed. Later in the story Babylon attacks Jerusalem and conquers the city and takes the people of Judah into captivity. After this victory Babylon conquers Assyria which resulted in Israel and Judah being brought under the submission of Babylonian rule and the tribes being brought together during the seventy year Babylonian captivity.
2. Many of Isaiah’s visions are written as though they have already taken place, but a majority of these visions are predicting future events that are about to happen during Isaiah’s generation while others will come to pass in a future age. Though these visions are of future events Isaiah speaks them in the present tense, because he spoke them as they came to his mind and as he saw the events unfolding before him. They are often spoken in this manner because of the certainty of it and because God had ordained them and revealed them to his prophets who spoke them to His people so they must come to pass, because God cannot lie.(Titus 1:2).
3. Though Isaiah is primarily speaking to Judah (the two tribes at Jerusalem) much of what he says applies to Israel (the ten tribes in Samaria) because both Judah and Israel are in the same corrupt spiritual condition.
4. All the promises to Israel are now in Christ. God’s promises to Israel now include the Jews and the Gentiles.

This is because under the New Covenant God is building an entirely new nation made up of Jews and Gentiles of which Christ is the head. In this new nation that God is creating in the Lord Jesus Christ Jews have no advantage over Gentiles since all are one in Christ Jesus.

The apostle Paul wrote: Gentiles were separated from Christ, alienated from the Commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus they have been brought to God by the blood of Christ. Jesus has made Jews and Gentiles both one by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances so that Jesus might create in himself one new man (i.e., one nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles). In Jesus both Jews and Gentiles are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Eph. 2:1-22).

The practical application of what this means, is that all the future and eternal promises God made to Israel through Isaiah also apply to Gentiles who by faith belong to Christ.

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### **O Naked and Disgraced Virgin Daughter of Babylon You shall Sit in the Dust.**

Isaiah 47:1-3 -----<sup>1</sup>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. <sup>2</sup>Take the millstones and grind flour, put off your veil, strip off your robe, uncover your legs, pass through the rivers. <sup>3</sup>Your nakedness shall be uncovered, and your disgrace shall be seen. I will take vengeance, and I will spare no one.

The focus of this chapter is not only upon the king and the people of Babylon believing in their heart that they were secure, but also upon their counsellors leading them into a false sense of security and their sorcerers by their enchantments enforcing them in their belief that they were secure, while all the while God is about to bring utter ruin to their entire kingdom and set His people free.

**The Chaldeans:** their history began in the era of Nimrod the king of Assyria. In order to bring all people under one government he built Babel in the land of Shinar to increase his own empire. At this time Assyria gradually became the head of the Chaldean people who were scattered in the fields and deserts and lived in tents.

However over time the Chaldeans built their city, its towers and palaces and established power and dominion over their neighbours until they eventually grew to be the greatest of all the monarchies upon earth and from that time they became commonly referred to as Babylon (or Babylonians) a dynasty in the country called Iraq today. The following verses show that the names Babylon and Chaldea are often interchanged and signify the same kingdom and people: -

- The LORD loves him; he shall perform his purpose on Babylon, and his arm shall be against the Chaldeans. (Isaiah 48:14).
- Go out from Babylon, flee from Chaldea, declare this with a shout of joy, proclaim it. (Isaiah 48:20).
- The word that the LORD spoke concerning Babylon, concerning the land of the Chaldeans, by Jeremiah the prophet. (Jer. 50:1).
- I will repay Babylon and all the inhabitants of Chaldea before your very eyes for all the evil that they have done in Zion, declares the LORD. (Jer. 51:24).
- I will spread my net over him, and he shall be taken in my snare. And I will bring him to Babylon, the land of the Chaldeans, yet he shall not see it, and he shall die there. (Ezekiel 12:13).

**O virgin daughter:** the word virgin comes from the Hebrew word (*b<sup>e</sup>thuwlah*) it can refer to a city, a nation, a state or a maid or bride or to a virgin in its truest sense. It literally means to separate a virgin from her privacy.

It implies that a woman had not been violated or defiled and is used as a collective feminine personification of the population of a beautiful city, town or a whole nation. When the expression, "Virgin daughter," is applied to such a city, town or nation it carries the following ideas: -

- The city has great magnificence and beauty and power and authority over many other nations and that its inhabitants are living in luxury, pleasure and great ease.
- The city had never been oppressed, afflicted or invaded (raped) by an enemy and forcefully suffered loss or robbed of its pride, beauty and glory.

The city of Tyre in Scripture is referred to as being a virgin, firstly, because of its magnificent beauty and pride and its inhabitants were living in great ease and pleasure and secondly, because it had never been subdued, taken or oppressed by its enemies. Tyre was as a fortress, stronghold and sanctuary of refuge that no one could penetrate, until Nebuchadnezzar the conquering king of Babylon and his armies plundered Tyre and forcefully stripped it of its fame magnificence, prosperity and pride and in this sense it is spoken of as being deflowered and robbed of its virginity.

The LORD when inspiring the prophet Nahum to prophecy against Nineveh had him, express their defeat in the following way: -

- Behold, I am against you (Nineveh), declares the LORD of hosts, and will lift up your skirts over your face; and I will make nations look at your nakedness and kingdoms at your shame. (Nahum 3:5).

The implication here is that prior to Nineveh's defeat they were viewed as an undefiled woman whose nakedness had never been seen, but after being defeated are pictured as a shameful, defiled, corrupt and naked woman that all nations look upon.

**Summary:** in ancient literature it was common to personify a great city or nation as a virgin woman, because of its famed beauty, prosperity, pride, triumphs and glory. In contrast to this a city that had been subdued and forcefully robbed of its beauty, pride, and glory was referred to as being deflowered. Not deflowered sexually, but of its pride and glory, which expresses the sense of the Hebrew word (*b<sup>e</sup>thuwlah*) in that the nation had been forcefully brought to ruin and separated from its beauty, pride and glory by an enemy and in this sense robbed of its virginity.

**The virgin daughter of Babylon:** in the context of this chapter applies to the inhabitants and citizens of Babylon because they willingly submitted and gave their allegiance to Babylon.

**Without a throne:** means that the royal palace of Babylon will be utterly defeated and that their king will be removed from the throne so that they will no longer exist as a head nation.

**Babylon's nakedness will be uncovered:** carries the idea that they will be forcefully stripped of their pride, fame, prosperity, strength and glory and be utterly brought to ruin.

In these verses the city of Babylon is personified in the following two ways: -

1. As a royal king robed in the most splendid and richest of garments that has great beauty, magnificence, power and strength.
2. As the king being forcefully stripped of his royal robes and all his garments by his enemies so that he stands naked helpless, powerless and with disgrace before all who look upon him.

**Cyrus the king of Persia:** the one who did strip Babylon of its king and royal palace and all its great fame and glory was Cyrus the king of Persia who God not only used as His anointed shepherd and called by name, but also equipped Cyrus and took him by the right hand and went before him.

The following verses picture God holding Cyrus by the right hand and opening all doors that no man can shut while Cyrus the king of Persia subdues all nations.

- Thus says the LORD to *his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped*, to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed. (Isaiah 45:1).
- I (*the LORD*) will go before you (*Cyrus king of Persia*) and level the exalted places, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron, <sup>3</sup>I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, *who call you (Cyrus) by your name*. <sup>4</sup>For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, *I call you by your name, I name you*, though you do not know me. (Isaiah 45:2-3).
- I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; *I equip you (Cyrus) though you do not know me*, <sup>6</sup>that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, there is none besides me; I am the LORD, there is no other. (Isaiah 45:5-6).
- Thus says the LORD: "The wealth of Egypt and the merchandise of Cush, and the Sabeans, *men of stature, shall come over to you (Cyrus)* and be yours; they shall follow you; they shall come over in chains and bow down to you. They will plead with you, saying: '*Surely God is in you*, and there is no other, no god besides him.' (Isaiah 45:14).

God used Cyrus King of Persia as His anointed shepherd to conquer the mighty Empire of Babylon and give Israel written permission to return to their beloved city and rebuild the Temple of God.

#### **The Daughter of Chaldeans shall No longer be called Mistress of Kingdoms.**

Isaiah 47:4-9 ----- <sup>4</sup>Our Redeemer—the LORD of hosts is his name—is the Holy One of Israel. <sup>5</sup>Sit in silence, and go into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans; for you shall no more be called the mistress of kingdoms. (The KJV says, the lady of kingdoms) <sup>6</sup>I was angry with my people; I profaned my heritage; I gave them into your hand; you showed them no mercy; on the aged you made your yoke exceedingly heavy. <sup>7</sup>You said, "I shall be mistress forever," so that you did not lay these things to heart or remember their end. <sup>8</sup>Now therefore hear this, you lover of pleasures, who sit securely, who say in your heart, "I am, and there is no one besides me; I shall not sit as a widow or know the loss of children": <sup>9</sup>These two things shall come to you in a moment, in one day; the loss of children and widowhood shall come upon you in full measure, in spite of your many sorceries and the great power of your enchantments.

**Our Redeemer, the LORD of hosts is his name the Holy One of Israel:** (v4) the invisible, immortal, Almighty, Holy God the creator of all things and source of all life is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob the God of Israel.

**Sit in silence:** (v5) carries the following two ideas: -

1. The king, princes, rulers and the people of Babylon ceasing from their boasting and self-glory and from their insolent speeches against God and their mocking taunts against Israel His people.
2. Sitting in deep sorrow grief, shame and affliction as the following Scriptures show mourners used to do.
  - They sat with him (Job) on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great. (Job 2:13).
  - Her (Zion) gates shall lament and mourn; empty, she shall sit on the ground. (Isaiah 3:26).
  - The elders of the daughter of Zion sit on the ground in silence; they have thrown dust on their heads and put on sackcloth; the young women of Jerusalem have bowed their heads to the ground. (Lament. 2:10).

**Go into darkness:** (v5) in this context carries the following ideas: -

1. The people of Babylon will be struck with confusion, bewilderment panic and deep grief and sorrow.
2. Babylon will be thrown into utter chaos and not only brought to ruin, but also stripped of all its strength, wealth, power and glory amongst the nations.

The speech is directed against Babylon, which was celebrated as a place of fame, business, enormous successful global trade and spoken of amongst all nations of the world. But a time is coming when it will be brought to such great ruin that the sound of business and industry in its streets will no longer be heard and its magnificence will no longer be spoken off.

- I am the man who has seen affliction under the rod of his wrath; <sup>2</sup>he has driven and brought me into darkness without any light. (Lam. 3:1-2).
- Rejoice not over me, O my enemy; when I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, The LORD will be a light to me. (Micah 7:8).

**You shall be no longer called the mistress of kingdoms:** (v5) (the lady of kingdoms in KJV) the word mistress/lady comes from the Hebrew word (*g<sup>e</sup>bereth*) and can refer to a kept woman who is acting as a mistress or to a master and lord over others. In the context of these verses both meanings are correct in that the Empire of Babylon was the master and lord over the nations and it was by the trade, wealth and taxes of the nations that Babylon stood in magnificence above all other nations.

Babylon is symbolised by the image of a vain, sensual thoughtless female living in the heights of royal luxury and wealth that has not only been defiled, degraded and endured overwhelming sufferings, but is also reduced to grinding flour with a millstone (v2) to earn an income. This was considered one of the lowest and most laborious jobs. The exalted Empire of Babylon will no longer be called the head and glory of all kingdoms or considered the most notable, potent, and glorious nation the world has seen, but will be brought to utter ruin.

- Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the splendour and pomp of the Chaldeans, will be like Sodom and Gomorrah when God overthrew them. (Isaiah 13:19).

The people of Babylon are pictured as lovers of pleasure who trusted in their idols and gods and pridefully believed in their heart that they were such a rich and powerful Empire with mighty armies that no nation could come against them and therefore boasted of their wealth and strength and their power to defeat and conquer all enemies that would attempt to do so. They were so arrogant that they not only believed that there was no other nation on earth as magnificent as they were, but also believed that their great wealth and power gave them absolute security.

However the LORD is telling them that despite all their magnificence amongst the nations they will be brought to ruin like a delicate and beautiful woman is brought to great grief and sorrow when a strong man invades her home and robs her of her children and destroys all that she treasures and values. It matters not how magnificent a nation maybe or how rich they are in wealth or how mighty their weapons of war and their armies are if God has purposed to bring judgment upon them they will not stand.

**I was angry with my people; I profaned my heritage:** (v6) the picture here is taken from an earthly father who has raised his children in love, but as they have grown older they have not only become rebellious against their fathers good teaching, but are also influencing others to follow their corrupt and wicked ways so the father being a father of love and of justice is forced to punish and discipline them.

This is exactly what happened with Israel, they had not only become rebellious and set their hearts diamond hard against the world of the LORD that came to them through the prophets, but had also turned to worship idols and pagan gods and

were extremely corrupt and wicked so God used Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon as His servant, (Jer. 25:9) to bring His judgment and punishment upon them. But instead of Babylon showing mercy and compassion to God's people while in captivity which is expected to be shown to all people subdued by another they oppressed them and afflicted them with misery and cruelty and therefore God is now about to bring His judgment upon them.

**Babylon added to their guilt:** often the nation God uses to bring punishment upon another maybe as guilty of corruption as the nation they are punishing. If they afflict unjust cruelty upon the enemy while executing God's justice they add to their guilt. Should this be the case God will bring His judgment upon them when they have fulfilled the work to which He is using them for.

God used the Babylonians to chastise His people, but they treated them with unwarranted oppression and cruelty during their seventy year captivity and by doing so added to their guilt against humanity which in turn brought God's judgment upon them. When Israel rebelled, turned to other gods and acted wickedly God would permit corrupt nations to prevail against them, but tyrants who cruelly and unjustly oppressed them would bring His judgment upon themselves.

**Babylon and the book of Revelation:** many prophecies concerning Babylon embrace Babylon during the era of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and the Babylon spoken of in the book of Revelation. Prophetically the Babylon spoken of during the days of Nebuchadnezzar can be seen as a prelude of the ultimate and more perfect and complete fulfilment in a future period when God pours out His judgment upon the Babylon spoken of in the following verses which will not only affect the Middle East, but will also affect all nations and populations of the world.

- Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast. (Rev. 18:2).
- The kings of the earth will stand far off, in fear of her torment, and say, "Alas! Alas! You great city, you mighty city, Babylon! For in a single hour your judgment has come." (Rev. 18:10).
- Alas, alas, for the great city Babylon that was clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold, with jewels, and with pearls! <sup>17</sup>For in a single hour all this wealth has been laid waste. (Rev. 18:16).
- The kings of the earth threw dust on their heads as they wept and mourned, crying out, "Alas, alas, for the great city where all who had ships at sea grew rich by her wealth! For in a single hour she has been laid waste." (Rev. 18:19).
- Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "So will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence, and will be found no more." (Rev. 18:21).

**Babylon and the world's financial system:** the Babylonians were money-lenders not only out of dedicated policy but with fervour, zest, and relish. One of their proverbs expresses this outlook clearly:-

- The giving of a loan is like making love; the returning of a loan is like having a son born.

They were a breed of happy, proud, heartless and ruthless moneylenders. Their whole world of business moved in terms of credit and financing, and their whole concept of social control and of imperialism rested on usury. It is not surprising that Babylon the Great, the harlot, is the type in Revelation of the One-World Order which shall seduce all nations.

Loans for God's people and their economy are not the basis of normal financial management as they were with Babylon, but of abnormal circumstances. They have their place, but they operate in terms of absolute understanding between the lender and the borrower as well as having clear, definite and obvious restrictions. The two kinds of loans that are recognised in the Bible were:-

- Loans to the believer with security, but without interest.
- Loans to the unbeliever with security and with interest.

But, in both instances the security is something real, it is a tangible asset, in goods or in money that is transferred and involves only the two parties to the contract. Modern banking is radically different. Banks create money by an official authorization and by one party simply recording a loan and a deposit on their books (which means the loan is money that does not actually exist and therefore to pay the interest back someone has to lose money).

**Example:** if I personally loan a person \$100 and charge them \$10 interest and they give me an IOU saying they owe me \$110 for them to pay back the \$10 interest someone has to lose \$10 because the \$10 interest I charged doesn't actually exist except on the piece of paper that says, IOU \$10.

Unlike the personal and limited action of a biblical loan where the interest is real money or a service or some material object, the consequence of worldly loans is inflation, (the decreasing of the prior association of money value to total goods and services) and as a result there is a decreasing of the value of all money.

These types of loans mean that there is always an element of robbery in that they reduce the value of all other money previously in existence. Modern central banking (i.e. the Federal Reserve System) is a modern application of the old Babylonian principles and is equally seductive in helping to bring about the lure of the Dream of Empire

**Federal Reserve System:** prior to the introduction of central banking, the ability to create money by an official authorization was relatively limited, and it depended in large measure on the confidence of the individuals in the local bank. Today, the instrument of control has passed to the Federal Reserve System, its directors and stockholders, the Treasury Department, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, and other agencies who are engaged in manipulating the money supply.

Biblical law is hostile to a money system that is based on credit, because it creates an abnormal and oppressive lifestyle of debt for a country or individuals who live by it. The Babylonian system of economics today is anti-biblical and as such will incur the judgment of God, whose advance warnings in Scripture proclaim:-

- I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was made bright with his glory and he called out with a mighty voice, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon for all nations, kings and merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living." (Rev. 18:1-3).

The merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her Babylon since no one buys her gold, silver, jewels, pearls and fine linen anymore (Rev. 18:11-12).

**You who said, "No one sees my wickedness," Evil shall come Upon You.**

Isaiah 47:10-11 ----- <sup>10</sup>You felt secure in your wickedness, you said, "No one sees me"; your wisdom and your knowledge led you astray, and you said in your heart, "I am, and there is no one besides me." <sup>11</sup>But evil shall come upon you, which you will not know how to charm away; disaster shall fall upon you, for which you will not be able to atone; and ruin shall come upon you suddenly, of which you know nothing.

The expression, "No one sees me," maybe true in many cases concerning others born of a woman not seeing the secret and hidden sins of others, but it is certainly not true of God. Nothing can be hidden from His eternal and omnipresent eyes.

Babylon's great success, prosperity and fame gave them a false sense of security in that they believed in their heart that they could live and do as they pleased, because no one saw their wickedness, meaning that God did not see their wickedness. Their reasoning for this was because they had been blessed with great victories and wealth rather as they might have expected been punished for their wickedness.

Even today many are deceived into a false sense of security by material wealth, success, prosperity and fame, but none of these things will count before God on the Day of Judgment. Today God's judgment is delayed, it can rightly be said that we live in the long day of death and the long day of grace, but just because God's judgment at this time is delayed does not mean that it will not come or that those who act corruptly will escape the punishment due to their wickedness.

**Disaster and ruin shall suddenly fall upon you:** (v11) the LORD use Cyrus king of Persia as His anointed shepherd (Isaiah 44:28) (Isaiah 45:1) to bring about this sudden disaster upon the great Empire of Babylon. Cyrus not only brought Babylon to utter ruin, but also gave the people of Israel written permission to return to the beloved city Jerusalem and rebuild the temple of God. For further information concerning Cyrus see the notes under the title, "Cyrus the king of Persia," following (v1-3) (above).

### **Your many Counsellors are Stubble that Cannot Save You or Themselves.**

Isaiah 47:12-15 ----- <sup>12</sup>Stand fast in your enchantments and your many sorceries, with which you have labored from your youth; perhaps you may be able to succeed; perhaps you may inspire terror. <sup>13</sup>You are wearied with your many counsels; let them stand forth and save you, those who divide the heavens, who gaze at the stars, who at the new moons make known what shall come upon you. <sup>14</sup>Behold they, are like stubble; the fire consumes them; they cannot deliver themselves from the power of the flame. No coal for warming oneself is this, no fire to sit before! <sup>15</sup>Such to you are those with whom you have labored, who have done business with you from your youth; they wander about each in his own direction; there is no one to save you.

Isaiah calls the Babylonian people to tell their sorcerers to seek their gods and their counsellors to look to the stars and the moon (as they commonly did) and predict what is going to come to pass concerning their nation and let them save Babylon from the disaster that the LORD in this chapter proclaims will come upon them.

Isaiah being a prophet of the true God knows that it matters not how much time in trances or prayer Babylon's sorcerers and counsellors spend seeking the will of their gods it is all in vain. Isaiah with this knowledge and absolute confidence and authority tells them that before the LORD all their sorcerers and counsellors are like dry rubbish that is consumed by the flames of a fire and that there is no one amongst their kingdom that can save them from the impending disaster that is to come, which of course refers to Cyrus and his armies.

The image painted in these verses is of the people of Babylon and her counsellors sitting securely in front of a fire warming themselves for comfort all the while being totally unaware that the fire of the LORD'S judgment is about to come upon them and in this fire they will find no comfort.

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### **The History of Israel and Assyria and Judah and Babylon.**

God sent prophet after prophet to warn Judah and Israel of impending doom if they did not change their wicked ways, but they set their hearts diamond hard against the word of God's prophets (Zech. 7:12). The LORD through the faithful prophets told them to surrender themselves to the King of Babylon and God would nurture them while in Babylonian captivity and deliver them.

But they continued to rebel against the word of the LORD and turned to other gods and entered into gross sin so the LORD used Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon (who He called His servant (Jer. 25:9) to bring the curses of the covenant upon them. The curses of the covenant are found in (Deut. 28:15-68) and the blessing of the covenant in (Deuteronomy 28:1-14).

The fierce armies of Babylon invaded the land of Judah, laid their farm land waste, attacked Jerusalem (the two tribes of Judah) and pillaged the temple. Zedekiah was blinded and carried to Babylon, and the great bulk of the population was taken in chains there with him (around 587 B.C.).

Later Babylon conquered Assyria who had previously taken Israel (the ten tribes in the land of Samaria) captive. They went into captivity to the Empire of Babylon as two rebellious nations who had turned from God to idols and were even sacrificing their own children to pagan gods. They were under Babylonian rule for the next seventy years.

Archaeologists have found that all of the cities of Judah were completely destroyed at this time, thus ended the glorious kingdom of David and Solomon. Observers would have said that the Hebrew nation was annihilated, and indeed, the other nations conquered by the Assyrians and Babylonians did cease to exist. But the prophets proclaimed a better hope for the chosen people. "A remnant shall return" Isaiah had said, and in time this remnant, purged and returned, became the basis on which a new Israel would be built.

**Now here is the good news:** while in captivity God moulded them like a master potter moulds a beautiful clay jar, Israel and Judah went into Babylon as two unfaithful nations that had turned away from the LORD to idols and other gods. Seventy years later, Cyrus (King of Persia) who the LORD called His anointed shepherd (Isaiah 44:28) and took by His right hand (Isaiah 45:1) to conquer the Empire of Babylon gave written permission for Israel to return to Jerusalem.

Under Ezra and Nehemiah God brought Israel and Judah back to their beloved city Jerusalem as one united nation faithful to only one God, the LORD their God, the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob (Israel never turned to idols or pagan gods again)

Multitudes of Jewish families who had been scattered throughout the nations returned to Jerusalem and the land of Israel with triumphant joy and rejoicing. When the temple of God was completed their faith was once again established and a golden time of prosperity and peace followed.

Sadly Israel as a nation never recognised their Messiah the Christ when he came, but even this was in the LORD'S sovereign will. The prophet Zechariah tells us when, the Lord returns in glory: -

- God will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn (Zech. 12:10-14).

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End.