

The Book of the Prophet ISAIAH

Chapter 13

Theme: God revealed the defeat and ruin of Babylon by Medes and Persians 200 years before fulfillment.

Outline:

- 1-5 God Mustered His Army Against Babylon
- 6-18 God's Wrath to Crush Babylon by Medes
- 19-22 Great Babylon Totally and Finally Ruined

Preparatory Reading: Isaiah 14,39,41-48; Jeremiah 25,27,50-51; Daniel 2,7; Hab 2; Hag 2; Rev 17-18.

Related Links:

- A. *Introduction to the Book of Isaiah (outline)* ... <http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/pdf/isaiah-introduction.pdf>.
- B. *Overview of O.T. Prophets (slides)* ... <http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/pdf/old-testament-prophets-slides.pdf>.
- C. *Chronological Table and Notes for Prophets* ... <http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/pdf/prophets-table-with-notes.pdf>.
- D. *The Prophets of God (sermon outline)* ... <http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/pdf/prophets-of-god.pdf>.
- E. *Babylon – History and Prophecies (slides)* ... <http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/pdf/babylon.pdf>.
- F. *Interpreting Bible Prophecies (slides)* ... <http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/pdf/prophecy-interpretation.pdf>.
- G. *The Five Kingdoms (slides of Daniel 2 and 7)* ... <http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/pdf/five-kingdoms.pdf>.
- H. *The Christian and Politics (outline)* ... <http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/pdf/christian-and-politics-2.pdf>.

Introduction:

- A. This chapter begins a new section of Isaiah somewhat different from those chapter preceding this one.
 - 1. For the next ten or twenty chapters, God will prophesy His judgments against nations of the world.
 - 2. This is a big change from challenges, warnings, and prophecies concerning Israel and its Messiah.
- B. There is nothing in this chapter but the overthrow and final ruin of Babylon by the Medes (Is 13:17).
 - 1. Bible students must exalt context and keep it central to avoid misapplying any verses for heresies.
 - 2. The sentences and words must be forced to fit the context (Babylon), not the other way around.
 - 3. If you do not keep this ruling all thoughts, you will misinterpret prophetic metaphors into heresies.
 - 4. Why did Jesus give the parable of the Good Samaritan? To answer only one very simple question.
 - 5. Rather than let words force you to modify the context or invent two fulfillments, do the opposite.
 - 6. For more of Babylon's origin, destruction, symbolism ... <http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/pdf/babylon.pdf>.
- C. Consider a couple aspects of this prophetic chapter to properly appreciate it and the wise Author of it.
 - 1. Fulfilled prophecy is one of the great proofs of evidence for our God and the Bible as supernatural.
 - 2. Other religions may have holy books e.g. Koran, but those holy books have no fulfilled prophecies.
 - 3. This prophecy is 200 years before it occurred, while Babylon was still a province of great Assyria.
 - 4. Babylon was not even an enemy of Israel yet, but the prophecy foretells is ruin for being an enemy.
- D. What profit and value can N.T. Christians gather from the prophecies fulfilled long ago and far away?
 - 1. God is in total control and rule of all world politics and wars no matter how complex or large.
 - 2. God will destroy all the enemies of His people and will do so in anger and jealousy against them.
 - 3. These are some of the great works of God, which are done to provoke praise and worship in us.
 - 4. These are faith-building lessons of hope and trust to ignore circumstances and claim His promises.
 - 5. There are lessons here for interpreting Bible prophecies that can be carried into the New Testament.
 - 6. What glorious confidence and faith Christians should have in their Ruler of Nations and Father!
 - 7. For more considerations of world politics ... <http://www.letgodbetruerue.com/pdf/christian-and-politics-2.pdf>.

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

- A. The burden of Babylon = God's judgment prophesied against Babylon, a common use.
 - 1. Compare Moab (Is 15:1), Damascus (Is 17:1), Egypt (Is 19:1), Arabia (Is 21:1,11,13), valley of vision (Is 22:1), Tyre (Is 23:1), beasts of the south (Is 30:6).
 - 2. And Nineveh (Nah 1:1), Phoenicia (Zech 9:1), Israel (Zech 12:1), Israel (Mal 1:1).
 - 3. God hated the Jews for mocking prophecies (*burdens*) of judgment (Jer 23:33-40).
- B. They were a *burden* to the prophets to deliver them but especially to those being judged.
- C. Every reader better humble Himself before the warnings of scripture and repent, today!

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.

- A. This language describes God, like a king or general, mustering an army for a great war.
 - 1. The context tells us this glorious fact in the plainest of terms in verses near (Is 13:4).
 - 2. *Lifting up a banner*, like a military standard, identifies a place for soldiers to gather.
 - 3. The *mountain* is most likely merely a high place, or a mountain of Media (Is 13:17).
 - 4. *Exalt the voice* unto them is to shout or yell to get the attention of soldiers audibly.
 - 5. *Shaking the hand* is using hand gestures to gather men together into their companies.
- B. The destination of this mustered army is to enter the gates of the nobles of Babylon.
 - 1. When an army is mustered, the nature of the campaign or expedition may be told.
 - 2. This military campaign would be quite easy and very successful with great spoil.
 - 3. The Medes and Persians found nobles in one night at Belshazzar's expense (Da 5:1).
 - 4. The gates were open into Babylon for the army to enter easily (Is 45:1-3; Jer 51:28).
- C. This form of speech had been used to gather the Chaldeans against Judah (Isaiah 5:26).
- D. This form of speech will be used again to gather another army against others (Is 18:3).
- E. This form of speech had been used to gather Christians together to Christ (Is 11:10-12).

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

- A. This is lofty language for the pagan idolaters of Media and Persia, but it fits acceptably.
 - 1. To sanctify is to consecrate or dedicate to divine or holy use – here God's judgment.
 - 2. The mustered army of the Medes and Persians were called by God to their vocation.
 - 3. How did these pagans rejoice in God's highness? Indirectly by their achievements!
 - 4. How did these pagans rejoice in God's highness? Indirectly by His gifts of success!
 - 5. How did these pagans rejoice in God's highness? Directly by Cyrus's great decree!
- B. Never forget – our God commands and calls the earth's largest, strongest armies to fight.
- C. Never forget – our God sets apart armies, exercises His anger, and blesses with victories.

- D. So much so are the armies of the world His that they are called His sanctified ones, His mighty ones, and they rejoice in His highness by doing His will and using His blessings!
1. God used Adolph Hitler, who was no different or worse than Alexander the Great.
 2. Any fear of men or even devils is not right for a Christian with his Father ruling all.

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.

- A. Media is chiefly in view here (Is 13:17), but many nations were involved (Jer 27:7; etc.).
1. The ram of Media/Persia had two horns, the first Media, the higher Persia (Dan 8:3).
 2. The banner had been raised on the high mountain (Is 13:2); the great army formed.
- B. **Muster.** To collect or assemble an army and its arms to prepare it for battle or travel.
- C. The LORD of hosts – the God of heaven’s angelic armies – uses human hosts as well.

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.

- A. Media is chiefly in view here (Is 13:17), but many nations were involved (Jer 27:7; etc.).
- B. Delight in the language of very close and direct association of God with a pagan army.
1. The army by all accounts is God’s army with Him leading it to war and great victory.
 2. They are nothing but an axe or saw in God’s hand for His indignation (Is 10:5,15).
 3. Never forget that even Satan is nothing but a puppet in the hand of God (Job 2:3-6).
- C. God was indignant for the arrogance, cruelty, sins, and wickedness of the Chaldeans.
- D. Learn the dramatic, hyperbolic language of prophets describing very significant events.
1. In fact, Media was not far from Babylon, but a relative neighbor, though extensive.
 2. Japan or North America would be far countries by ordinary use, but not so here.
 3. From the end of heaven is true (horizon) and hyperbolic (truly nearby). Accept it.
 4. They hardly destroyed the whole land; they captured the city Babylon of the land.
 5. The whole land is all of Babylon, the capital and central city of the pagan empire.
 6. You yourself use such extreme expressions, like ... *the whole world has gone crazy*.

***** *God’s Wrath to Crush Babylon by Medes – Verses 6-18* *****

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

- A. Babylon and Chaldea *should howl* in consternation and fear at approaching desolation.
- B. It is the *day of the LORD*, which means the God of the Bible had ordained the great war.
1. Do the words *the day of the LORD* have to mean His second or third coming? No!

2. The day of the LORD should always and only be understood by context (Mal 4:5).
 3. Malachi and Peter used it for ruin of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. (Mal 4:1-6; Acts 2:20,40).
- C. The day of the LORD was *at hand*, which means it was not far away to be easily ignored.
1. Must the words *at hand* mean that Babylon would be overthrown in the near future?
 2. No, for the event was 200 years away; Isaiah prophesied under Ahaz here (Is 14:28).
 3. For analysis of prophetic timing (pages 13-19) ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/preterism.pdf>.

7 Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt:

- A. The judgment of God upon Babylon by the Medes and Persians would cause them fear.
1. The preparatory success of the coalition would cause initial fear in the Babylonians.
 2. Easy entry into the city would shock Babylon when they found out too late to resist.
 3. The hyperbolic language of the prophets is obvious again here for a confident city.
 4. Surely there some few and a minority of Chaldeans that tried to defend their city.
- B. Remember, God did not kill Pharaoh by a stroke while sleeping at night. No, not at all!
1. These wicked men deserved more than an instant death – they deserved some fear.
 2. God gave Nabal ten days to think about losing everything, even his wife to David.

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. Like a woman in labor entering transition, leaders and warriors of Babylon would fear.
1. The fear would be painful and sorrowful – truly debilitating anguish over the danger.
 2. A woman's labor starts spontaneously, and the surprise entry of Darius was as well.
 3. A woman cannot stop the pain of labor, and the Chaldeans could not stop their threat.
- B. They would be amazed – astonished by the realization that their city was already taken.
- C. Flames are red, and their faces would reflect their anguish and shame of certain ruin.
- D. Babylon had considered herself impregnable, but she fell most easily in just one night.

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.

- A. *Behold* = pay close attention = the LORD comes with cruelty to desolate and to destroy.
- B. The *day of the LORD cometh* is all futurists need to imagine their *Left Behind* novels.
- C. Is this the Day of Judgment, for it says *destroying sinners out of the world* (Is 13:11)?
1. No, it is not. The day here occurred back in 456 B.C. by Cyrus the Persian (Is 13:17).
 2. Context is our master, and we must never fall victim to foolish word connections.
 3. For more about context (outline) ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/slaves-to-context.pdf>.
 4. *Interpreting Bible Prophecies* (slides) ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/prophesy-interpretation.pdf>.

D. The sinners are the Babylonians and no one else = the Chaldeans for cruelty to the Jews.

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.

- A. These are common apocalyptic descriptions of great changes and events in a kingdom.
 - 1. They are not to be taken literally, as futurists do by their first rule of interpretation.
 - 2. Heavenly bodies going dark is fearful, gloomy, painful events (Is 5:30; Ec 12:1-2).
 - 3. Heavenly bodies can refer to rulers of a nation being killed (Gen 37:5-11; Dan 8:10).
 - 4. Compare similar usage elsewhere (Is 24:21-23; Ezek 32:7-9; Matt 24:29; Acts 2:20).
- B. Such cataclysmic events in the natural realm represent such events in the political realm.
 - 1. Never forget that the prophets used similitudes (Hosea 12:10; Rev 1:11; I Pet 1:11).
 - 2. God used this language elsewhere, for example His destruction of Edom (Is 34:1-8).
 - 3. There are many, many examples of similar and related verses throughout the Bible.
 - 4. You use such language yourself ... *the world is turned upside down* ... when it is not.

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.

- A. The world here is only the Babylonian world, another rule for interpretation (Luke 2:1).
- B. The Chaldeans were guilt of evil, iniquity, proud arrogancy, and terrible haughtiness.
- C. When God finished with these enemies of His church, they would never rise up again.

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

- A. The defeat of Babylon's mighty men would be so complete that soldiers would be rare.
- B. Recall God describing Assyria's army as being shrunk to a child's counting (Is 10:19).
- C. Fine gold, and the rare, desired gold of Ophir, were both limited, as soldiers in Babylon.

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.

- A. These are common apocalyptic descriptions of great changes and events in a kingdom.
 - 1. The great security and stability of heaven and earth are shaken up here (Hag 2:6-9).
 - 2. Paul said Haggai's use of this language was fulfilled by the apostles (Heb 12:25-29).
 - 3. Compare similar usage elsewhere for political change (Joel 3:16; Matthew 24:29).
- B. Such cataclysmic events in the natural realm represent such events in the political realm.
 - 1. Never forget that the prophets used similitudes (Hosea 12:10; Rev 1:11; I Pet 1:11).

2. There are many, many examples of similar and related verses throughout the Bible.
 3. You use such language yourself ... *the world is turned upside down* ... when it is not.
- C. The true God of the Bible gets angry, has wrath, and even fierce anger against sinners.

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.

- A. Babylon would run out of its usual course and habits like a terrified deer or wary sheep.
1. This apocalyptic, hyperbolic language is why we do not force prophecy to be literal.
 2. The context tells us that the event here is merely Babylon being defeated by Media.
 3. Both deer and sheep can run very fast to get away from trouble as their only defense.
- B. Those men that had moved from other nations to join Babylon's coalition would leave.
1. Babylon, capital of the world, had mingled people there of other nations (Jer 50:37).
 2. Those men, soldiers, and mercenaries Babylon had drawn would leave (Is 47:15).
 3. In one night these fair-weather friends of Babylon would run away to their homes.

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

- A. Those that did not run away – the men in whom Babylon trusted – would be thus killed.
- B. Cyrus announced in Syriac to stay inside and any in the streets would be killed (Gill).
- C. Not only the Babylonians would die that night but all the confederates and mercenaries.

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

- A. Here is the fulfillment of Psalm 137:8-9 – Babylon's children dashed against the stones.
1. As the Chaldeans had done to Jews and other nations, the same happened to them.
 2. God is known by judgment He executes – sins of men turned on them (Ps 9:15-16).
- B. As Babylon had done to Judah and Jerusalem, so God had the Medes do to Babylon.
1. They took the riches even of the temple, so God gave Babylon's to Cyrus (Is 45:3).
 2. They had raped the women of Judah, so God allowed Persia to do likewise (La 5:11).
- C. Nebuchadnezzar's cruelty is known by threats in Daniel and Zedekiah's sons (Je 52:10).

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.

- A. This is nothing more or less than Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian in 456 A.D.
1. The Medes were the first power of the coalition, but Persia was greater (Dan 8:3-4).
 2. Successive empires of the world of Babylon and Persia are foretold (Daniel 2 & 7).

- B. Note that it is God that stirs up men; the Bible speaks actively of His great sovereignty.
 - 1. When trouble is brewing between nations, it is because our God has stirred the pot.
 - 2. Never forget that the choices men make are theirs but God led them to it (Josh 11:20).
- C. The Medes were so moved by God that they would not join up with Cyrus for reward.
 - 1. Cyrus the Persian declared to this other army, “O ye Medes, and all present, I truly know that not for want of money are ye come out with me.” See Gill commentary.
 - 2. God would also stir up Cyrus to release the Jews for no reward (Isaiah 45:11-13).
- D. Regarding kings and all of lesser authority, God ordained the offices, chose the men for the offices, and moves and directs their hearts while in office. Do not neglect any part.
- E. *The Ordinance of Authority (outline)* ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/authority-ordinance-of.pdf>.

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.

- A. The use of *bows* here is synecdoche for archers and other weapons used against them.
- B. The Holy Spirit redirected Isaiah back to the painful consequences for previous cruelty.
- C. God not only mustered an army by stirring up Media; He also moved them to cruelty.
- D. Note a psalm written about Jewish captives mocked by Chaldean captors (Ps 137:8-9).
- E. In light of this vengeance, what will God do for His RCC martyrs (Rev 6:9-11). Glory!

***** *Great Babylon Totally and Finally Ruined – Verses 19-22* *****

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

- A. The summary is plain enough – glorious Babylon would be utterly and forever ruined.
- B. First, consider the Bible's exaltation of the city as one of the most glorious in the world.
 - 1. God honored it as one of the world's greatest (Isaiah 14:4; 47:5; Jer 50:23; 51:13,41).
 - 2. God honored her greatest king Nebuchadnezzar as a king of kings (Daniel 2:37-38).
- C. What was left of Sodom and Gomorrah? Nothing at all; those cities were burned up.
 - 1. Babylon shortly after the apostles was only mounds (I Pet 5:13; Jer 50:26; 51:37).
 - 2. Emperor Trajan (53-117) said, “...nothing but mounds and stones and ruins...”
 - 3. Pictures of the place today make it hard to imagine a city like Babylon ever there.
 - 4. The kiln-fired bricks were used for building projects elsewhere, including Baghdad.
 - 5. Vandalized walls and a deserted palace were built by Saddam Hussein in 1980's.
- D. For 1000 years or much longer, Babylon was desolate mounds not touched until 1800's.
 - 1. Robert Johann Koldewey (1855-1925) did much of the archaeology work there.
 - 2. Though indications of greatness were discovered, the city is still uninhabited ruins.

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.*

- A. This occurred 500 years after Cyrus; Peter wrote from Babylon in 60 A.D. (I Pet 5:13).
- B. Here is another rule of prophetic interpretation to observe ... the timeframe of prophets.
- C. The mounds were ignored for 1000-1800 years for German Robert Koldewey in 1899.
- D. There is nothing there – no inhabitants – no livestock – nothing of ordinary civilization.
- E. Saddam Hussein built a palace there in the 1980's, but it has been since entirely looted.

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.*

- A. The only creatures using the former site of the greatest city are wild animals and birds.
- B. There is little to no value to seek details on these creatures and miss the valuable lesson.
 - 1. The profit is to realize God's judgment is thorough, terrible, and final for all sinners.
 - 2. God can and will take a glorious city and reduce it to nothing with or without fire.
 - 3. Any houses left or holes where houses had been will be occupied by desert creatures.
 - 4. Doleful animals are unfriendly and useless, lamentably dismal, gloomy (Micah 2:4).
 - 5. Owls are solitary and lonely creatures that avoid men and their places of activity.
 - 6. Satyrs or dragons can be wild goats (look like satyrs) or mystical creatures of speech.
 - 7. What are the *Monsters of the Midway* ... the NFL Chicago Bears ... and no one fusses.

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.*

- A. Like the previous verse, solitary and wild creatures will occupy any remaining houses.
 - 1. If troubled by the word *dragons* here, make sure you never use the word *dragonfly*.
 - 2. Wild animals and creatures living apart from human activity would occupy Babylon.
- B. Isaiah prophetically said ... *her time is near to come ... her days shall not be prolonged*.
 - 1. He prophesied near 200 years before Cyrus took the city (from Ahaz to Zerubbabel).
 - 2. Isaiah prophesied in 645 while King Ahaz lived (Is 14:28); Cyrus took it in 456 B.C.
 - 3. Alexander died 130 years later trying to rebuild Babylon as his capital in 323 B.C.
 - 4. Peter wrote at least one of his epistles from the city in about 60 A.D. (I Peter 5:13).
 - 5. Trajan thought it desolate in the first century, and it became uninhabited mounds.
 - 6. God's timing is not the same as ours, which must be remembered always (II Pet 3:8).

For much more about Babylon (slides) ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/babylon.pdf>.