

Title: If I have _____.
Text: Isaiah 13.1 – 14.2
Theme: True hope is in God alone
Series: Isaiah #18
Prop Stmtnt: Hope in that which will be judged is hopeless.
Aim: I aim to call my people to put all of their security and rest in Christ.

Babylon. It is not a city that is, but a city that was. And it was, for a very long time. It's roots go all the way back to Genesis 10. In Genesis 11 we learn about mankind's organized attempt to replace God with themselves by constructing a tower in order to make a name for themselves. The name they wanted to make was in direct opposition to THE name. So, from its very beginning, Babylon was not only a place, but Babylon was also a belief; a worldview that had no place for God. In fact, Babylon was anti-God.

The Bible reveals God's view of the world. This world is the battleground between two kingdoms. The 1st Kingdom is the Kingdom of God (sometimes referred to as the Kingdom of Heaven), which has been handed by the Father, to His Son, Jesus Christ. The 2nd Kingdom (anti-kingdom or imposter-kingdom) is headed by Satan, the anti-God, the imposter God who will, one day, put forth his anti-Christ. Throughout the Bible then we read the story of the world. It is the story of two people: followers of God or followers of idols, two ways: the Narrow way that appears to be hard and the Wide way that appears to be easy, two beliefs: the gospel, or man's rules, two goals: God's glory or man's glory, two economies: giving all over to Christ, or keeping all you can for self, and two ends: eternal life or eternal death.

These two kingdoms are represented by two cities: The city of God (Jerusalem) and the city of man (Babylon). Babylon, for all of her wealth, power, culture, beauty and impressive architecture and art is at its heart the representation of the kingdom of man, with all of its atrocities. The buildings may be splendid, the music and art stunning, the food, the delicacies, the clothing and the entertainment, nothing less than spectacular, but underneath it all is heart that hates God. And what comes with that is all of the atrocities of violence, murder, plunder and debauchery.

Babylon is described in the book of Revelation as the great prostitute. She has no ethics, no values, no core belief, no true dignity and worth. She is full of herself. She is full of self-importance, but upon closer examination she has nothing of true value to be exalted about. It is all image. There is no substance. The citizens of Babylon are the people who look outside of God for their worth. When you look outside of God, you are trusting in something or someone else to validate you. Whatever that is, it is like drinking saltwater. It will only leave you thirstier.

Let's say that you are a girl in high school and all of your friends have a boyfriend. What are you tempted to believe? If I have a boyfriend, then I have value. That is a rule of Babylon. Now, is that true? No! A boyfriend cannot give you value. That

comes from God. But, ironically, if you think it comes from a boyfriend, then you are tempted to be “desperate” in order to either get one, or keep one, even if he is a jerk. How do you explain why so many otherwise intelligent and talented girls date (excuse me “hang out”) with so many jerks?! Babylon says, “If you have a _____ then you have value.” And Babylon makes the rules (at least it appears that way). Babylon tells us what to wear, what to eat, what to drive, where to live, where to vacation, what to like, who to vote for, who to look like, dress like, listen to and what movies to watch. Babylon is a mirage. It is a fake oasis that promises satisfaction, but cannot give you any because there is no water. There is no true life.

Let’s say that you have a Twitter and/or Facebook account. You are tempted to believe that you have value if you have more followers or more friends than other people you know. That is a Babylon rule. Are you going to believe it? The story is old. It has been told over and over and over. The rich, the famous, the powerful, the stars are for the most part empty, narcissistic, demanding and desperate people. But yet, people believe the Babylon rule – be like them. Envy them. Buy their clothes.

But it is more than boyfriends and twitter. What is it for you? Fill in the blank. “If I have ____ then I will have value.” Whatever is in the blank is your Babylon. It is that which desires to usurp God in your life. Compare that up against God.

Every age has a Babylon. In the NT days, Babylon was Rome. Today, she may be New York, Washington DC, Paris, London, Moscow, Tehran, or any other city where the leadership thumbs its nose at God, and seeks to establish kingdoms on the rules of man. In fact, Jerusalem, often acted like Babylon. And when she did, she faced the same fate as Babylon as well. All of the kingdoms (little “k”) in this world are simply part of the kingdom of the imposter. Today, as the world becomes more and more connected, as nations unite and continents band together, as this world pushes more and more toward being one economy, with one leader and one religion, it will be a worldwide Babylon. Babylon will be expressed in terms of a world that believes that if it is united, it can accomplish anything it wants. But no kingdom of man can sustain the weight of its own arrogance. There is only one true king, who alone possesses the right to rule. Therefore, there is only one true Kingdom. The other kingdom(s) is doomed. Babylon, and everyone in her, and all that she represents has no hope. It does not matter how powerful she may appear to be, how wealthy she is, how cultured, advanced, organized and efficient she may be, God is the Lord of all the nations. No nation, kingdom, power or people will replace him. Every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord.

Read Text:

Isaiah, like the Bible has 2 parts:

- 1) Judgment is coming (1-39)
 - a. Intro (1-6)

- b. Who are you going to trust? (7-39)
 - i. Ahaz trusted the wrong savior (7-11)
 - ii. Do not trust saviors who cannot save (12-35)
 - iii. Hezekiah trusted God (36-39)

2) But Hope will win (40-66)

This morning we are looking at chapter 13. We are at the front end of a major section of this book. Over and over we are going to hear this theme: Do not trust in that which will be destroyed. Trust God! Chapter 13 is clear. Babylon is doomed. Why would you invest in a business going bankrupt?

1. **No Power can stand before God's army.** (1-5)

“The oracle” (Heb. Massa) has the idea of burden. (14.28; 15.1; 17.1; 21.1, 11, 13; 22.1; 23.1) These are all words of judgment upon these nations. But why? Why would God reveal these judgments to Judah when these other nations would most likely never hear them? I don't think their ultimate purpose was to judge the nations as much as they were designed to encourage Judah to trust God and be saved!

When Isaiah wrote this, Babylon was not yet a military powerhouse, though she was destined to be. She was, however a cultural and financial center. Babylon was a city that had influence. Everyone, even the Assyrians wanted to be “approved” by Babylon. In fact, Assyria gave Babylon a level of independence it did not give to most others and one of the Assyrian kings, Tiglath-pileser III actually had himself crowned, not only as the Assyrian king, but as the king of Babylon. Babylon, even in Isaiah's day was the symbol of arrogance, power, greed and man's will. When Isaiah wrote this, Ninevah was the capital of Assyria, but Babylon was the cultural capital. It would not be for another 75 years or so before Babylon would rise to prominence. And interestingly enough, the Babylonian empire, would much beyond 100 years. And yet, Babylon was the capital of the empire that destroyed Jerusalem. Even the Assyrians could not do that. But, that was all yet to come. When Isaiah wrote this, Babylon's short days of glory were before her. She had her moment in time. She had her one minute of fame. Now, she is done. Her ruins speak of day when the world came to her, longing to be approved and accepted by her.

Verse two speaks of a call to arms. On top of a hill that can be seen for miles around a signal is being given to assemble an army. Verse 3 makes it clear that God is calling this army together and in verses 4-5, we get this sense of how fast, how sudden, how utterly surprising and swift the destruction is going to be. The mountains that were supposed to protect them are now full of soldiers. The sound of an overwhelming army assembling and getting into position, ready for the assault echoes down into the city striking terror into the people. Too long they have denied God. Too long they have gone their own way and mocked him. Now, they have no defenses.

Why would you trust Babylon, when Babylon cannot stand before God?

2. **God will destroy the destroyers.** (6-18)

The “day of the LORD” (6, 9) is a time of deliverance for the people of God, but a time of unspeakable terror for the enemies of God. Whenever the people of God have gone through times of persecution, they (we) have always found refuge and comfort in the fact that this present darkness and deep distress is only for a while. The enemies of God have no such hope. As such, the prophet is right to say, “howl.” (6) This could also be translated wail. It is a cry of anguish that finds no comfort. Those who were the destroyers, who in their conquering unleashed their own passions in unbridled fury and rage against the women and children and elderly will themselves face a terror worse than that which they inflicted on others. In that day, those who did the destroying will be destroyed. Those who were the powerful will be helpless. Those who assaulted the defenseless will be defenseless. The way in which this destruction comes upon Babylon (and all those in human history who have been this way) will be such that it is the hand of God that is behind all of it. (6) Verse 7 speaks of how all of man’s plans, weapons, and strategies will be useless and how the hearts of the armies and peoples will melt like butter. The bravado will be gone. The impressive parades and displays of military hardware will be over. All of this will be replaced by terror and panic as reality begins to set in, that everything that these people have trusted in is absolutely useless.

Every person who trusts in the city of man will be utterly defenseless and rightfully full of terror on the day of the LORD. What makes you think that you are different? What do you have to have in order to stand in the presence of the Almighty and not be swept away by his perfect righteousness? There is only one thing that will protect you. It is not your righteousness. It is Christ. It is Christ alone. It is Christ, plus nothing, minus nothing. When you look fully and only to Christ as your King, your Righteousness, your Substitute, your Savior, your death, your Life, and your resurrection, then you are counted as being IN him. Being IN him means that you are credited with; clothed with his righteousness. As the great hymn says, “Dressed in his righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne.” Christ is your only hope. He is the only King who saves. All gods will destroy you because they themselves will be destroyed.

When God created this world, he created it with design and order. God did not create the world to be able to function smoothly with sin and rebellion. When sin and rebellion against his rule came into this world, what happened to this earth is akin to what happens to your body when you get food poisoning. From that day on, the earth has been in turmoil. It heaves, it wretches, it tremors, it sweats. It cannot handle rebellion against the Creator. It is out of order. Verse 10 speaks of the stars, the sun, and the moon that are affected by this.

The root of this is pride. Repeatedly, the prophet warns us about this most sinister of evils. Pride is our enemy since it is an attempt to take glory away from the only

One to whom glory truly belongs. The human race has the capacity to wipe out most of the population of the northern hemisphere through nuclear weapons. Verse 12 depicts the aftermath of destruction on that level.

3. **There is no hope for the destroyers.** (19-22)

These verses paint a picture of desolation for Babylon. This is what she is destined to become. The sound of merry, music, weddings, and commerce will be replaced by an eerie silence broken only by the howls of creatures who now live, hunt and haunt where the powerful used to sit in splendor. Babylon was a city that collapsed under the weight of its own importance. It could not support its own pride. No kingdom of man can survive.

The judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah came swiftly but not without warning. That event was a hint of what awaits all nations and people who forget God. Our world, our own nation appears to be bi-polar. On the one hand, we gather for the Olympics and participate in ceremonies that are stunning in their staging and always hopeful in their message. We create medical breakthroughs that are astounding. The decoding of DNA and the opportunities this presents for developing smart bomb antibiotics and intricate cancer fighting medicines are wide-open. We can help countries with pure water, food production and a host of health issues, but at the same time we cannot stop fighting. All of our medical, economic, and technological advances are ultimately going to be blown up by our inability to control our own egos. The potential of the human race for advancement is only out done by the human races' ability to destroy itself. But this is not the last word. Judgment will not have the last word.

4. **God will rescue his own.** (14.1-2)

Isaiah looked into the future when Judah would be overrun by the Babylonians. But, Babylon would not last. The enemy of the people of God would fall. And she did, hard. The destruction of Babylon was the occasion for the Jews to be freed. The Babylonian empire was replaced by the Medes and the Persians who let the Jews go back to their homes. The destruction of Babylon was a sign that pointed to the day when all of the Babylons of the earth would be destroyed and the restoration of God's people to their land was a sign that pointed to the day when God would rescue his own and restore everything to the way it was supposed to be. This marks another major theme in Isaiah. In judgment there is hope. These two verses show a complete reversal of fortunes. The powerful now will be weak then and the weak now will be powerful then. In the end, the destroyers now will be destroyed then and the victims now will rule then. In the end, the hated now will be loved then, and the respected now will be rejected then.

These verses also describe a new kind of slavery. God's people are not described as going out to conquer and control the world, but instead are depicted as magnets that attract the people from the nations who come and want to join them in service.

Ancient Babylon's downfall was cataclysmic. The complete and utter collapse of this world will be just as much expected on a universal scale. This world, and everything that she stands for is already condemned. Why would you trust this world? Why would you put your hope on living by her rules and listening to her lies? This world has nothing for you. If I have _____ then I will have value. Really? If you answer that with talent, then

Today, Assyria and all of her glory lay buried beneath sand. Babylon is the home of ruins that can only speak of time that was. The gods of the ANE are history. Marduk, Baal, Molech and Chemosh are dead. Their influence, their celebrations, their traditions are filler for history books. But Yahweh lives. He is the great and only I AM. He always is and will never be was. He is all that you need. He has loved you through Christ. He has wooed you by giving you a treasure in Christ that is unspeakable in value.

Revelation 21.1-4

In the end, what will you wish then, that you trusted in now?