

# Isaiah 21 - The Fall of Babylon Proclaimed

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

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

#### (H) Babylon (21:1-10)

##### (a) Babylon's fall (21:1-2)

##### (b) Isaiah's response to Babylon's fall (21:3-5)

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#### (I) Edom (21:11-12)

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## Isaiah 21

### (H) Babylon (21:1-10)

#### (a) Babylon's fall (21:1-2)

1 The pronouncement concerning the wilderness of the sea: As windstorms in the Negev come in turns, It comes from the wilderness, from a terrifying land.

1 The oracle concerning the wilderness of the sea. As windstorms in the Negev sweep on, It comes from the wilderness, from a terrifying land.

1 A message concerning the pasture by the Sea. "Like whirlwinds in the Negev sweep on, it comes from the desert, from a distant land.

1 The burden of the desert of the sea. As whirlwinds in the south pass through; so it cometh from the desert, from a terrible land.

- The Medes to take Babylon (Cf. Is 12; 14; Jer 50-51; Rev 17-18)

- The Fall of Babylon (Dan 5; Is 44-45)

2 A harsh vision has been shown to me; The treacherous one *still* deals treacherously, and the destroyer *still* destroys. Go up, Elam, lay siege, Media; I have put an end to all the groaning she has caused.

2 A harsh vision has been shown to me; The treacherous one *still* deals treacherously, and the destroyer *still* destroys. Go up, Elam, lay siege, Media; I have made an end of all the groaning she has caused.

2 A dire vision has been announced to me: the traitor betrays, and the plunderer takes loot. Get up, Elam! Attack, Media! I am putting a stop to all the groaning she has caused.

2 A grievous vision is declared unto me; the treacherous dealer dealeth treacherously, and the spoiler spoileth. Go up, O Elam: besiege, O Media; all the sighing thereof have I made to cease.

- Elam: Cyrus = "King of Ansan" (Media, not Persia); Persia not known in Isaiah's day! (Gen 10:22; 14:1,9; Is 11:11; 22:6)
- Persian + Media conquers Chaldea, Ecbatana, Borsippa, Babylon (Dan 5)
- Babylon has yet to rise in Isaiah's day! Cyrus ("both" Medes + Persians) will then conquer Babylon. Notice the astonishing distance into the future...Also, notice the subtle change to the 1st person...

(b) Isaiah's response to Babylon's fall (21:3-5)

- 3 For this reason my loins are full of anguish; Pains have seized me like the pains of a woman in labor. I am so bewildered I cannot hear, so terrified I cannot see.
- 3 For this reason my loins are full of anguish; Pains have seized me like the pains of a woman in labor. I am so bewildered I cannot hear, so terrified I cannot see.
- 3 Therefore my body is racked with pain; pangs have seized me, like the pangs of a woman in labor; I am so upset that I cannot hear; I am so frightened that I cannot see while I'm reeling around.
- 3 Therefore are my loins filled with pain: pangs have taken hold upon me, as the pangs of a woman that travaileth: I was bowed down at the hearing of it; I was dismayed at the seeing of it.
- 539 BC (!): Conquest of Babylon by Cyrus the Great?
- Note the strange use of this phrase: Is 13:8; 21:3; 26:17; Jer 22:23; 48:41; 49:22; 50:43; Micah 4:9
- 4 My mind reels, horror overwhelms me; The twilight I longed for has been turned into trembling for me.
- 4 My mind reels, horror overwhelms me; The twilight I longed for has been turned for me into trembling.
- 4 And as for my heart, horror has terrified me; the twilight I longed for has started to make me tremble.
- 4 My heart panted, fearfulness affrighted me: the night of my pleasure hath he turned into fear unto me.

- 5 They set the table, they spread out the cloth, they eat, they drink; "Rise up, captains, oil the shields!"
- 5 They set the table, they spread out the cloth, they eat, they drink; "Rise up, captains, oil the shields,"
- 5 They set the tables; they spread the carpets; they eat, they drink! Get up, you officers! Oil the shields!"

5 Prepare the table, watch in the watchtower, eat, drink: arise, ye princes, and anoint the shield.

- Cf. Dan 5. Remember, this was recorded about 200 years before it transpired. In the midst of the banquet of Belshazzar, the Median general, Gobryas, detoured the river that flowed through the city and marched his army on the dry river bed underneath the walls of the city. He took the city by surprise and shock.

### **The Rise of Cyrus**

Cyrus II ("the Great" 559-530 BC) was the founder of the Achaemenid Persian Empire that continued for two centuries until the time of Alexander the Great (331 BC). Cyrus' father, Cambyses I (600-559 BC), was king of Anshan, a region in eastern Elam. His mother was Mandane, a daughter of Astyages, king of Media (585-550 BC).

When Cambyses died in 559 BC, Cyrus inherited the throne of Anshan and, after unifying the Persian people, attacked the weak and corrupt Astyages (his father-in-law). The Median general Harpagus, whom Astyages had previously wronged, deserted the king and brought his army to the side of the young Cyrus. Astyages was soon captured and the Persians took the capital city of Ecbatana in 550 BC without a battle. (This was also to be the result at Babylon 11 years later.)

Cyrus succeeded in welding the Medes and Persians into a unified nation. Moving swiftly to the west, he absorbed all the Median territories as far as the Halys River in Asia Minor. When Croesus, the fabulously wealthy king of Lydia, refused to recognize the sovereignty of Medo-Persia, Cyrus defeated him in battle and took over his empire in 546 BC. Seven years later, he was ready to launch the great assault against Babylon itself.

(c) Announcement of Babylon's fall (21:6-10)

6 For this is what the Lord says to me: "Go, station the lookout, have him report what he sees.

6 For thus the Lord says to me, "Go, station the lookout, let him report what he sees.

6 For this is what the LORD told me: "Go post a lookout. Have him report what he sees.

6 For thus hath the Lord said unto me, Go, set a watchman, let him declare what he seeth.

7 "When he sees a column of **chariots**, horsemen in pairs, A train of donkeys, a train of camels, He is to pay close attention, very close attention."

7 "When he sees riders, horsemen in pairs, A train of donkeys, a train of camels, Let him pay close attention, very close attention."

7 When he sees chariots, each man with a pair of horses, riders on donkeys or riders on camels, let him pay attention, full attention."

7 And he saw a chariot with a couple of horsemen, a chariot of asses, and a chariot of camels; and he hearkened diligently with much heed:  
- "...chariots" = troop, 2x2. Troops mounted, not in chariots.

8 Then the lookout called, "Lord, I stand continually by day on the watchtower, And I am stationed every night at my guard post.

8 Then the lookout called, "O Lord, I stand continually by day on the watchtower, And I am stationed every night at my guard post.

8 Then the lookout shouted: "Upon a watchtower I stand, O Lord, continually by day, and I am stationed at my post throughout the night.

8 And he cried, A lion: My lord, I stand continually upon the watchtower in the daytime, and I am set in my ward whole nights:

### **The Fall of Babylon**

9 "Now behold, here comes a troop of riders, horsemen in pairs." And one said, "**Fallen, fallen is Babylon**; And all the images of her gods are shattered on the ground."

9 "Now behold, here comes a troop of riders, horsemen in pairs." And one said, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon; And all the images of her gods are shattered on the ground."

9 Look! Here come riders, each man with a pair of horses!" They're shouting out the answer: "Babylon has fallen, has fallen, and they have shattered all the images of her gods on the ground!

9 And, behold, here cometh a chariot of men, with a couple of horsemen. And he answered and said, Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground.

- "...Fallen, fallen is Babylon" - Cf. Rev 18:2

— However, Cyrus did not destroy their idols! He restored them, repaired the Merodach temple, prayed to Bel and Nebo for long life. Son Cambyses: new year celebration.

— This reference must be yet future

[The remarkable career of Cyrus is covered in Is 44-45]

### **The Consolation of Israel**

10 My downtrodden *people*, and my afflicted of the threshing floor! What I have heard from the LORD of armies, The God of Israel, I make known to you.

10 O my threshed *people*, and my afflicted of the threshing floor! What I have heard from the LORD of hosts, The God of Israel, I make known to you.

10 O my downtrodden people, my wall! I'll tell you what I have heard from the LORD of the Heavenly Armies, the God of Israel."

10 O my threshing, and the corn of my floor: that which I have heard of the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, have I declared unto you.

(I) Edom (21:11-12)

11 The pronouncement concerning Edom: One keeps calling to me from Seir, "Watchman, how far gone is the night? Watchman, how far gone is the night?"

11 The oracle concerning Edom. One keeps calling to me from Seir, "Watchman, how far gone is the night? Watchman, how far gone is the night?"

11 A message concerning Dumah. "Someone is calling to me from Seir: 'Watchman, what is left of the night? Watchman, what is left of the night?'

11 The burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?

12 The watchman says, "Morning comes but also night. If you would inquire, inquire; Come back again."

12 The watchman says, "Morning comes but also night. If you would inquire, inquire; Come back again."

12 The watchman replies: 'Morning is coming, but also the night. If you want to ask, then ask; come back again.'

12 The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come.

(J) Arabia (21:13-17)

13 The pronouncement about Arabia: In the thickets of Arabia you must spend the night, You caravans of Dedanites.

13 The oracle about Arabia. In the thickets of Arabia you must spend the night, O caravans of Dedanites.

13 A message concerning Arabia. "You will camp in the thickets in Arabia, you caravans of the Dedanites.

13 The burden upon Arabia. In the forest in Arabia shall ye lodge, O ye travelling companies of Dedanim.

14 Bring water for the thirsty, You inhabitants of the land of Tema; Meet the fugitive with bread.

14 Bring water for the thirsty, O inhabitants of the land of Tema, Meet the fugitive with bread.

14 Bring water for the thirsty, you who live in the land of Tema. Meet the fugitive with bread,

14 The inhabitants of the land of Tema brought water to him that was thirsty, they prevented with their bread him that fled.

15 For they have fled from the swords, From the drawn sword, and from the bent bow, And from the press of battle.

15 For they have fled from the swords, From the drawn sword, and from the bent bow And from the press of battle.

15 For he has fled from swords, from the drawn sword, from the bent bow, and from the heat of battle."

15 For they fled from the swords, from the drawn sword, and from the bent bow, and from the grievousness of war.

**16** For this is what the Lord said to me: "In a year, as a hired worker would count it, all the splendor of Kedar will come to an end;

**16** For thus the Lord said to me, "In a year, as a hired man would count it, all the splendor of Kedar will terminate;

**16** For this is what the LORD is saying to me: "Within three years, according to the years of a contract worker, the pomp of Kedar will come to an end.

**16** For thus hath the Lord said unto me, Within a year, according to the years of an hireling, and all the glory of Kedar shall fail:

17 and the remainder of the number of bowmen, the warriors of the sons of Kedar, will be few; for the LORD God of Israel has spoken."

17 and the remainder of the number of bowmen, the mighty men of the sons of Kedar, will be few; for the LORD God of Israel has spoken."

17 And there will be few archers, those who are descendants of Kedar, who survive, because the LORD, the God of Israel, has spoken."

17 And the residue of the number of archers, the mighty men of the children of Kedar, shall be diminished: for the LORD God of Israel hath spoken it.