

# Babylon Proclamation

Isaiah 13:1-22

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**BIG BEND  
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## Isaiah 13:1-8

*The burden against Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw.* <sup>2</sup> *“Lift up a banner on the high mountain, Raise your voice to them; Wave your hand, that they may enter the gates of the nobles.*

<sup>3</sup> *I have commanded My sanctified ones; I have also called My mighty ones for My anger— Those who rejoice in My exaltation.”*

<sup>4</sup> *The noise of a multitude in the mountains, like that of many people! A tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together! The Lord of hosts musters The army for battle.*

<sup>5</sup> *They come from a far country, from the end of heaven— The Lord and His weapons of indignation, to destroy the whole land.*

<sup>6</sup> *Wail, for the day of the Lord is at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty.*

<sup>7</sup> *Therefore all hands will be limp, every man’s heart will melt,* <sup>8</sup> *And they will be afraid. Pangs and sorrows will take hold of them; They will be in pain as a woman in childbirth; they will be amazed at one another; Their faces will be like flames.*

### v1 – What is the burden against Babylon?

In the prophets, a burden is a "heavy" message of weighty importance, heavy in the sense that it produces sorrow or grief.

- The Hebrew word translated burden here is ‘massa’ which means 'to carry' or 'to lift up the voice.'
- The first meaning comes the translation 'burden,' or 'load'; and the second meaning we get the translation 'oracle,' or 'utterance.'
- Grammatically, we may be able to say "oracle." But since these are heavy oracles, we are justified in calling them burdens!

*Against Babylon:* Isaiah finished his prophetic career in 685 B.C., almost 100 years before Judah finally fell before the Babylonian Empire (586 B.C.). At the time of this prophecy, Babylon was a significant nation, but they were definitely behind the Assyrian Empire in status. Yet the LORD who knows the end of all things can speak of the judgment on the pride of Babylon hundreds of years before the judgment comes.

### Why is God speaking to Babylon?

This prophecy was probably never published in Babylon, so it wasn't given as a warning to them. Instead, it was for the help of God's people.

- First, by showing them that God was indeed just, and would judge the wicked nations around them. Israel and Judah were feeling the sting of God's discipline, and they were wondering if God is unfairly singling them out.
- Second, Babylon (and other nations in this section) had come against Israel and Judah, and God showed His love to His people by announcing His vengeance against their enemies.

### v2 – What were the gates of the nobles?

Babylon had nobles and their conquerors would certainly enter the gates that allowed people in or kept out the undesirables.

### v3 – Who are these sanctified ones God is calling to come against Babylon?

This had to be the Medes and Persians who God raised up to discipline the Babylonians.

### How is it God's sanctified ones would rejoice in God's exaltation?

The Medes and Persians were executing the will of God whether they knew it or not. They were rejoicing not because they were executing the will of God but because they were being successful.

### v4 – What can this be referring to: a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together?

This begins to sound like the final battle of Armageddon. And as we look at the context to follow here, the day of the Lord is in view. So, is this the near-term Babylon that would conquer Judah or End-Times Babylon that would be the government of the Antichrist during the Tribulation? It could very well apply to both.

### **So what army is the Lord of hosts mustering for battle?**

Certainly, an army of judgment against the Babylonian Empire, prophesied decades before they were even a superpower. But v5 in context looks like there is more at work here than a human army...

### **v5 – What does this say about the army God musters against Babylon?**

They come from a *far country*... the Medes and Persians qualify from Judah's perspective. But there are also those who come from *the end of heaven*... this has to refer to spiritual warfare, angels are behind the scenes pulling the strings of the earthly rulers (Gabriel to Daniel: the Prince of Persia restrained me).

### **How is it this army will *destroy the whole land*?**

The Babylonians did leave Judah desolate so that neglect effectively destroyed the land. But this could also apply to the wars of the Tribulation.

### **v6 – What destruction will happen as a result of the day of the Lord?**

Since God is in control, this could refer to Babylon conquering Judah but other contextual clues here indicate that the focus is on the return of the Lord.

### **v7-8 – How will people react to the day of the Lord?**

They will be so frightened that their hands will be limp and *every man's heart will melt*. This sounds a lot like:

Luke 21:25-27 – *there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.*

### **v8 – Who will be *amazed at one another*?**

When Babylon fell suddenly by a clever, surprise attack by Cyrus, the citizens of the city were completely shocked (Daniel 5). Even more people will be amazed when *they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory* at the end of the Tribulation.

### **Why would their faces be like flames?**

This is probably referring to their expressions of fear... distorted knowing that all hope is lost and their fate is sealed reflecting the fires of hell.

### **Isaiah 13:9-16**

<sup>9</sup> *Behold, the day of the Lord comes, cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and He will destroy its sinners from it.*

<sup>10</sup> *For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light; The sun will be darkened in its going forth, And the moon will not cause its light to shine.*

<sup>11</sup> *"I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, And will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.*

<sup>12</sup> *I will make a mortal more rare than fine gold, A man more than the golden wedge of Ophir.*

<sup>13</sup> *Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth will move out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts and in the day of His fierce anger.*

<sup>14</sup> *It shall be as the hunted gazelle, and as a sheep that no man takes up; Every man will turn to his own people, And everyone will flee to his own land.*

<sup>15</sup> *Everyone who is found will be thrust through, and everyone who is captured will fall by the sword.*

<sup>16</sup> *Their children also will be dashed to pieces before their eyes; Their houses will be plundered and their wives ravished.*

### **v9 – Why does Isaiah shift from speaking of Babylon during Judah's day to the day of the LORD?**

Isaiah now speaks in the "prophetic tense," having in mind both a near fulfillment (the day of judgment against the Babylonian Empire), and an ultimate fulfillment (the final day of judgment of the anti-Christ End Times Babylon at the return of Jesus).

### **What is the day of the Lord?**

The day of the LORD is an important phrase, used some 26 times in the Bible. It speaks of not a single day of judgment, but of the season of judgment when the LORD sets things right.

- It is as if today is man's day, but the LORD's day is coming!

### **v10 – What will characterize the day of the Lord?**

*The stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be darkened:* Several prophetic passages describe the cosmic disturbances that will precede and surround the return of Jesus (Joel 2:10, Revelation 6:12-14, Isaiah 34:4).

Matthew 24:29 – *Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.*

### **v11- Why would God punish the world?**

*I will punish the world for its evil:* This prophetic identification of Babylon with the world, ripe for ultimate judgment.

- We aren't surprised that Isaiah has prophetically combined the vision of Babylon's judgment with the judgment of the whole world for its evil.

### **Why is Babylon so prominent in Scripture, mentioned 287 times, more than any other city except Jerusalem?**

- Babylon was the seat of the civilization that first expressed organized hostility to God.
- Babylon was later the capitol of the empire that cruelly conquered Judah. To the Jews, Babylon was the essence of all evil, the embodiment of cruelty, the foe of God's people.
- In the Old Testament, the name Babylon is associated with organized idolatry, blasphemy and the persecution of God's people.
- In the New Testament, the world's system of the last days is characterized both politically, religiously and commercially as Babylon.

### **v12 – What does it mean that God will make a mortal more rare than fine gold?**

This has to be referring to the Tribulation which follows the Rapture of the Church that removes all of God's children and then there is the wholesale death of the Tribulation in which over half the population of the earth die, and that is before the Lord returns to cleans the earth of all unbelievers...

Revelation 19:21 – *And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.*

### **v13 – What will God do during the day of the Lord?**

*I will shake the heavens, and the earth will move out of her place:* Haggai 2:6 and Hebrews 12:25-28 echo this same thought.

- Since God can shake the heavens and move the earth, and since God Himself is unshakable, it makes a lot more sense to trust in God than even the ground we stand on and the air we breathe.

### **How is it the earth will move out of her place?**

Some have speculated what this may mean. Whatever it is, it will be specular and unprecedented in the history of mankind totally blowing out of the water the conventional wisdom about the universe:

2 Peter 3:4-6 – *Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.” For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water.*

### **v14 – What will the enemies of God be like?**

*It shall be as the hunted gazelle:* The picture of God's judgment, upon both Babylon and the world in general, is unrelenting. It is like the hunted gazelle is overtaken by the lion, and it is utterly consumed.

- There is no escape from God's unrelenting judgment.

### **How did Jesus make himself the hunted gazelle for us?**

If you take comfort in Jesus, remember that this is the same unrelenting judgment that was poured out upon Him on the cross.

### **Why will people flee to their own land?**

Their own land is where they expect to find safety. Everyone wants to be at home when the crisis hits.

### **v15 – Who will be the hunted during the day of the Lord?**

There will be newly minted believers during the Tribulation who refuse to worship the Antichrist...

Revelation 13:15 – *He [the False Prophet] was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.*

Most believers during the Tribulation will become martyrs...

Revelation 6:9 – *When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God*

...and that is from the beginning of the Tribulation

### **v16 – What else will happen during the day of the Lord?**

Lawlessness... *their houses plundered* sounds a lot like the Word Economic Forum: “you’ll own nothing and be happy” only you will not be very happy about being plundered.

### **Isaiah 13:17-22**

<sup>17</sup> *“Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, who will not regard silver; And as for gold, they will not delight in it. <sup>18</sup> Also their bows will dash the young men to pieces, And they will have no pity on the fruit of the womb; Their eye will not spare children.*

<sup>19</sup> *And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans’ pride, will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.*

<sup>20</sup> *It will never be inhabited, nor will it be settled from generation to generation; Nor will the Arabian pitch tents there, Nor will the shepherds make their sheepfolds there.*

<sup>21</sup> *But wild beasts of the desert will lie there, and their houses will be full of owls; Ostriches will dwell there, and wild goats will caper there.*

<sup>22</sup> *The hyenas will howl in their citadels, and jackals in their pleasant palaces. Her time is near to come, and her days will not be prolonged.”*

### **v17 – What instrument would God use against the Babylonians?**

*I will stir up the Medes against them:* Now the prophecy shifts back to the near-term. But even then, if this prophecy was made decades before the Babylonian Empire defeated the Assyrian Empire and became a superpower, it was well before the time when the Medes came against the Babylonians, conquering them as instruments of God's judgments.

### **How is it the Medes will not delight in silver or gold?**

They were after more than just riches, they were after power.

### **How do specifically worded passages like this drive Bible skeptics crazy?**

They can't handle it and have to regard Isaiah as written after the events prophesied. Only God knows the future and this is seen in the specific details He reveals.

### **v18 – What does this tell us about the God's tool against Babylon?**

They will be ruthless not even sparing children. They did not want to leave anyone who might grow up and seek vengeance... since they thought that way, they naturally thought others did as well.

### **v19 – What does the reference to Sodom and Gomorrah reveal about the demise of Babylon?**

The phrase 'Sodom and Gomorrah' suggests not only complete destruction at the hand of God but also the destruction of its moral cause.

### **v20 – When was it fulfilled that Babylon would *never be inhabited*?**

When Cyrus conquered Babylon, he did not devastate the city. The walls were left standing until 518 B.C., and general desolation did not set in until the third century B.C. Babylon gradually fell into decay, and the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled.

- Babylon became completely depopulated by the time of the Muslim conquest in the seventh century A.D., and to this day it lies deserted becoming a tourist attraction under Saddam Hussein.

### **What will be the ultimate fulfillment of the demise of the Babylonian anti-God system?**

When Jesus returns in glory and conquers the world system, He will rule the earth for 1,000 years. As He does, there will be no more "world system" in opposition to God as we know it.

- In this sense, the end-times world system in opposition to God will never be inhabited again.

### **v21-22 – What does it tell us that wild beasts of the desert will be in uninhabited Babylon?**

The picture is of the darkness and confusion surrounding the fall of Babylon.

- The 'wild goats' are sometimes associated with demons in goat form that are called 'satyrs' (Lev. 17:7; 2 Chron. 11:15).

### **What applications come to mind from our discussion today?**

- God will indeed judge the wicked... it may not be when we want it to happen but justice will be done.
- God uses even the wicked to do His will... but only the righteous who do His will are rewarded.
- The day of the Lord starts with a terrible time of Tribulation... but church-age saints will escape it.
- The day of the Lord is eagerly anticipated by the church and Israel because it prepares the world for the Millennial Kingdom.
- Babylon represents the end-times anti-God political, economic and religious system the Jesus will crush when He returns.
- It will not be pleasant to be a hunted child of God during the Tribulation... it will be much better to accept Jesus as your Savior in the Age of Grace.
- The Bible is full of very specific prophecies that have been fulfilled... so, we should expect the prophecies of the Lord's return to also be fulfilled.