

Is. 13:1 The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see.

“burden” – an utterance, chiefly a doom, a prophecy

“Babylon” – includes the empire as well as the city

“see” - to gaze at; mentally, to perceive, contemplate (with pleasure); specifically, to have a vision of

As we look at these next few chapters, we need to be reminded that the prophets didn't always understand the time relationship regarding what they were seeing or prophesying about, as is most obviously pictured when Jesus read from Isaiah 61 in the synagogue of His hometown of Nazareth. (Luke 4:16-18)

Isaiah 61:1–3 “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, [this is where He stopped] and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.”

He stopped in the middle of verse two because that ended the part that He was fulfilling at that time. The time of vengeance and the restoration of Israel referenced in the rest of that passage will occur at His second coming.

As I read through this chapter again, it stood out to me that Isaiah was “seeing” what he was prophesying about. How terrifying such a vision must have been!

In this chapter Isaiah pronounces judgment on Babylon—an empire that had not yet even risen to prominence. There are other chapters in the scripture that speak of the destruction of Babylon—Jeremiah 50-51 and Revelation 17-18.

Is. 13:2 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.

As I checked out the original words and some different translations, it made sense that a call is being made for a banner or signal to be lifted up on a *bare* (from the Hebrew) mountain so as to be easily seen. It seems to be a call to battle.

Nobles = voluntary, to volunteer as a soldier... a grandee (sometimes a tyrant)

I'm not sure what the last part of the verse is saying. Maybe it is a reference to attacking the tyrant of Babylon.

Is. 13:3 I have commanded my sanctified ones, I have also called my mighty ones for mine anger, even them that rejoice in my highness.

Is. 13:4 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.

The word *sanctified* is not a separate word, but is included in the word “ones.” The meanings given include “appoint, consecrate, dedicate.”

The same situation occurs with the phrase “mighty ones.” This is a different word for *ones* and the meanings include “powerful, warrior, tyrant, champion, valiant man.”

The possessive words “my” and “mine” are not in the original. This is where it would be useful to know Hebrew.

Verse 4 makes it clear that it is the Lord gathering this army together, but it actually makes more sense to read verse 3 without *my* and *mine* to me. I think my paraphrase would be: “The Lord has given a charge to an army of powerful, maybe even tyrannical, men who have been appointed by God to this task, men who are angry and rejoice in their pride. (I don’t think anyone in this army gives any acknowledgement to God as their source of power or strength as indicated by the phrase “rejoice in ~~my~~ highness.”) This army is composed of a great multitude of people from various Gentile nations.

This great multitude is also part of Jeremiah’s prophecy.

Jeremiah 50:9 For, lo, I will raise and cause to come up against Babylon an assembly of great nations from the north country: and they shall set themselves in array against her; from thence she shall be taken: their arrows shall be as of a mighty expert man; none shall return in vain.

Jeremiah states that every arrow shot by this army will hit its mark. Sounds a lot like the smart bombs of today.

Is. 13:5 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.

Is. 13:6 Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty.

As I continue to read in this section I can’t help but begin to place this at the time of destruction declared for Babylon in Revelation, which is yet future. This army is coming from a far away place using the weapons that the Lord has given them to destroy the whole land because of His rage at their sin. Again, emphasis is given in verse 6 that this “day of the Lord” will come as a destruction, a devastation, a waste. This description does not apply to how the Medes/Persians conquered Babylon in Daniel’s time. History records that Cyrus basically led his armies in to take over the city without opposition.

This message from God through Isaiah is very similar to His message through Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 50:18 Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will punish the king of Babylon and his land, as I have punished the king of Assyria.

Jeremiah 50:25 The LORD hath opened his armoury, and hath brought forth the weapons of his indignation: for this is the work of the Lord GOD of hosts in the land of the Chaldeans.

**Is. 13:7 Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt:
Is. 13:8 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.**

In several different expressions, Isaiah is making the point that men will be terrified and in great pain. Most translations use the idea of *flaming faces*. That would certainly be a cause for wonder and amazement as they saw the results of these weapons of destruction on each other. It is also quite compatible with today's weapons of war—especially nuclear.

The idea of this type of fear at the destruction of Babylon is supported in Revelation.

Revelation 18:15 The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,

Is. 13:9 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.

When God pours out His judgment on Babylon, it will be cruel (terrible, violent).

Revelation 18:21 And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.

This judgment of God will be an “outburst of passion” (Hebrew) and great anger. The purpose is to destroy the land and the sinners in it. That is why God gives warning for His people to come out of it (just as He called Lot out of Sodom).

Revelation 18:4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

Is. 13:10 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.

This is another verse that immediately connects my thoughts to the destruction of Babylon spoken of in Revelation. Although the sixth seal judgment

(Revelation 6:12) and the fourth trumpet judgment (Revelation 8:12) affect these heavenly bodies, I think that is too early in the tribulation period to be reference to the destruction of Babylon. I tend to associate this verse with the fifth vial judgment.

Revelation 16:10 And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain....

Is. 13:11 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.

Scripture is full of the truth that God's wrath is directed toward God's enemies, the children of disobedience, the wicked, those who don't believe on the Son, the ungodly, sinners, and the proud.

- *Nahum 1:2 God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance **on his adversaries**, and he reserveth wrath **for his enemies**.*
- *Ephesians 5:6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God **upon the children of disobedience**.*
- *Job 21:30 That **the wicked** is reserved to the day of destruction? they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath.*
- *John 3:36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and **he that believeth not the Son** shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*
- *Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven **against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men**, who hold the truth in unrighteousness....*
- *See verse 9 above.*
- *Isaiah 2:12 For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be **upon every one that is proud and lofty**, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low....*

Is. 13:12 I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir.

In this time of God's wrath, the day of the Lord, the time when Babylon will be destroyed, the number of men on earth will become scarce—thus, the comparison to being as rare or valuable as fine gold. (Ophir was a region in the east known for its gold. Some scholars place it in India and others in Arabia.) I think the reason for this is the number of dead that will result from wars that will be occurring during that time and as a result of the judgments of God.

Revelation 6:4 And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another:

Revelation 6:8 And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part

of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

Revelation 8:9 And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died;

Revelation 8:11 And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

Revelation 9:15 And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.

Is. 13:13 **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.**

One of the cross references to this verse is Haggai chapter 2. In that one chapter there are two references made to “shaking the heavens.”

Haggai 2:6-7 For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts.

Haggai 2:21-22 Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth; And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother.

The first reference seems to emphasize that the *shaking* precedes the return of Jesus in glory to His throne in Jerusalem. The second gives emphasis to the destruction of “the kingdoms of the heathen.”

“earth shall remove out of her place” – Maybe this is a reference to the greatest earthquake ever to be experienced by man on planet earth as referenced in Revelation 16 with the 7th vial. I could not find a comparable scripture with this wording.

Revelation 16:18 And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.

The next verse in Revelation affirms the connection of these events to the wrath of God against Babylon.

Revelation 16:19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.

There was a great earthquake in Sumatra in December of 2004 that gave us a preview of the type of earthquake mentioned here. Following are excerpts from Sci-tech-today.com concerning this event:

“December's great Sumatra-Andaman earthquake -- the most powerful in more than 40 years and the trigger of a devastating tsunami -- shook the ground everywhere on Earth's surface, scientists have found. Weeks later the planet was still trembling.... The earthquake and resulting tsunami, which swept across the Indian Ocean, killed more than 176,000 people in 11 countries and left about 50,000 missing and hundreds of thousands homeless....' No point on Earth remained undisturbed,' wrote Roger Bilham of the University of Colorado.... the quake caused the planet to oscillate like a bell, at periods of about 17 minutes, which they were able to measure for weeks afterward.”

I'm sure the effects of this event will pale in comparison to the event being referenced by Isaiah.

Is. 13:14 *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.*

“roe” = gazelle, a deer

During this time of wrath directed against the world, including Babylon, people are pictured as frightened animals. They will be seeking safety, and most people feel safest surrounded by their own family and loved ones.

Is. 13:15 *Every one that is found shall be thrust through; and every one that is joined unto them shall fall by the sword.*

Is. 13:16 *Their children also shall be dashed to pieces before their eyes; their houses shall be spoiled, and their wives ravished.*

This time of judgment will be violent (cf verse 9). It has always been hard for me to imagine that man can inflict the kind of cruelty upon one another that they do, but history testifies to the atrocities of man. In the twentieth century we witnessed some of the worst through the Nazi regime; closer to home we have had people flying airplanes into buildings in the name of Allah; and in Israel, in particular, people have been willing to turn themselves into bombs and kill innocent people for political or religious purposes. Most recently have been the acts perpetrated by ISIS against Christians in particular as well as anyone else they consider their enemy—locking men in cages and setting them on fire, throwing men off of buildings, mass beheadings, etc.

Our “entertainment” has become a medium of such violence that people are even more desensitized than ever.

As always, the innocent suffer because of the sins of their fathers.

Is. 13:17 Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver; and as for gold, they shall not delight in it.

Is. 13:18 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.

As prophets normally do, Isaiah speaks the prophetic message without knowledge of the exact how and when of its fulfillment. Sometimes the message includes portions of prophecy that will be fulfilled at different times; sometimes there are types involved in a partial fulfillment (e.g., Antiochus Epiphanes as a type of the antichrist in Daniel). History tells us that the Medes did conquer Babylon, but not with the violence described here. This makes me wonder if the destruction of Babylon referenced in Revelation will be a result of God using descendants of or forces from the area of the conquering Medes of Daniel's time.

According to International Turkey Network (itnet.org), the Kurds believe they are descendants of the biblical Medes and that they have a strong case based on geographical, linguistic and cultural factors. Note: As of July 2014, it is looking more and more like the Kurds are going to establish their own state.

Jeremiah identifies the Medes as the instrument of God's destruction as well.

Jeremiah 51:11 Make bright the arrows; gather the shields: the LORD hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for his device is against Babylon, to destroy it; because it is the vengeance of the LORD, the vengeance of his temple

Again, I think it is important to note that the Medes did not destroy Babylon when they conquered it in the time of Daniel.

Is. 13:19 And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.

Is. 13:20 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.

Is. 13:21 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.

Is. 13:22 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.

Again, Jeremiah emphasizes this same prophecy.

Jeremiah 50:39-40 Therefore the wild beasts of the desert with the wild beasts of the islands shall dwell there, and the owls shall dwell therein: and it shall be no more inhabited for ever; neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation. As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbour cities thereof, saith the LORD; so shall no man abide there, neither shall any son of man dwell therein.

Jeremiah 51:37 And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwellingplace for dragons, an astonishment, and an hissing, without an inhabitant.

The destruction of Babylon described here has never happened. I found a quote from The Apocalypse by Joseph Seiss that explains this well.

“When did Babylon ever fall with so complete a fall, or meet with such an utter obliteration from the earth, ‘as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah?’ Sodom and Gomorrah were completely blotted out. But this has never yet been the case with Babylon. Such was not its fate when the Medes and Persians seized it from the hands of the infamous Belshazzar, for they made it one of their royal cities. In the time of Alexander it still stood, and was the chosen capital of the Graeco-Macedonian empire, the second city of Alexander’s dominions, where he himself lived and died. It continued to be a populous place under the Syrian kings, who succeeded Alexander in the rule over it. In the time of the apostles it was still a populous place, for both Peter and Bartholomew preached the Gospel there, and there Peter wrote his first Epistle. As late as A.D. 250, there was a Christian church there, and an influential bishopric for many years thereafter. Five hundred years after Christ there were Jewish academies there, who issued the celebrated Babylonian Talmud. Here, then, was a lengthening out of the existence of Babylon as a populated city for more than a thousand years subsequent to the taking of it by Cyrus. And even to this present hour there is a city in the middle of the area occupied by old Babylon containing 10,000 people, and which pays to its governor a revenue of 342,000 Turkish piastres, more than \$17,000, a year. Shepherds do make their folds there, as testified by all modern travelers, and the Arabians do pitch their tents there. It is not an utter desolation without inhabitant, and never has been since Nimrod laid its first foundations. The sentence upon Babylon is therefore not yet fulfilled, and cannot be unless that city comes up again into something of its former consequence.”