

Isaiah 13 - Proclamation Against Babylon; Babylon's Destruction

I. Prophecies of condemnation (Is 1:1–35:10)

- (2) Condemnation of the nations (Is 13:1–23:18)
 - (A) Babylon (Is 13:1–14:23)
 - (a) God's call to attack Babylon (13:1-5)
 - (b) Universality of Babylon's destruction (13:6-16)
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Prophecies Concerning the Nations (Isaiah 13-23)

In Is 13-23, the prophet turns from Judah to deliver God's message to the surrounding Gentile nations. It is as if the prophet is telling these nations, "If God hasn't spared His own people, what makes you Gentiles think you will escape?" This section is so large that it is often difficult to determine its structural significance. The nations addressed by Isaiah are as follows:

- Babylon (13:1–14:23) - 45 verses
- Assyria (14:24-27) - 4 verses
- Philistia (14:28-32) - 5 verses
- Moab (15:1–16:14) - 23 verses
- Damascus and Samaria (17:1-14) - 14 verses
- Cush (18:1-7) - 7 verses
- Egypt (19:1-25) - 25 verses
- Egypt and Cush (20:1-6) - 6 verses
- Babylon (21:1-10) - 10 verses
- Edom (21:11-12) - 2 verses
- Arabia (21:13-17) - 5 verses
- Jerusalem (22:1-25) - 25 verses
- Tyre (23:1-18) - 18 verses

Is 13-23: These 11 chapters group together prophecies against foreign nations, much the same as those in Jer 46-51 and Ezek 25–32. See [Arab States in Prophecy](#) for an overview of the final disposition of Arab nations.

Isaiah 13

- (2) Condemnation of the nations (Is 13:1–23:18)

(A) Babylon (Is 13:1–14:23)

(a) God's call to attack Babylon (13:1-5)

1 The **pronouncement** concerning Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw:

1 The oracle concerning Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw.

1 A message that Amoz's son Isaiah received about Babylon:

1 The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see.

- "...pronouncement" - *massa*, the "burden" [KJV] that Isaiah saw was another gathering of many peoples

— The first gathering is that of the armies of the Antichrist in the Valley of Jezreel, in preparation for the Campaign of Armageddon. See [Armageddon: Chronology to the Second Coming](#).

— This is the gathering of anti-Babylon and anti-Antichrist forces for the "Battle of Armageddon"

— The ones destroying Babylon (Rev 17-18; Cf. Is 13-14; Jer 50-51) are referred to as "consecrated ones" (Gentile believers)

The Gathering of Anti-Babylon Forces

2 Lift up a flag on the bare hill, Raise your voice to them, Wave the hand that they may enter the doors of the nobles.

2 Lift up a standard on the bare hill, Raise your voice to them, Wave the hand that they may enter the doors of the nobles.

2 "Raise a banner on a bare hilltop! Cry out loud to them! Give a wave of the hand, signaling for them to enter the gates of the nobles.

2 Lift ye up a banner upon the high mountain, exalt the voice unto them, shake the hand, that they may go into the gates of the nobles.

- The armies amass to attack Babylon

3 I have commanded **My consecrated ones**, I have also called for **My warriors** Who boast in My eminence, To execute My anger.

3 I have commanded My consecrated ones, I have even called My mighty warriors, My proudly exulting ones, To execute My anger.

3 I myself have commanded my consecrated ones; I have also summoned my warriors, those who rejoice in my triumph, to carry out my angry judgments.

3 I have commanded my sanctified ones, I have also called my mighty ones for mine anger, even them that rejoice in my highness.

- "...my consecrated ones...My warriors" - confirms that those God gathers to destroy Babylon are His own (v1)

4 A sound of a roar on the mountains, Like that of many people! A sound of an uproar of kingdoms, Of nations gathered together! The LORD of armies is mustering the army for battle.

4 A sound of tumult on the mountains, Like that of many people! A sound of the uproar of kingdoms, Of nations gathered together! The LORD of hosts is mustering the army for battle.

4 "Listen! There's a noise on the mountains like that of a great multitude! Listen! There's an uproar among the kingdoms, like that of nations massing together! The LORD of the Heavenly Armies is mustering an army for battle.

4 The noise of a multitude in the mountains, like as of a great people; a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together: the LORD of hosts mustereth the host of the battle.

- Since it describes a plurality of kingdoms attacking Babylon, including the Medes (v17), many assume it refers to fulfilled history (539 BC, etc.)

— However, careful analysis of the passage implies that this predicted destruction has yet to happen

5 They are coming from a distant country, From the farthest horizons, The LORD and the weapons of His indignation, To destroy the whole land.

5 They are coming from a far country, From the farthest horizons, The LORD and His instruments of indignation, To destroy the whole land.

5 They're coming from a faraway land, from the distant horizon— the LORD and the weapons of his anger— to destroy the entire land."

5 They come from a far country, from the end of heaven, even the LORD, and the weapons of his indignation, to destroy the whole land.

- The scope of the language seems to go far beyond the conquest of the Medes and Persians in 539 BC (which occurred without a battle and does not fit the detail)

— Isaiah began with Babylon (v1), but his imagery then soared to "the entire land" (v5) to "the world" (v11), to "the heavens...and the earth" (v13)

In the remaining verses (Is 13:6—14:23), there is a detailed description as to the "means" and "hows" Babylon will be destroyed. Verses 6 and 9 place these events within the day of Jehovah, the most common biblical term for the Tribulation. In other words, this is not a prophecy fulfilled any time in ancient history, but one to be fulfilled during the Tribulation.

Isaiah 13-14

- **Day of the Lord (13:6-9)**
- **Cosmic disturbances (13:10-13)**
- **Global judgment (13:11-12)**
- **Sodom and Gomorrah (13:19)**
- **Complete and final desolation (13:20-22)**
- **Universal peace and rest (14:5-8)**
- **Israel's regeneration (14:1-4)**

Henry Morris, *Revelation Record*, 348.

(b) Universality of Babylon's destruction (13:6-16)

6 Wail, for the **day of the LORD** is near! It will come as destruction from the **Almighty**.
6 Wail, for the day of the LORD is near! It will come as destruction from the Almighty.
6 Wail out loud, because the Day of the LORD is near. It will come like destruction from the Almighty!
6 Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty.
- "...day of the LORD" - final judgment upon the earth (Cf. v9; Haggai 2:6-7; Heb 12:25-29; Zech 14:4ff)
- "...Almighty" - *Shaddai*, rare use by prophets (Joel 1:15-2:1; Ezek 1:24; 10:5; here)
- This verse places the destruction of Babylon within the scope of the Day of the Lord, a reference to the Great Tribulation

7 Therefore all hands will fall limp, And every human heart will melt.
7 Therefore all hands will fall limp, And every man's heart will melt.
7 Because of this, every hand will go limp, and every man's courage will melt.
7 Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt:

8 They will be terrified, Pains and anguish will take hold of them; They will writhe like a **woman in labor**, They will look at one another in astonishment, Their faces aflame.
8 They will be terrified, Pains and anguish will take hold of *them*; They will writhe like a woman in labor, They will look at one another in astonishment, Their faces aflame.
8 They will be terrified; pain and anguish will seize them; they'll writhe like a woman in labor. They'll look aghast at one another; and their faces will be ablaze with fear.
8 And they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames.
- "...a woman in labor" - Cf. 21:3; Jer 31:8; Ps 48:6; 1 Thess 5:3

9 Behold, **the day of the LORD** is coming, Cruel, with fury and burning anger, To make the **land a desolation**; And He will exterminate its sinners from it.
9 Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, Cruel, with fury and burning anger, To make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners from it.
9 Watch out! The Day of the LORD is coming— cruel, with wrath and fierce anger— to turn the entire inhabited earth into a desolation and to annihilate sinners from it.
9 Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it.
- "...the day of the LORD" - final judgment upon the earth (Haggai 2:6-7; Heb 12:25-29; Zech 14:4ff)
- "...land a desolation" - Cf. v5

Cosmic Disturbances

10 For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not flash their light; The sun will be dark when it rises And the moon will not shed its light.
10 For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not flash forth their light; The sun will be dark when it rises And the moon will not shed its light.
10 For the stars of the heavens and their constellations won't shine their light; the sun will be dark when it rises, and the moon won't shine its light.
10 For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.
- Isaiah's description of supernatural signs in the heavens is very similar to that of Joel; depending upon when one dates the prophecies of Joel, may have been borrowed from him
- Is 24:21-23; Ezek 32:7; Joel 2:10,31; 3:14b-15; Matt 24:29; Mark 13:24; Luke 21:25

Global Judgment (v11-12)

11 So I will punish the world for its evil And the wicked for their wrongdoing; I will also put an end to the audacity of the proud And humiliate the arrogance of the tyrants.

11 Thus I will punish the world for its evil And the wicked for their iniquity; I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud And abase the haughtiness of the ruthless.

11 I'll punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I'll put an end to the pomposity of the arrogant, and overthrow the insolence of tyrants.

11 And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.

- Punish the world: a scope broader than the fall of Babylon in 539 BC

— God's judgment on the day described punishes the entire world

12 I will make mortal man scarcer than pure gold And mankind than the gold of Ophir.

12 I will make mortal man scarcer than pure gold And mankind than the gold of Ophir.

12 I'll make people scarcer than pure gold, and mankind rarer than gold from Ophir.

12 I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir.

13 Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, And the earth will be shaken from its place At the fury of the LORD of armies In the day of His burning anger.

13 Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, And the earth will be shaken from its place At the fury of the LORD of hosts In the day of His burning anger.

13 Therefore I'll make the heavens tremble. The earth will shake from its place at the wrath of the LORD of the Heavenly Armies, at the time of his burning anger.

13 Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger.

- Isaiah concludes his description of the time of judgment by stating it will be a time when God will shake both the heavens and the earth (Is 24:18-20; Jer 4:24; Joel 3:16; Haggai 2:6-7; Zech 14:4-5; Matt 24:29; Heb 12:25-29; 2 Peter 3:10; Rev 6:9-17; 20:11)

- Every man for himself (Jer 50:16; 51:9)

14 And it will be that, like a hunted gazelle, Or like sheep with no one to gather them, Each of them will turn to his own people, And each of them will flee to his own land.

14 And it will be that like a hunted gazelle, Or like sheep with none to gather *them*, They will each turn to his own people, And each one flee to his own land.

14 They will be like a hunted gazelle, or like sheep with no one to gather them, each will turn to his own people, and each will flee to his own land.

14 And it shall be as the chased roe, and as a sheep that no man taketh up: they shall every man turn to his own people, and flee every one into his own land.

- Isaiah now returns to describe the nature of the destruction about to be inflicted on Babylon

15 Anyone who is found will be thrust through, And anyone who is captured will fall by the sword.

15 Anyone who is found will be thrust through, And anyone who is captured will fall by the sword.

15 Whoever is captured will be thrust through, and whoever is caught will fall dead, killed by the sword.

15 Every one that is found shall be thrust through; and every one that is joined unto them shall fall by the sword.

16 Their little ones also will be dashed to pieces Before their eyes; Their houses will be plundered And their wives raped.

16 Their little ones also will be dashed to pieces Before their eyes; Their houses will be plundered And their wives ravished.

16 Their infants will be dashed to pieces before their eyes, and their houses will be looted, and their wives slept with.

16 Their children also shall be dashed to pieces before their eyes; their houses shall be spoiled, and their wives ravished.

- Babylon will experience total annihilation: infants will be "dashed to pieces" while they watch, their homes will be looted, and their wives raped

— Isaiah pictures a bloodbath that will engulf warriors, women, soldiers and civilians

— Cruelty: Hosea 13:13; Nahum 3:10

— Wives: Deut 28:32; Zech 14:2; Cf. Ps 137:9

(c) Finality of Babylon's destruction (13:17-22)

17 Behold, I am going to stir up the Medes against them, Who will not value silver or take pleasure in gold.

17 Behold, I am going to stir up the Medes against them, Who will not value silver or take pleasure in gold.

17 Watch out! I'm stirring up the Medes against them, who care nothing for silver and take no delight in gold.

17 Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver; and as for gold, they shall not delight in it.

- Medes: in Isaiah's day were allies of Babylon against Assyria! They allied with the Persians to conquer Babylon in 539 BC. But nothing like what is described here happened when the Medes/Persians conquered Babylon. As foretold in Is 45, the Medes and Persians took

Babylon without a battle. In fact, it was several days before residents discovered they had been conquered.

— The Medes today are known as the Kurds. They are fiercely independent people whose homeland straddles Turkey, Iran and Iraq. Having been persecuted by all three countries, particularly Iraq, it won't take much incentive for them to settle their score with Babylon when the time comes.

— Also mentioned in Jer 51:11; 2 Kings 17:6

Because Isaiah mentions the Medes, many interpreters have assumed the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy took place in 539 BC when Cyrus and the Medo-Persian empire captured Babylon. However, a careful comparison of Is 13 with the events of 539 BC show that this passage was not literally fulfilled at that time. Isaiah describes the Medes as those "who do not care for silver and have no delight in gold" (13:17b). Instead the purpose for the attack by the Medes will be to kill the inhabitants of Babylon. While the Medes were part of the army that captured Babylon, they did not attack or kill the inhabitants of the city. Both the Babylonian Chronicle and Cyrus' own account record the peacefulness of Babylon's fall. Cyrus wrote, "My numerous troops walked around in Babylon in peace, I did not allow anybody to terrorize (any place) of the [country of Sumerl and Akkad. I strove for peace in Babylon and in all his (other) sacred cities.

18 And their bows will mow down the young men, They will not even have compassion on the fruit of the womb, Nor will their eye pity children.

18 And *their* bows will mow down the young men, They will not even have compassion on the fruit of the womb, *Nor* will their eye pity children.

18 Their bows will dash the young men to pieces; they'll show no pity on those not yet born, and their eyes will not spare children.

18 Their bows also shall dash the young men to pieces; and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb; their eye shall not spare children.

- The bow was a chief weapon. Herodotus: "Every youth was to learn to ride, draw a bow, and speak the truth."

Sodom & Gomorrah (v19)

19 And Babylon, the beauty of kingdoms, the glory of the Chaldeans' pride, Will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.

19 And Babylon, the beauty of kingdoms, the glory of the Chaldeans' pride, Will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.

19 Babylon, that jewel of kingdoms, the splendor and pride of the Chaldeans, will be like Sodom and Gomorrah, when God overthrew them—

19 And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.

- Isaiah focused on the permanence of the destruction ("shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah"); this implies sudden, total, and permanent annihilation. Following its destruction, it was never inhabited again (Is 14:23; Jer 50:13,26,39; 51:26,29,37).

Complete & Final Desolation

20 It will never be inhabited or lived in from generation to generation; Nor will the Arab pitch his tent there, Nor will shepherds allow their flocks to lie down there.

20 It will never be inhabited or lived in from generation to generation; Nor will the Arab pitch *his* tent there, Nor will shepherds make *their flocks* lie down there.

20 It will never be inhabited or lived in through all generations; no Bedouin will pitch his tent there; no shepherds will make their flocks lie down there.

20 It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there.

- The future destruction of Babylon will be so complete and catastrophic that it will never again be rebuilt or inhabited (Cf. Jer 50:3,13,26; 51:26,29,43,62)

-- Nomadic settlers would often pitch their tents for months (sometimes even years) in one location before moving when supplies of water or grass for grazing became depleted.

Babylon will not even experience the short- term occupation of nomadic settlers.

- This prophecy is clear, and based on known history, has never been fulfilled

— When Koldewey, the German archaeologist, excavated in the 19th century, he was able to hire local residents

— Located 14 miles SE of Al Hillah, about 62 miles S of Baghdad

21 But desert creatures will lie down there, And their houses will be full of owls; Ostriches also will live there, and shaggy goats will frolic there.

21 But desert creatures will lie down there, And their houses will be full of owls; Ostriches also will live there, and shaggy goats will frolic there.

21 But desert beasts will lie down there, and their houses will be full of howling creatures; there owls will dwell, and goat-demons will dance there.

21 But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there.

- Since typical animals cannot live in a place of perpetual burning, they are not literal animals; they are demons (Cf. Rev 18:1-2)

— Same animals described in Jer 50:39-40

22 Hyenas will howl in their fortified towers And jackals in their luxurious palaces. Her fateful time also will soon come, And her days will not be prolonged.

22 Hyenas will howl in their fortified towers And jackals in their luxurious palaces. Her *fateful* time also will soon come And her days will not be prolonged.

22 Hyenas will howl in its strongholds, and jackals will make their dens in its citadels. Its time is close at hand, and its days will not be extended any further.

22 And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.

The original language of this passage contained words that are believed to be the names of demons. The animal names are said to have been substituted to make the passage understandable to western minds.