

Isaiah 13

The oracle concerning Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw.

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,

and have summoned my mighty men to execute my anger,

my proudly exulting ones.

4 The sound of a tumult is on the mountains

as of a great multitude!

The sound of an uproar of kingdoms,

of nations gathering together!

The Lord of hosts is mustering

a host 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 land.

6 Wail, for the day of the Lord is near;

as destruction from the Almighty it will come!

7 Therefore all hands will be feeble,

and every human heart will melt.

8 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 Behold, the day of the Lord comes,

cruel, with wrath and fierce anger,

to make the land 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 pomp of the arrogant,

and lay low the pompous pride of the ruthless.

12 I will make people more rare than fine gold,

and mankind 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.

14 And like a hunted gazelle,

or like sheep with none to gather them,

each will turn to his own people,

and each will flee to his own land.

15 Whoever is found will be thrust through,

and whoever is caught will fall by the sword.

16 Their infants will be dashed in pieces

before their eyes;

their houses will be plundered

and their wives ravished.

17 Behold, 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.

19 And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms,

the splendor and pomp of the Chaldeans,

will be like Sodom and Gomorrah

when God overthrew them.

20 It will never be inhabited

or lived in for all generations;

no Arab will pitch his tent there;

no shepherds will make their flocks lie down there.

21 But wild animals will lie down there,

and their houses will be full of howling creatures;

there ostriches will dwell,

and there wild goats 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.

We're in the thirteenth chapter of Isaiah, and this begins another section in the book of Isaiah. The first twelve chapters were messages of both judgment and hope for Jerusalem and Judah: judgment b/c the Israelites have been unfaithful to God and lived in pride, leading to a punishment for their sin, but also glimmers of hope b/c God would keep a remnant, and ultimately send his son Jesus one day out of His great love for His people. This next section of Isaiah, chapters 13-23, centers on the day of the Lord for all the nations. What is the Day of the Lord? My study Bible provides a helpful explanation of it: "The day of the Lord brings judgment on the godless, but blessing and salvation to the godly. Isaiah's reference encompasses historical events (the fall of Israel, Assyria, and Judah) and the coming judgment and salvation." Again, to sum up, the day of the Lord is when God judges the godless, those who live as though He doesn't exist, but blesses the godly, those who live for Him.

This chapter focuses on the day of the Lord for Babylon, where God judges the Babylonians for their sin. From the first verse, this is the "oracle concerning Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw". I think verses 6 and 7 are a good summary of this oracle about Babylon: "**6** Wail, for the day of the Lord is near; as destruction from the Almighty it will come! **7** Therefore all hands will be feeble, and every human heart will melt." Isaiah proclaims that on this day of judgment, there will be destruction from the almighty God. So all hands will be feeble and every human heart will melt - in other words nobody will be able to take courage against God. In the previous verses, Isaiah mentions a great multitude gathering, God mustering a host for battle, and God is wielding the weapons of his indignation to destroy the whole land.

And the rest of the chapter gives vivid images of the destruction that will take place. It includes verses 15 and 16 where “whoever is found will be thrust through,” their infants are dashed to pieces, houses plundered, and wives ravished. It’s no mercy for all the people in the land, b/c they’ve shown no mercy to others. In one of the verses, God calls the Babylonians ruthless. And Babylon is specifically called out again in verse 19: “And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the splendor and pomp of the Chaldeans, will be like Sodom and Gomorrah when God overthrew them.” Those two descriptions, “the glory of kingdoms” and “the splendor and pomp of the Chaldeans,” captures the pride of man in Babylon. At the time of Isaiah, which includes 722BC when Assyria took over Israel, Assyria must have seemed unstoppable, and Babylon was a symbol of their strength and invincibility. Yet here Babylon is to be like Sodom and Gomorrah, which God utterly destroyed in a day. God knows ahead of time that He will use the Medes to defeat the Babylonians - He says this in verse 17. The last few verses talk about how the land will be so desolate that the wild animals will be the only ones roaming around the houses and buildings.

On the day of the Lord for Babylon, God used the Medes to defeat the Babylonians. Babylon would be destroyed b/c of the people’s pride, ruthlessness, and other sinful ways. Although this passage is about Isaiah’s oracle to Babylon, it also speaks to people beyond Isaiah’s audience back then. For example, verse 11 is about the world, not just Babylon: “I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will put an end to the pomp of the arrogant, and lay low the pompous pride of the ruthless.” For everybody on earth even today, God will one day separate out those who choose to live for Him vs those who choose to live as though He doesn’t exist. God sees all sin, and he will enact punishment for that evil. The punishment of the Assyrians and the Babylonians at the hands of the Medes will be like the punishment of those who live in sin one day since God is God over all the earth.

Today, can we humble ourselves and acknowledge our need for Jesus? Given that we all have sinned throughout our lives, that we all think and do things that are considered wicked in God’s eyes, our only hope is accepting the work of the perfect son of God, Jesus, in our lives. The only way to be cleansed of our sin is by accepting Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. Also, the only way to constantly turn to God is by looking to Jesus, allowing the Holy Spirit to lead us away from pride and our selfish ways. Are there areas in our lives where we are currently acting in pride, like how Babylon was “the glory of kingdoms” and “the splendor and pomp of the Chaldeans”? For me, I constantly need to surrender my career and my relationships to Him b/c I can easily be proud and think that I made these happen by hard work, and I need to be in control. Let’s surrender those areas to God, the rightful king and judge over all of the earth. Let’s pray that on the day of the Lord, we’ll be found holy b/c we are found in Jesus, that we did not trust in our own selves, but that we’ve put all of our trust in Jesus.