



2021 1Q Isaiah: Lesson 6 Playing God

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

We don't often get humor in our lessons, but today we do, let's read the first three paragraphs, "After a minister..."

SUNDAY

The lesson will focus our attention on Babylon—why? What does Babylon represent?

Babylon in Scripture represents Satan's kingdom—it wars against Jerusalem—which represents God's plan of salvation.

Remember the focus of Scripture—after Adam sins, in Genesis 3, God promises the Messiah, our Savior. The rest of the OT is focused on this battle between God's agencies working to bring the Messiah and Satan's agencies working to stop it.

This is why Babylon, and the other kingdoms we see in Scripture are highlighted, because they are used by Satan to try and destroy the people through whom God will bring Jesus.

And how is Babylon described in Bible prophecy?

MYSTERY
BABYLON THE GREAT
THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES
AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. (Rev 17:5 NIV84)

Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!
She has become a home for demons
and a haunt for every evil spirit,
a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird.
3 For all the nations have drunk
the maddening wine of her adulteries.
The kings of the earth committed adultery with her,
and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries."



4 Then I heard another voice from heaven say:

“Come out of her, my people,
so that you will not share in her sins,
so that you will not receive any of her plagues; (Rev 18:2-4 NIV84)

Why is Babylon a symbol of this detestable system? We see in history other nations that warred against Israel:

- Hittites
- Philistines
- Assyrians

Why are none of these the nation the Bible uses to depict as the mother of harlots, the representative of Satan’s kingdom—why Babylon?

There is another nation which comes up in Bible symbolism as representing Satan’s power also and that is Egypt (Rev 11:8). What does Egypt represent? How is Egypt different from Babylon and why was Babylon chosen over Egypt to represent the mother of harlots?

What is a harlot in Bible symbolism? An unfaithful person who defiles themselves or corrupts themselves spiritually with other lovers. Think of what is represented by what the harlot does (I am not trying to be too graphic, but consider the metaphor and what it represents). The harlot is intimate with people not her spouse, she lets others, not her husband enter her and deposit their seed. The harlot represents those people who are intimate with gods other than Jesus—they let the other gods into their heart and plant their weed-seeds, their lies, their falsehoods, into their hearts.

Understanding the symbolism of the harlot, why isn’t Egypt the mother of harlots—why Babylon?

What is the wine of Babylon that all the nations drink and get intoxicated upon? What does wine do? It confuses the thinking, impairs the judgment, while making people feel good. So Babylon has something that people ingest that confuses their thinking, impairs their judgment, and makes them feel good. Something different comes from Egypt, which makes Babylon the mother of harlots and the distributor of an intoxicating brew of lies.

If we focus on the nation of Israel as the agency through which Messiah and salvation come—what is the difference between Egypt and Babylon?

Didn’t both nations hold God’s people as slaves? So what is the difference?

Egypt was led by Pharaoh who denied God’s existence—“who is God that I should know Him.”

Babylon was led by Nebuchadnezzar who initially denied God but later accepted Him.



Now consider the sin of adultery—can you commit adultery against someone you have never known? For instance, can you cheat on your wife if you have never married? So, Egypt doesn't represent a harlot because Egypt represents those who never knew God, those who deny God. Egypt represents evolutionism, secularism, communism.

But Babylon represents those who accept God—but they betray Him. How?

- What else is unique about Babylon compared to other nations of the world who attacked Israel?
- What would make Babylon the mother of all the harlots and what is the wine that intoxicates the world getting the nations to commit adultery with her?
- And how are the people of God are caught up in this so much that God gives a special call for them to come out of Babylon?

Of the various nations that war against Israel, **Babylon is the first to create a legal code**, the Code of Hammurabi. In other words, **Babylon is the first of these abusing nations to most accurately represent Satan's law and Satan's government** and Satan's methods and to create the imposed law system as a form of righteousness or justice that every nation of the world drinks. This imposed law worldview as a means of justice is the wine that intoxicates the world. And the code of Hammurabi was law enacted at the behest or with the authority of their god—in other words the idea that this is how God operates and it is by God's will and through His power it is enforced. In God we trust! And when Nebuchadnezzar was converted he immediately passed imposed laws in regard to worshipping the God of Daniel.

So Babylon represents those who claim to worship God, but betray the Creator God and instead give their love, affection and hearts to an imperial dictator who makes up rules like humans do, and must use power to inflict punishment for sin, requiring legal payments to pay for sin. This false view will ultimately lead to the formation of the beast of Revelation that will seek social justice through human governments.

Recently, I received in the mail the book *The Subversion of Christianity* by Jacques Ellul. It was sent without any note so I don't know who sent it. I want to thank whomever sent it. I am finding it quite insightful. If any of you want a very deep and insightful book, this is a great book. But be warned, it is written for the academic, it is not an easy read.

He describes the process of how Christianity became subverted and points out several keys to the subversion. As immorality began to rise in society and the Christian populace, the church responded with more rules and law.

Ellul writes:

“The popes use laws to fight the corruption of the clergy. The church uses organization in its fight for unity...the church's reaction to the encounter with immorality, its immense attempt to enforce law and morality, and its reply to loose conduct in the ethical fields is closely connected with the error of confusing the church and society... The perversion, then, was that of making the gospel into law...the mistake was dealing with these on the moral and legal



plane instead of following the example of Paul, who always works through the moral question to the spiritual question, gets back to the essence of the revelation in Christ, and from this derives some models of conduct that are consistent with faith and love. The church did not do this. It thus set itself on the same level as the world and treated moral matters on the moral plane.” p. 88-89.

“Catholic Christianity becomes the state religion and an exchange takes place: the church is invested with political power, and it invests the emperor with religious power...We have to say very forcefully that we see here the perversion of revelation by participation in politics, by the seeking of power. The church lets itself be seduced, invaded, dominated by the ease with which it can now spread the gospel by force (*another* force than that of God) and use its influence to make the state, *too*, Christian. It is great acquiescence to the temptation Jesus himself resisted, for when Satan offers to give him all the kingdoms of earth, Jesus refuses, but the church accepts, not realizing from whom it is receiving the kingdoms...Christianity became the state religion...It is frightening to see how easily the church accepts all this. Hardly had it emerged from persecution before it itself began to persecute...The church is a political power but it is always at the service of the political power that is either in place or in the course of being installed...

“It will be republican under a republic as it is monarchist under a monarchy. Irrefutable theological arguments are always found. A monarchical regime reflects the monarchical unity of God. A republic reflects the people that God elects for himself on earth. Democracy shows that God associates himself with the will of the peoples. The tradition was already well established when in the sixth century the idea was formulated that the acts of God in history were performed through the Franks. The church could then become National Socialists (the German Christians) when Hitler came to power. IT could become communist (with notorious figures like Berecski and Hromadka) in communist countries. Each time it develops a theological argument to show that the power that has been set up is good...Once the church is read to associate with instituted power it is obliged to associate with all and sundry forms of the state...When the church becomes socialist in the support of a socialist regime, it may stress the theological themes of poverty and justice...

“The church’s fault is to be found in the process of justify political *power* and *action*.” p.124-126 we read:

Do you see the historical progression away from design law, the truth, love, freedom of God restored in the heart through trust in God, to a system of imposed law with rules and morality codes enforced externally? This is Satan’s world, Satan’s system of imposed law and the church embraces it, and all the world now embraces this method and commits adultery with her.

Egypt represents the other system—the system of godlessness. So in Bible symbolism Babylon represents religious imperialism, the false god-construct of imposed law, and Egypt represents godlessness, evolutionism, secularism, communism etc. Both are Satan’s kingdom.



In Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 the Bible describes Lucifer's rebellion in heaven and his desire to rise above and take the throne of God.

Consider that—how is it that God is above humans and angels? It is by reality—by His nature that being God, Creator, an infinite being—He is in reality above all others.

How did Satan seek to rise above—is it by his nature or is it by fiat, declaration, proclamation, imposition, legislation?

Notice not only the reality differences of their nature, but also the difference in their methods. Satan, who is not in nature above others, seeks to elevate himself above others, but reading from Philippians 2:

Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, **being in very nature God**,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
⁷ but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
⁸ And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death—
even death on a cross!
⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name...(Philippians 2:6-9 NIV84)

God, whose nature is infinite, runs His universe by giving of Himself, sacrificing Himself to uplift those beneath Him—this is the kingdom of love. Satan, who is not by nature above others, seeks to elevate himself above others.

All kingdoms of this sinful world are built on Satan's system, a few ruling elites elevate themselves above others and take from the masses to elevate themselves. Whereas God gives of Himself to elevate the masses.

Look at the history of the world:

- Pharaoh's of Egypt
- Emperor's of China and Japan
- Kings of Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome
- Kings and Queens of the nations of Europe

Every kingdom of the world has elites ruling over the masses, not by nature, not because they are inherently higher or greater but by rules, imposed laws, they take from the masses, the pass laws to tax, to restrict land or business ownership, or privilege, even one's freedom as a human being enslaving some throughout history—all through imposed laws.



This power over others system is Satan's world and Satan's kingdom and Babylon is the mother of all these harlots who prostitute themselves with the merchants of the world, selling their virtue for riches—those who believe in God but embrace Satan's methods. Egypt is also Satan's kingdom and represents all those nations who deny God, like China, North Korea—but who also set up a few ruling elites to exploit the masses. And Satan pits these two systems against each other and wars them back and forth with God's people in the middle—but who primarily get caught up in Babylon because Babylon professes a belief in God.

God's people are called to come out of Babylon to leave the systems of imposed laws and imposed penalties, to stop seeking to achieve social justice through more laws, more rules and more punishments. To seek justice by loving every person as God loves us, to give glory to God because the hour in human history has come for people to see God for who He really is, the Creator who made the heavens and earth and sea and whose laws are design laws, not imposed Babylonian rules.

Sunday's lesson asks us to read Isaiah 13, I hope you have done this as we don't have time to read it today. This chapter describes threatenings, wrath, and consequence such as war, Babylon and the Medes conquering and the killing and suffering that happens.

In the bottom green section the lesson asks a series of questions, let's examine them:

- “Why does a loving God do these things, or allow these things to happen? Certainly some innocent people will suffer, as well, wouldn't they? How do we understand this action by God?”
 - What law lens are we thinking through? If imposed law lens what does innocent mean? Not having personally done any wrong, so infants are innocent. If thinking through design law lens what does innocent mean—not infected with sin—no carnal nature, no fear and selfishness. In other words, not dying from a terminal sin condition. Which is more accurate infants are innocent of sin, or infants are born in sin, conceived in iniquity and have a terminal sin condition—albeit not by their choosing?
 - And if infants have this terminal sin condition and God doesn't do anything what happens to them and every other human being in history? They die—what death the sleep death and are resurrected to eternal life, or eternal death? So, if we have design law lens do we understand there is something more going on here than just temporal life and death?
 - Why then does a loving God threaten? Why do loving parents threaten their children who play in the street? In a child's mind what is wrong with playing in the street? Mommy will spank! The loving parent steps between the child and the real problem, violations of the laws of health/physics when the child's body is hit by a car, and allows the child to think the problem is the inflicted punishment from the parent—until the child grows up and understands the problem was never the parent. This is the OT, God steps between His immature children and reality and allows Himself to be viewed as the inflictor of punishment to protect them from the real consequences of violating His design laws for life. So God threatens in love to protect until we grow up and know like Moses, there is no need to be afraid of God.



- Why does God allow the wars and injustice to occur? Because of His design law. He is love and love only exists in freedom.
- “What should these texts, and all the texts in the Bible that talk about God’s anger and wrath against sin and evil, tell us about the egregious nature of sin and evil?”
 - I like how they said “and all the texts in the Bible” and if we include the Bible as a whole what does it teach about God’s wrath toward sin? God actively works to eradicate sin. He hates sin because sin damages and destroys that which He loves. And what action did God actively do to combat sin, to unleash His wrath to destroy sin? God sent His Son to become sin so that through Jesus He might take away the sin of the world and make us the righteousness of God.
 - If God’s wrath toward sin is Jesus actively working to destroy sin, truth eradicating lies, love overcoming fear and selfishness, then what is God’s wrath toward unrepentant sinners?
 - If one accepts Babylon’s view of imposed law then one teaches God’s wrath is God inflicting torment, pain, suffering and death to punish sinners.
 - But we are called out of Babylon, we have a message to return to worship the Creator whose laws are design laws. And in that view, God wrath is exactly what the Bible teaches and described so effectively by Paul in Romans 1:18-30—it is letting them go to reap what they have chosen—because that is how design law works. Only imposed law, Satan’s kingdom, requires the infliction of punishment. Even at the Cross when Jesus experienced God’s wrath, what did the Father do to the Son? Let Him go, gave Him up. So the evidence is clear. Any ideas of God’s wrath being God using power to inflict pain and suffering is a lie of Satan.
 - Is there a difference between sin and evil?
 - Sin is a condition of being out of harmony with God and God’s design law for life. We are born in sin and conceived in iniquity, but we are not born evil.
 - Evil is the embracing and choosing of the methods of sin, of the methods of fear and selfishness and the pursuit of those methods in the treatment of others. In other words, evil is putting sin into practice and exploiting, hurting, and harming others.
 - Does God hate sin and evil? Absolutely, does He hate sinful and evil people? No—He loves them.
- “Isn’t the mere fact that a God of love would respond this way enough evidence to show us just how bad sin is?”
 - No—the evidence of how bad sin is, is in what sin does
 - God’s response is evidence of God’s love, but the destruction and harm that sin causes reveals how bad sin is.
- “We have to remember that this is Jesus speaking these warnings through Isaiah, the same Jesus who forgave, healed, pleaded with, and admonished sinners to repent. In your own mind, how have you come to understand this aspect of a loving God’s character? Ask yourself this question, as well: Could not this wrath actually stem from His love? If so, how so? Or, look at it from another perspective, that of the Cross, where Jesus Himself, bearing the sins of the world, suffered worse than anyone else ever has suffered, even those ‘innocents’ who suffered



because of the sins of the nations. How does the suffering of Christ on the cross help answer these difficult questions?"

- Does God's wrath stem from His love? Absolutely, what is the only act that love can take and still be love if some insists on leaving you? Let them go! Even if it results in their death. This is God's wrath, letting go those whom He loves because they insist on severing their connection with Him. And when the life-giver lets go, what happens?
- What does it mean that Christ bore "the sins of the world"? What law model do you view it through? When we accept Satan's lie of imposed law, then sins are bad deeds and Jesus "bearing" them means every act of sin was placed on Christ and had to be punished. So Jesus gets punished by God for all our sins.
 - Remember this quote from *The Desire of Ages*: "In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. **Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan**; and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice." DA 761.4
- It is Satan's view that our sins were punished in Jesus, because once you accept the view God's law functions like human law then justice requires infliction of punishment. So false theologies come forward in which people teach that ever sin of every person through all time were placed on Jesus and God punished Him for every sin using power to make the Son suffer and then legally executing Him in our place.
- This is all a lie and a perversion, which makes God out to be cruel, unjust as He is willing to punish an innocent and let the guilty off, and makes God out to be the source of pain and death. All of which leads to distrust of God and obstructs the true plan of salvation which requires we trust God and open the heart to Him.
- Through design law lens we realize that Christ took upon Himself the sinfulness of the world, the sin-infected condition that Adam brought upon the world. Jesus came as the second Adam to remedy or fix the damage which Adam did to the species. Thus He was tempted in all ways like us but chose with His human abilities to reject all temptation, live sinlessly and develop a perfect character. He became sin though He knew no sin so that we might become the righteousness of God. At the cross He experienced the pain and suffering that sin brings, but not that God inflicts. In fact, it was God working cooperatively with Jesus for them to fulfill their joint purpose in eradicating sin and saving humanity.
- We believe that Jesus did suffer more than any other person in history, but how? Certainly not physically, there are many examples of people being tortured much longer and more severely than Jesus. How did Jesus suffer more than any other?
 - What was the cause of the greatest suffering, the physical or the mental/emotional? The mental/emotional—and what caused that suffering to be the greatest? The loss of the connection with His Father. Think about it this way—if you were told you could never see or speak to Vladimir Putin again how distressing would that be for you? If you were told that you would never be able to see or speak with your spouse or child again how painful would that be for you? What is the point? The greater the love connection the greater the pain



when it is severed. God and Jesus had a connection of love and intimacy that was infinite—beyond our ability to understand and process and on the Cross Jesus had that connection severed in order to save us? Why? Under the false imposed legal model we are told because God had to punish Him. But in reality, under design law model, it was not for punishment sake it was for healing, redeeming, for fixing the sin problem, for eradicating the cause of death and restoring life into the species human. Jesus could not complete His mission to save humanity without eradicating the infection of fear and selfishness. This means He had to face death, the temptation to save self, and had to choose to surrender His life voluntarily and not choose to act to save self. In so doing the law of love was restored fully into the humanity He assumed and the infection of fear and selfishness was purged. Thus He destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light. This was only possible if the Father who is the source of life, let Him go. Thus the Father was in the Son reconciling the world to Himself. It was their joint purpose, carried out through the Son and they acted cooperatively to achieve it.

- So Christ's sufferings on the Cross reveal God's infinite sacrifice to eradicate sin and bring remedy so all can be saved, even those who suffer in this world from no fault of their own

WEDNESDAY

The lesson asks why does Babylon later refer to Rome? Imperialism, Babylon the first system that that interacted with Israel, professed a belief in God and had an imperial legal code, including for worship. Rome is the other major system that arose which interacted with Israel, then accepted a belief in Christ but infected Christianity with Babylon's wine of imperial law, that God's law works like human law and that justice is punishing sin.

Read second paragraph, "Like literal Babylon..." The lesson also reminds us of Jacob's dream where he sees Jesus standing at the top of the ladder at Bethel which means the house of God and the house of God is the gate of heaven—and the real house or temple of God is???? Jesus who said, "destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again."

The temple at Jerusalem was an object lesson for Jesus and then for us who are built together into a house for God. Thus, the two systems, Babylon which is built on imposed law and seeks to lift up self over others, and Jesus who humbles self to lift us up and we become like Him in character and also seek to serve others not lord over them.

THURSDAY

read last paragraph, "Look at Isaiah..." Is this a pointless argument or the central point in the entire argument?



Does it make a difference to God's character if sin kills or if God kills?

Would it make a difference in your ability to trust your parent or your doctor if you believed that if you disobeyed your mother or doctor's instruction not to smoke that they would kill you rather than you would die of cancer?

Does it make a difference?

Why does it come when it comes? This argues that God decides when and how and whom, is that right?

Who decides whether someone is saved or lost, God or that person?

Does God's judgment of that person determine their salvation or merely diagnoses accurately the condition of their heart—healed or hardened? What determines whether a heart is healed or hardened? Who decides that?

And what determines when the final events take place? Why does God wait? God has the power to come today, why doesn't He? Because He want all to be saved and who decides? What determines the condition of hearts? Their choices, not God's...so is the delay evidence of God forcing His way or God operating in harmony with the principles of freedom?

What about the manner of their death? What causes the suffering? An infliction by God or the natural result of unremedied sin when God grants them their choice?

Remember this quote from

Those who have chosen Satan as their leader and have been controlled by his power **are not prepared to enter the presence of God. Pride, deception, licentiousness, cruelty, have become fixed in their characters.** Can they enter heaven to dwell forever with those whom they despised and hated on earth? **Truth will never be agreeable to a liar; meekness will not satisfy self-esteem and pride; purity is not acceptable to the corrupt; disinterested love does not appear attractive to the selfish.** What source of enjoyment could heaven offer to those who are wholly absorbed in earthly and selfish interests? GC 542.1

Could those whose lives have been spent in rebellion against God be suddenly transported to heaven and witness the high, the holy state of perfection that ever exists there,—every soul filled with love, every countenance beaming with joy, enrapturing music in melodious strains rising in honor of God and the Lamb, and ceaseless streams of light flowing upon the redeemed from the face of Him who sitteth upon the throne,—**could those whose hearts are filled with hatred of God, of truth and holiness, mingle with the heavenly throng and join their songs of praise? Could they endure the glory of God and the Lamb? No, no;** years of probation were granted them, that they might form characters for heaven; but



they have never trained the mind to love purity; **they have never learned the language of heaven, and now it is too late. A life of rebellion against God has unfitted them for heaven. Its purity, holiness, and peace would be torture to them; the glory of God would be a consuming fire. They would long to flee from that holy place. They would welcome destruction**, that they might be hidden from the face of Him who died to redeem them. The destiny of the wicked is fixed by their own choice. **Their exclusion from heaven is voluntary with themselves**, and just and merciful on the part of God. GC 542.2

Like the waters of the Flood the fires of the great day declare God's verdict that the wicked are incurable. GC 543.1

Why are the wicked tortured? Is it because God inflicts it, or God merely sets them free to reap what they have sown, that God stops shielding them from reality and they have full exposure to sin in their beings?

Why are they out of heaven? Voluntarily! Who determines their unfitness for heaven? Why do they suffer in unveiled truth and love?

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

February 13 we will do two lessons: Lesson 9 at 9:25 a.m. and Lesson 10 at 10:35 a.m. and will not meet on February 20.