

Danger of the Occult

Isaiah 47

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Isaiah 47:1-7 – The humiliation of Babylon (NIV)

*“Go down, sit in the dust, Virgin Daughter Babylon; sit on the ground without a throne, queen city of the Babylonians. No more will you be called tender or delicate.”*² *Take millstones and grind flour; take off your veil. Lift up your skirts, bare your legs, and wade through the streams.*³ *Your nakedness will be exposed and your shame uncovered. I will take vengeance; I will spare no one.”*⁴ *Our Redeemer—the Lord Almighty is his name—is the Holy One of Israel.*⁵ *“Sit in silence, go into darkness, queen city of the Babylonians; no more will you be called queen of kingdoms.”*⁶ *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.*⁷ *You said, ‘I am forever—the eternal queen!’ But you did not consider these things or reflect on what might happen.*

v1-2 – How is Babylon represented here?

Come down and sit in the dust: Isaiah pictures proud Babylon as a humiliated woman, who shall no more be called *tender and delicate*. She is forced to work, stripped of her fine clothing and is forced to march in a forced relocation (*pass through the rivers*).

- The image of a rich, frivolous and sensual young woman who, as a prisoner, is doomed to the despicable state of a slave.

v3 – Why is God taking out vengeance on Babylon?

I will take vengeance, and I will not arbitrate with a man: The humiliation God will impose on Babylon is exactly the humiliation she put upon Judah and Jerusalem. When God humbles Babylon, He is taking vengeance and cannot be talked out of His judgment.

v4 – How is the Lord of hosts is glorified?

As for our Redeemer: Isaiah cannot help but praise God and boast in his redeemer when he sees how God will take vengeance on this enemy of God’s people.

What does it tell us that the Hebrew word, *gaal*, for “our Redeemer” means “kinsman-redeemer”?

A *gaal* had to be a close relative. Christ is this too, for according to His humanity He came forth from the Jews.

- Sometimes a *gaal* had to exercise bloody vengeance. Christ will work bloody vengeance upon Babylon for its oppression of His people.
- Frequently a *gaal* had to pay a ransom to free a prisoner. The Lord Jesus paid with His blood on Golgotha to ransom His people.

On the basis of these considerations, it is evident that the name *gaal* is very fitting word describing the Savior.

v5 – What was God’s plan for the Babylonians?

To go into obscurity.

Why is Babylon referred to as a daughter of the Chaldeans?

The Chaldeans were the fore-runners of the Babylonians and the two terms are essentially synonymous.

Why is Babylon referred to as a lady of kingdoms?

Babylon was not just another kingdom but the “lady” of kingdoms, this speaks to her having the high position among the nations. Indeed, this is essentially what Daniel said...

Daniel 9:36-39 – Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king. You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all—you are this head of gold. But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth.

v6 – Why will God humble Babylon?

I was angry with My people: Babylon thought that she conquered Judah and Jerusalem through her own power. But Babylon didn’t see that she really conquered them because God was angry with His people, and therefore used Babylon as an instrument of His work.

- God says, “You didn’t know that I had given them into your hand.”

How did Babylon go too far as Judah's disciplinarian?

You showed them no mercy: As an instrument in God's hand, Babylon was too enthusiastic in their attack on God's people. Even though God allowed it and used it, they still should have shown mercy to God's people.

- We are always safe when we take the path of mercy.

v7 – Why would Babylon say, *I shall be a lady forever*?

Babylon was blind, cruel, and now is shown to be proud and presumptuous. For all these reasons, God promised to humble Babylon.

How is the attitude that "*I shall be a lady forever*" reflected in the current Laodicean church?

In her self-satisfaction and frivolous self-deception, she says, *I shall be a lady*. She claims royal riches, power and honor for herself forever... being wealthy while being spiritually poor.

There is also a sense that...

2 Peter 3:4 – *all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation*

They do not expect Jesus to return any time soon. They are just "doing church" as if we are not on the very cusp of His return.

- It becomes all-too easy to compromise with the world... go along to get along
- No sense of urgency to get on with what God is calling them to do
- Missing evangelistic opportunities to take advantage of the sense that something is just not right with the world
- Missing out on the reward for looking forward to the Lord's return

Isaiah 47:8-15 – The rebuke of Babylon (NIV)

⁸ "Now then, listen, you lover of pleasure, 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.' ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ You have trusted in your 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.' ¹¹ 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. ¹² "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. ¹³ All the counsel you have received has only worn you out! Let your astrologers come

forward, those stargazers who make predictions month by month, let them save you from what is coming upon you.

¹⁴ Surely they are like stubble; the fire will burn them up. They cannot even save themselves from the power of the flame. These are not coals for warmth; this is not a fire to sit by. ¹⁵ That is all they are to you— these you have dealt with and labored with since childhood. All of them go on in their error; there is not one that can save you.

v8 – What was the attitude of Babylon?

Hear this now, you who are given to pleasures, who dwell securely: She was prideful and arrogant

I am, and there is no one else besides me; I shall not sit as a widow: She had confidence in empire building that it would continue. (*her children*)

v9 – Why else would God judge Babylon?

Judgment would also come to Babylon *because of the multitude of your sorceries, for the great abundance of your enchantments*. Babylon was famous as a founding place and breeding ground for occult arts and practices.

What was the problem with sorcery?

Sorcery, the use of spells, divination, or speaking to spirits, is clearly condemned in the Bible. The word sorcery in Scripture is always used in reference to an evil or deceptive practice. For example, King Manasseh is condemned for his many evil practices, including sorcery...

2 Chronicles 33:6 – *And he burned his sons as an offering in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, and used fortune-telling and omens and sorcery, and dealt with mediums and with necromancers. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger.*

The apostle Paul lists sorcery as one of many sinful practices that characterizes unbelievers (Gal 5:19-21).

- The New Testament Greek word translated "sorcery" is pharmakeia.
- In Paul's day, the word primarily meant "dealing in poison" or "drug use" and applied to divination and spell-casting because sorcerers often used drugs along with incantations and amulets to conjure occult power.

What is a medium?

Mediums serve as conduits, establishing a connection between the physical and spiritual realms. Through their heightened intuition and psychic abilities, mediums act as intermediaries, transmitting messages, guidance, and healing from the spirit world to the living.

What is a necromancer?

Unlike mediums, necromancers typically engage in darker rituals and may employ necromantic tools such as skulls, bones, or black mirrors to facilitate their communication with spirits. These rituals often involve invocations, evocations, and complex ceremonial practices designed to bridge the gap between the living and the dead.

If sorcery didn't work, why did people practice it?

It did work sometimes, the demons it attracted would encourage its use because it bypassed God's wisdom and power in order to give glory to Satan instead.

- Sorcery offers a wisdom that is "earthly, unspiritual, of the devil" (James 3:15). Our wisdom comes from God (James 3:17), not from deceiving spirits.
- The power of God is much greater than the power of sorcery (1 John 4:4).
- God has no tolerance for sorcery calling it an abomination. Sorcery is listed among the sinful practices of the nations surrounding Israel (Deuteronomy 18:10-12).

How is it sorcery will make a comeback in the end times?

Revelation 18:23 – *For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived*

Spiritual Babylon, representing the false political, economic, & religious system of the last days, will deceive "all nations" with sorcery before judgment falls.

- Certainly, the who world was deceived by the Covid pharmakeia.

v10 – How can anyone trust in their wickedness?

This is a searching insight into the heart of the proud sinner. They trust in their continuing wickedness to cover the tracks of their previous sin. They are clever, but their wisdom in wickedness has warped them (*Your wisdom and your knowledge have warped you*).

v11 – What would become of Babylon?

Therefore evil shall come upon you: And it did for Babylon, which was suddenly conquered in one night when they believed all was safe and secure (Daniel 5).

How did Babylon not know from where the evil they will experience arises?

They did not know God and certainly not the fact that He is in control. It was God who raised up the Persians to judge them.

What principle can we draw from the humbling of arrogant Babylon?

The rebuke of Babylon's pride is a simple fulfillment of a principle repeated three times in the Scripture: *God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.* (Proverbs 3:34, James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5).

v12 – How did God mock the Babylonians?

Stand now with your enchantments and the multitude of your sorceries: God challenged the sorcerers of Babylon to save the people from His judgment. After all, if they had real spiritual power, they should be able to. But their weakness in the face of the LORD's judgment would be exposed.

How did the Babylonian practice of sorcery reflect 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.

v13 – What others were Babylon looking to for deliverance?

astrologers, stargazers, monthly prognosticators (NKJV)

What is the problem with astrology?

Astrology is the "interpretation" of an assumed influence the stars (and planets) exert on human destiny. This is a false belief.

- The royal astrologers of the Babylonian court were put to shame by God's prophet Daniel and were powerless to interpret the king's dream (Daniel 2:27).
- God specifies astrologers as among those who will be burned as stubble in God's judgment (Isaiah 47:13-14).
- Astrology as a form of divination is expressly forbidden in Scripture (Deuteronomy 18:10-14).
- God forbade the children of Israel to worship or serve the "host of heaven" (Deuteronomy 4:19).
- Several times in their history, however, Israel fell into that very sin (2 Kings 17:16 is one example). Their worship of the stars brought God's judgment each time.

v14 – What would become of the astrologers, stargazers, monthly prognosticators?

Behold, they shall be as stubble, the fire shall burn them: Not only could the sorcerers of Babylon not deliver others from God's judgment, but they also couldn't even deliver themselves. The fire of judgment that would come upon them would be severe; it would not be a coal to be warmed by, nor a fire to sit before.

- False religion may seem to offer the warmth of 'helpfulness', but it is not a fire to sit by, rather a fire which will burn up, a furnace of destruction.

v15 – What is God’s final Word to the sorcerers and astrologers?

No one shall save you: What a sobering final sentence. This is true for all who will not find their salvation in the LORD; if you will not look to Him and be saved, then certainly no one shall save you.

Necromancy and astrology are both occult practices...

What other occult practices does God condemn?

The dictionary defines occult as “hidden, secret and mysterious, particularly pertaining to the supernatural.” Other occult practices are witchcraft (Wicca), the black arts, fortune telling, magic (both black and white), Ouija boards, Tarot cards, spiritism, parapsychology, and Satanism.

Why are people so fascinated with the occult?

Occult practices appeal to our natural curiosity... Many people who get involved in the occult begin with “harmless” practices such as playing with a Ouija board.

- Many who have experimented this way have found themselves going deeper and deeper into the occult.
- Unfortunately, this type of involvement is akin to quicksand—easy to get into and difficult to get out of.

Another fascination of the occult is that it appears to offer quick and easy answers to life’s questions.

- Occult practices attract demons, who help just enough to keep their victims intrigued, while exerting more and more control over gullible hearts and minds.

How has the occult been a problem for Israel in history?

God strictly warned the Israelites against being involved with the occult (Leviticus 20:6). The pagan nations that surrounded Israel were steeped in divination, sorcery, witchcraft, and spiritism, and this is one reason why God gave His people the authority to drive them out of the land (Deuteronomy 18:9–14).

Are occult practices a problem today?

The rise of interest in the occult is a sign of the end of the age:

1 Timothy 4:1 – *The [Holy] Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons*

- We have whole religions established through occult practices: Mormonism & Islam.
- Churches are going apostate embracing the woke values of the world.
- Universalism and salvation-by-works are being embraced by professing Christians.

How are we to recognize the occult and those who promote it?

An incident involving Paul and Barnabas in the early days of the church is instructive...

Acts 13:6–10 – *They “traveled through the whole island until they came to Paphos. There they met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus, who was an attendant of the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. The proconsul, an intelligent man, sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith. Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, ‘You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord?’”*

In this account, we see several characteristics of those involved in the occult.

- They are false prophets (verse 6) who deny the basic doctrines of Christianity: the deity of Christ, the fall of man into sin, heaven, hell, salvation and the atoning work of Christ on the cross.
- Second, they seek to influence other people, particularly those in positions of power, to turn them from the faith (verses 6-7).
- Third, they do everything in their power to keep the true gospel of Christ from being spread, opposing His ministers at every turn (verse 8).

When the truth of the gospel is curtailed, watered down, or flatly rejected, Satan and his demons rejoice.

What applications come to mind from our discussion?

- We may be in the Laodicean Church Age but that doesn’t mean we have to be a Laodicean believer.
- God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.
- The occult is deadly, have no part in it.
- Increasing occult practices are a sign of the times; get on with what God is calling you to do before it’s too late.