

Isaiah 47:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast laboured, even thy merchants, from thy youth: they shall wander every one to his quarter; none shall save thee.

Analysis

Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast laboured, even thy merchants, from thy youth. Babylon's commercial and magical partners prove utterly worthless in crisis. The Hebrew *yaga'* (laboured, toiled) indicates exhausting effort Babylon invested in alliances, trade networks, and occult practices. The phrase "from thy youth" suggests these relationships were long-established, dating to Babylon's origins. Yet accumulated partnerships cannot avert divine judgment.

"They shall wander every one to his quarter; none shall save thee" depicts panic-driven abandonment. When judgment strikes, Babylon's supposed allies scatter to protect themselves. The verb *ta'ah* (wander, stray) suggests confused flight without destination - fair-weather friends reveal their true character in catastrophe. The stark conclusion "none shall save thee" (*ein moshia'ech*) creates maximum contrast with Israel's God, repeatedly called Savior throughout Isaiah.

Reformed theology finds here a warning against misplaced trust. Human alliances, wealth, and wisdom cannot substitute for covenant relationship with God. Babylon's elaborate systems - commercial, military, religious - collapsed utterly because they lacked the one foundation that endures: the living God. This echoes Christ's parable of the wise and foolish builders (Matthew 7:24-27) - only what's built on God's word withstands judgment's storm.

Historical Context

Babylon's commercial network spanned from India to Egypt, making her the ancient world's economic hub. The city also attracted magicians, astrologers, and sorcerers from across Mesopotamia (v. 12-13). When Cyrus conquered Babylon in 539 BC, her merchant partners and occult practitioners scattered, prioritizing self-preservation over loyalty. The detailed description of merchant abandonment suggests Isaiah knew Babylon's economic foundation would prove illusory when tested by divine judgment.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What relationships, resources, or systems have you 'laboured with from your youth' that would prove inadequate if truly tested by crisis?
2. How does the merchants' scattering 'every one to his quarter' warn against building your life on transactional rather than covenantal relationships?
3. In what ways does Christ prove to be the Savior who never abandons, in contrast to Babylon's fair-weather allies?

Interlinear Text

אֲשֶׁר לְנָפְיוֹ כִּי

H3651

H1961

H0

H834

בְּגַעַת

Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast laboured

H3021

סָפֶכְ יְהֹ

even thy merchants

H5503

מִנְעָוָב יְהֹ

from thy youth

H5271

אִישׁ

every one

H376

לְעַבְרוֹן

to his quarter

H5676

תְּעוּ וְ

they shall wander

H8582

מוֹשִׁיעַן: אֵין

H369

none shall save

H3467

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