

ISAIAH CHAPTER 13 and 14

The Fate of Babylon

Isaiah 13:1-22:

1 *Isaiah son of Amoz received this message concerning **THE DESTRUCTION OF BABYLON**:*

2 *“See the flags waving as the enemy attacks. Cheer them on, O Israel! Wave to them as they march against Babylon **TO DESTROY THE PALACES OF THE HIGH AND MIGHTY**.*

3 *I, the Lord, have assigned this task to these armies, and they will rejoice when I am exalted. I have called them to satisfy my anger.”*

4 *Hear the noise on the mountains! Listen, as the armies march! It is the noise and the shout of MANY NATIONS. The Lord Almighty has brought them here to form an army.*

5 *They came from countries far away. They are the Lord’s weapons; they carry his anger with them and will destroy the whole land.*

6 *Scream in terror, for the Lord’s time has arrived—the time for the Almighty to destroy.*

7 *Every arm is paralyzed with fear. Even the strongest hearts melt*

8 *and are afraid. Fear grips them with terrible pangs, like those of a woman about to give birth. They look helplessly at one another as the **flames of the burning city** reflect on their faces.*

9 *For see, **THE DAY OF THE LORD** is coming—**THE TERRIBLE DAY OF HIS FURY AND FIERCE ANGER**. The land will be destroyed and all the sinners with it.*

10 *The heavens will be black above them. No light will shine from stars or sun or moon.*

11 *“I, the Lord, **WILL PUNISH THE WORLD** for its evil and the wicked for their sin. I will crush the arrogance of the proud and the haughtiness of the mighty.*

12 *Few will be left alive when I have finished my work. People will be as scarce as gold—more rare than the gold of Ophir.*

13 *For I will shake the heavens, and the earth will move from its place. I, the Lord Almighty, will show my fury and fierce anger.”*

14 *Everyone will run until exhausted, rushing back to their own lands like hunted deer, wandering like sheep without a shepherd.*

15 *Anyone who is captured will be run through with a sword.*

16 *Their little children will be dashed to death right before their eyes.*

Their homes will be sacked and their wives raped by the attacking hordes.

17 *For **I WILL STIR UP THE MEDES AGAINST BABYLON**, and no amount of silver or gold will buy them off.*

18 *The attacking armies will shoot down the young people with arrows.*

They will have no mercy on helpless babies and will show no compassion for the children.

19 Babylon, the most glorious of kingdoms, the flower of Chaldean culture, will be devastated like Sodom and Gomorrah when God destroyed them.

20 Babylon will never rise again. Generation after generation will come and go, but the land will never again be lived in. Nomads will refuse to camp there, and shepherds will not allow their sheep to stay overnight.

21 Wild animals of the desert will move into the ruined city. The houses will be haunted by howling creatures. Ostriches will live among the ruins, and wild goats will come there to dance.

22 Hyenas will howl in its fortresses, and jackals will make their dens in its palaces. Babylon's days are numbered; its time of destruction will soon arrive.

The book of Isaiah is interpreted differently by many scholars. Some see these prophecies as referring to the near future and applying to the major world powers of the day such as Assyria, Babylon, and Medo-Persia. Other scholars see the prophecies as applying to the more distant future and focusing on those things that will occur in the final days, the Tribulation, and the Millennium. Some suggest the prophecies apply to both near and long-term events. The near term events being what is called a “*type*” in theological terms, or a sampling of what will also occur in the end times.

I will give you a personal evaluation of what this interpreter sees, not only in Isaiah, but in other Bible prophecies as well. The Bible is without a doubt the most remarkable literary work ever assembled. I am not an expert on literary styles and techniques but I can tell you this: I understand how to do exegesis, that is **to give** an explanation or critical interpretation of a text, such as the Bible. However, the Bible is such a marvelous literary work that it can give us a passage which can be correctly interpreted in more than just one way. A human being is not capable of writing like this using all the prose, poetry, prophesy, miracles, and complete inventory of literary styles and techniques, and to incorporate such writing over a period of 1,500 years. It is simply impossible for a single human to have done this and it would be equally impossible for groups of people to coordinate it over a period of 1,500 years. This book was dictated to men and women by the Holy Spirit of God in absolute perfection and there isn't a person in the world that can refute that. And if you think there is, you can bring them on.

So when we interpret the book of Isaiah, we will most often focus on the long-term effects of the prophecies because those are the effects that will most directly effect us. But remember, the prophecies were given in this way so that people could believe the long term implications of the prophecy by seeing the short-term implications actually happen not too long after the prophecy was stated.

Let me try to give you an example of this. If I were to predict that the Chicago Cubs were going to win the World Series the next three years in a row, and then after not winning for two years would come back and win five more world series in a row, you would probably think I had lost my mind. But if the Cubs did win the World Series for 3 years

in a row, the chances are you would believe my ability to predict the five year win streak Predicting that the Cubs would win three consecutive World Series in succession would seem absolutely impossible. But if such a miracle, such a prediction came true, you would very likely accept my prediction of five more successive wins. That is exactly what we see happening in much of the prophecy of the Bible.

Let us now go back and take a closer look at each of these verses.

Isaiah 13:1:

1 The oracle concerning Babylon that Isaiah son of Amoz saw.

The passage in 13:1-14:27 shows that Isaiah's writing about events before they happened was possible. Isaiah looks into the future, predicting the destruction he saw would come upon Babylon as a result of the Medo-Persian invasion. It may at first seem strange that Babylon appears in these visions because it was an insignificant power in Isaiah's day, completely overshadowed by Assyria. But Isaiah was empowered to look forward to the time when Assyria and Babylon would be combined into one great nation, of which the city of Babylon would be the capital.

The nation of Babylon was the power destined to carry out the judgments of God against Judah because of Judah's rebellion and idolatry. It becomes evident that behind the actual rulers of these countries is a dominating satanic influence. This prophecy has a double fulfillment. What that means is that the destruction of Babylon by Cyrus and Darius of Medo-Persia in 538 BC is what is known as a "type" in biblical writing. The destruction of Babylon in 538 BC represented a similar destruction of the world government that will exist when Christ returns again.

In eloquent and dramatic language Isaiah pictures the final downfall of anyone and everyone who oppress the people of God.

This section is an oracle, sometimes translated "burden," as it comes from the verb meaning "to be lifted or carried." It refers to the actual words of a god communicated through a priest, priestess, or prophet. It was a weighty or burdensome kind of message to deliver. It is a common term in the prophetic writings (Isaiah 13:1; 14:28; 15:1; 17:1; 19:1; 21:1, 11, 13; 22:1; 23:1; 30:6; Jeremiah 23:33-34, 36, 38; Ezekiel 12:10; Nahum 1:1; Habakkuk 1:1; Zechariah. 9:1 [see comments there]; 12:1; Malachi. 1:1). **ISAIAH'S ORACLE CONCERNS BABYLON.** Babylon deserved God's wrath, for that city had long been a rallying point of anti-God activity. From its very beginning (Genesis. 11:1-9) it had been characterized by rebellion against God. Over the centuries, as various dynasties ruled over that city, it was viewed as a place of hatred against the God of Israel. Even in the Tribulation, just before the return of Christ, it will be a center of hatred against God (Revelation 17-18).

Then God forms His army in Isaiah 13:2-5:

2 On a bare hill raise a signal, cry aloud to them; wave the hand for them to enter the gates of the nobles.

3 I myself have commanded my consecrated ones, have summoned my warriors, my proudly exulting ones, to execute my anger.

4 Listen, a tumult on the mountains as of a great multitude! Listen, an uproar of kingdoms, of nations gathering together! The Lord of hosts is mustering an army for battle.

5 They come from a distant land, from the end of the heavens, the Lord and the weapons of his indignation, TO DESTROY THE WHOLE EARTH.

The army referred to in these verses is clearly God's because He said He summoned His warriors to carry out His wrath against Babylon; that is, they would do His bidding. This army was a great multitude, like an amassing of entire nations. Coming for war they would assemble from faraway lands, from the ends of the heavens. This is not a specific geographical description as much as a way of saying that His great army would include soldiers from many places. Though Isaiah was writing about the military strife in his day, a similar mustering of vast armies will occur just before the millennial kingdom begins after Christ's return (Revelation 16:12-16).

Isaiah 13:6-13:

6 Wail, for THE DAY OF THE LORD is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty!

7 Therefore all hands will be feeble, and every human heart will melt,

8 and they will be dismayed. Pangs and agony will seize them; they will be in anguish like a woman in labor. They will look aghast at one another; their faces will be aflame.

9 See, the day of the Lord comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the earth a desolation, and to destroy its sinners from it.

10 For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light.

11 I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will put an end to the pride of the arrogant, and lay low the insolence of tyrants.

12 I will make mortals more rare than fine gold, and humans than the gold of Ophir.

13 Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of its place, at the wrath of the Lord of hosts in the day of his fierce anger.

The day of the LORD refers to the time of the Lord's judgment on the wicked world and/or the deliverance of His people. **A judgment which will come on the whole world just before God establishes His millennial kingdom on the earth.** This judgment from the Almighty will cause people to be in extreme distress, in pain like a woman's labor pains. The day of the Lord, expressing His anger against sin, will destroy sinners and punish the world for its evil and its proud attitude toward God. The statements in 13:10 about the heavenly bodies (stars. ...sun ...moon) no longer functioning may figuratively

describe the total turnaround of the political structure of the Near East as well. The same would be true of the heavens trembling and the earth shaking, figures of speech suggesting all-encompassing destruction. Again, all of this is the equivalent to the final judgment to come on the world. Because so many will die in battle, people will be scarcer than the rare and valuable gold of Ophir, a town probably located on the southwestern coast of Arabia (Job 22:24; 28:16)

Isaiah 13:14-18:

14 Like a hunted gazelle, or like sheep with no one to gather them, all will turn to their own people, and all will flee to their own lands.

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

16 Their infants will be dashed to pieces before their eyes; their houses will be plundered, and their wives ravished.

17 See, I am stirring up the Medes against them, who have no regard for silver and do not delight in gold.

18 Their bows will slaughter the young men; they will have no mercy on the fruit of the womb; their eyes will not pity children.

The fall of Babylon to the Medes was merely a short-term glimpse of the ultimate fall of the world government in the end times. In **the day of the Lord**, described in verses 6-13, the army formed by God would attack unrelentingly. The people attacked would be utterly powerless to stop the invasion. They would be like antelope and sheep, defenseless creatures that are easy prey for hunters. There will be nothing they can do but to attempt to flee back to wherever they came from. But for those who were caught, terrible things would happen, including death by the sword, infanticide, plundering, and rape. The destruction would be unrelenting in that the invaders could not be bought off with money and they will have no mercy on babies or children.

Isaiah 13:19-22:

19 And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the splendor and pride of the Chileans (the name given to Nebuchadnezzar's subjects)¹, will be like Sodom and Gomorrah when God overthrew them.

20 It will never be inhabited or lived in for all generations; Arabs will not pitch their tents there, shepherds will not make their flocks lie down there.

21 But wild animals will lie down there, and its houses will be full of howling creatures; there ostriches will live, and there goat-demons will dance.

22 Hyenas will cry in its towers, and jackals in the pleasant palaces; its time is close at hand, and its days will not be prolonged.

The recipient of this destruction is the city of Babylon and the world government on the end times which is referred to as *Babylon*. Because of her **pride** (verse 11) and godless idolatry, Babylon would **be overthrown by God**. Just as God overthrew the wicked cities of **Sodom and Gomorrah** (Genesis. 19:24-25), so He would overthrow the wicked

¹ Parentheses added.

city of Babylon. Isaiah's description of the devastation of Babylon, no inhabitants for **generations** and no tents or flocks, but instead **jackals... owls... wild goats, and hyenas** is typical of the way ancient Near Eastern cultures described the desolate condition of demolished cities

One day, in one form or another, Babylon will again appear on the world scene. But then I think it will be more than just a city. It will be symbolic of the one-world government that will be in power just before Christ returns. Christ will then destroy the one-world government just like the Medes and Persians destroyed Babylon.

ISAIAH CHAPTER 14

Isaiah 14:1-32:

1 But the Lord will have mercy on the descendants of Jacob. Israel will be his special people once again. He will bring them back to settle once again in their own land. And people from many different nations will come and join them there and become a part of the people of Israel.

2 The nations of the world will help the Lord's people to return, and those who come to live in their land will serve them. Those who captured Israel will be captured, and Israel will rule over its enemies.

3 In that wonderful day when the Lord gives his people rest from sorrow and fear, from slavery and chains,

4 you will taunt the king of Babylon. You will say, "The mighty man has been destroyed. Yes, your insolence is ended.

5 For the Lord has crushed your wicked power and broken your evil rule.

6 You persecuted the people with unceasing blows of rage and held the nations in your angry grip. Your tyranny was unrestrained.

7 But at last the land is at rest and is quiet. Finally it can sing again!

8 Even the trees of the forest—the cypress trees and the cedars of Lebanon—sing out this joyous song: 'Your power is broken! No one will come to cut us down now!'

9 "In the place of the dead there is excitement over your arrival. World leaders and mighty kings long dead are there to see you.

10 With one voice they all cry out, 'Now you are as weak as we are!

11 Your might and power are gone; they were buried with you. All the pleasant music in your palace has ceased. Now maggots are your sheet and worms your blanket.'

12 "How you are fallen from heaven, O shining star, son of the morning! You have been thrown down to the earth, you who destroyed the nations of the world.

13 *For you said to yourself, 'I will ascend to heaven and set my throne above God's stars. I will preside on the mountain of the gods far away in the north.*

14 *I will climb to the highest heavens and be like the Most High.'*

15 *But instead, you will be brought down to the place of the dead, down to its lowest depths.*

16 *Everyone there will stare at you and ask, 'Can this be the one who shook the earth and the kingdoms of the world?*

17 *Is this the one who destroyed the world and made it into a wilderness? Is this the king who demolished the world's greatest cities and had no mercy on his prisoners?'*

18 *"The kings of the nations lie in stately glory in their tombs,*

19 *but you will be thrown out of your grave like a worthless branch. Like a corpse trampled underfoot, you will be dumped into a mass grave with those killed in battle. **YOU WILL DESCEND TO THE PIT.***

20 *You will not be given a proper burial, for you have destroyed your nation and slaughtered your people. Your son will not succeed you as king.*

21 *Kill the children of this sinner! Do not let them rise and conquer the land or rebuild the cities of the world."*

22 *This is what the Lord Almighty says: "I, myself, have risen against him! I will destroy his children and his children's children, so they will never sit on his throne.*

23 *I will make Babylon into a desolate land, a place of porcupines, filled with swamps and marshes. I will sweep the land with the broom of destruction. I, the Lord Almighty, have spoken!"*

24 *The Lord Almighty has sworn this oath: "It will all happen as I have planned. It will come about according to my purposes.*

25 *I will break the Assyrians when they are in Israel; I will trample them on my mountains. My people will no longer be their slaves.*

26 *I have a plan for the whole earth, for my mighty power reaches throughout the world.*

27 *The Lord Almighty has spoken—who can change his plans? When his hand moves, who can stop him?"*

28 *This message came to me the year King Ahaz died:*

29 *Do not rejoice, you Philistines, that the king who attacked you is dead. For even though that whip is broken, his son will be worse than his father ever was. From that snake a poisonous snake will be born, a fiery serpent to destroy you!*

30 *I will feed the poor in my pasture; the needy will lie down in peace. But as for you, I will wipe you out with famine. I will destroy the few who remain.*

31 *Weep, you Philistine cities, for you are doomed! Melt in fear, for everyone will be destroyed. A powerful army is coming out of the north. Each soldier rushes forward ready to fight.*

32 What should we tell the enemy messengers? Tell them that the Lord has built Jerusalem, and that the poor of his people will find refuge in its walls.

While having some reference to the release from Babylonian captivity in 536 BC, the primary view in this chapter has Isaiah looking at the final Babylon at the end of the Tribulation when Christ returns. Conditions described here will apply to the Millennium (Christ's future thousand year reign upon the earth) after the judgment of the final Babylon.

Isaiah 14:1,2:

1 But the Lord will have compassion on Jacob and will again choose Israel, and will set them in their own land; and aliens will join them and attach themselves to the house of Jacob.

2 And the nations will take them and bring them to their place, and the house of Israel will possess the nations as male and female slaves in the Lord's land; they will take captive those who were their captors, and rule over those who oppressed them.

Israel's elevation to her original God-ordained place as a witness to the world and her rest from her worldwide woe will come about only after the world political system of Babylon is destroyed. Instead of their miserable state of captivity which they'll endure during the Tribulation under the Antichrist, Israel will rule those nations that once ruled them. **The future earthly kingdom of Jesus is in view. Isaiah instructs the delivered nation of Israel to sing a song of celebration for the downfall of the Antichrist**, the king of Babylon. The system that made life miserable for God's people is gone forever.

Isaiah 14:3-8:

3 When the Lord has given you rest from your pain and turmoil and the hard service with which you were made to serve,

4 you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon: How the oppressor has ceased! How his insolence has ceased!

5 The Lord has broken the staff of the wicked, the scepter of rulers,

6 that struck down the peoples in wrath with unceasing blows, that ruled the nations in anger with unrelenting persecution.

7 The whole earth is at rest and quiet; THEY BREAK FORTH INTO SINGING.

8 The cypresses exult over you, the cedars of Lebanon, saying, "Since you were laid low, no one comes to cut us down."

The king of Babylon seems to be used here as a synonym for all Gentile powers throughout the centuries that have persecuted God's people and culminating in the Antichrist who will lead the world government in the end times. When the last great enemy is destroyed, the people of God will be able to rejoice in God's power. Just as the Israelites rejoiced on the shores of the Red Sea as they viewed the destruction of Pharaoh's army. So in the coming Day of the Lord, Israel will raise the Song of Moses and the Lamb as they see all their enemies destroyed.

At this point we might be able to get some understanding of how sin and rebellion developed in Heaven itself. We might also be able to understand something of the unseen powers that have dominated so many people throughout the centuries in an attempt to undermine the will of God. The fall of Lucifer portrays the fall of Satan. The whole earth will be at peace. This passage connects very closely with Ezekiel 28, which should be carefully considered for a complete and full understanding of what is happening here in Isaiah.

Isaiah 14:9-15:

9 Sheol beneath is stirred up to meet you when you come; it rouses the shades to greet you, all who were leaders of the earth; it raises from their thrones all who were kings of the nations.

10 All of them will speak and say to you: "You too have become as weak as we! You have become like us!"

11 **Your pomp is brought down to Sheol, and the sound of your harps; maggots are the bed beneath you, and worms are your covering.**

12 **HOW YOU ARE FALLEN FROM HEAVEN, O DAY STAR, SON OF DAWN!**

How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low!

13 You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit on the mount of assembly on the heights of Zaphon;

14 I will ascend to the tops of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High."

15 But you are brought down to Sheol, to the depths of the Pit.

All the kings and leaders that are already in Hell stage a welcome party for the Antichrist. They tell him that no matter how important you were in life, everyone is the same among the dead. Verse 12 could be addressing both the Antichrist and Satan, who had entered into him, but the passage goes on to focus on Satan. Different translations describe Satan in a variety of ways: "*the light bearer*"; "*son of the morning*"; "*Day Star*"; "*son of Dawn*". Lucifer, or Satan, or the Devil, is a created angel of the very highest order, identical with the covering cherub of Ezekiel 28. He was apparently the greatest of all the angels and was perfect before God until he fell because of pride. It was Lucifer's ambition to take the throne of God for himself and become the supreme ruler of the universe. Note his 5 "*I wills*." Consequently Lucifer fell from grace and lost his place as the number 1 angel. That is how an angel became the Devil or Satan. Cast down from the place of power and favor which he had enjoyed, he became the relentless enemy of God and humankind. He now roams Heaven and earth like a roaring lion, seeking those he can devour (1 Peter 5:8).

The death of Jesus on the cross marked Satan's downfall as inevitable. But he is determined to carry out his vengeance on humankind wherever he can before his own final judgment takes place. His heart is filled with hatred against God and all that God loves.

We know from other passages that Lucifer was not alone in his rebellion. 2 Peter 2:4 tells us that a whole bunch of angels joined Satan in his rebellion (one-third of the total to be exact). We see further confirmation of this in Matthew 25:41 and Revelation 12:7-9. These evil angels are the ones who place evil and self-destructive temptations before the people of this world. They seek to dominate the hearts and minds of the rulers of the nations of the world, stirring them up to act in opposition to the will of God. Therefore it should come as no surprise in the next verses that we see the king of Babylon allowing himself to be dominated by Lucifer.

Isaiah 14:16-23:

*16 Those who see you will stare at you, and ponder over you: “Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms,
 17 who made the world like a desert and overthrew its cities, who would not let his prisoners go home?”
 18 All the kings of the nations lie in glory, each in his own tomb;
 19 but you are cast out, away from your grave, like loathsome carrion, clothed with the dead, those pierced by the sword, who go down to the stones of the Pit, like a corpse trampled underfoot.
 20 You will not be joined with them in burial, because you have destroyed your land, you have killed your people. May the descendants of evildoers nevermore be named!
 21 Prepare slaughter for his sons because of the guilt of their father. Let them never rise to possess the earth or cover the face of the world with cities.
 22 I will rise up against them, says the Lord of hosts, and will cut off from Babylon name and remnant, offspring and posterity, says the Lord.
 23 And I will make it a possession of the hedgehog, and pools of water, and I will sweep it with the broom of destruction, says the Lord of hosts.*

This passage describes in no uncertain terms the complete destruction of the last great enemy of God’s people in the Day of the Lord. There is a similar description in Ezekiel 31:16-18. All the glory that goes with being a warrior and the pride of world conquest ends in utter destruction for the warriors and the world conquerors.

None who have ever dared out of pride and arrogance to defy God have ever been able to escape destruction and judgment.

In the world government of the last days we see represented all the powers throughout history that have persecuted Israel and the people of God. But then it will be all over forever and ever.

Isaiah 14:24-27:

24 The Lord of hosts has sworn: As I have designed, so shall it be; and as I have planned, so shall it come to pass:

25 I will break the Assyrian in my land, and on my mountains trample him under foot; his yoke shall be removed from them, and his burden from their shoulders.

26 This is the plan that is planned concerning the whole earth; and this is the hand that is stretched out over all the nations.

27 For the Lord of hosts has planned, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?

When the nations are gathered together at the Battle of Armageddon, the Lord will destroy the Antichrist and his world government along with all his armies and any other enemy of Jesus Christ. It is finished and Jesus kingdom of righteousness will be established over all the earth for a period of 1,000 years. What a wonder it will be. Praise God!

In the last five verses of this chapter we have a separate prophecy which was given in the last year of Ahaz' reign. It relates to Palestine and its people.

Isaiah 14:28-32:

28 In the year that King Ahaz died this oracle came:

29 Do not rejoice, all you Philistines, that the rod that struck you is broken, for from the root of the snake will come forth an adder, and its fruit will be a flying fiery serpent.

30 The firstborn of the poor will graze, and the needy lie down in safety; but I will make your root die of famine, and your remnant I will kill.

31 Wail, O gate; cry, O city; melt in fear, O Philistia, all of you! For smoke comes out of the north, and there is no straggler in its ranks.

*32 What will one answer the messengers of the nation? **“THE LORD HAS FOUNDED ZION, AND THE NEEDY AMONG HIS PEOPLE WILL FIND REFUGE IN HER.”***

For the time being God had turned back the armies of Syria and Assyria, but even greater conflicts were to befall Judah in the future. We know they came to pass in the days of King Hezekiah and finally at the end of the reign of Zedekiah. First Judah was overrun by the Assyrians who, however, turned back without accomplishing their purpose. But as the result of Judah's lack of self-judgment, eventually the armies of Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem, killed thousands of people, and carried many more into captivity in Babylon. And this would not be the last of the destruction that was to come on the land of Judah and the people of Israel. Even after a remnant of the people returned to the land around 538 B.C., their days were numbered, and in AD 70, the Romans completely destroyed the city, burning the temple to the ground, slaughtering over a million people, and scattering those that remained all over the known world for the next 1,900 years. And now that the nation has been restored, they are still suffering persecution by every nation around them.

But that will all one day come abruptly to an end, and that day may not be too far off.

