

Isaiah 13-14

Isaiah 13-14 — Overview

13:1-5: God Announcing Judgment on Babylon

- A **hand** stretches out from a **mountain** to summon a judgment that destroys the **whole land**

13:6-22: **Day of the LORD** Against Babylon

- **Wrath** and **anger** bring **Babylon** low
- **Stars** become darkened
- **Land** inhabited by wild creatures

14:1-2: God Will Have Compassion on Israel

- God makes their masters their servants

14:3-23: Trash Talk Against Babylon

- **Wrath** and **anger** bring **Babylon** low
- **Stars** become darkened
- **Land** inhabited by wild creatures

14:24-27: God Announcing Judgment on Assyria

- A **hand** stretches out from a **mountain** to summon a judgment that destroys the **whole land**

Isaiah 13:1-5

The Oracle Against Babylon

¹ The oracle^a concerning **Babylon** which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw.

² On a bare **hill** raise a signal^b;
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 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.

⁵ They come from a far country,
from the end of heaven—
the LORD and his weapons of indignation,
to destroy the **whole land** ^c.

^alit. "Burden"

^bc.f. ch 2, 5, 11. All about raising a signal on a mountain/hill

^cc.f. ch 5:26

Why Address Babylon in Isaiah's Day?

They weren't that big of a deal. Babylon is a picture of all evil in the scriptures. Reference the tower of Babel story (Genesis 11) as the origin of this nation. Super relevant for chapters 13-14.

In v4 we have the nations gathering together on a mountain just like chapter 2, except this time, there's no weapons getting destroyed here.

Isaiah 13:6-16

The Day of the LORD

- ⁶ Wail, for the day of the LORD is at hand!
It will come as destruction from the Almighty^a.
- ⁷ Therefore all hands will be limp,
every man's heart will melt,
⁸ and they will be amazed.
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.
- 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 man more rare than fine gold,
and mankind than the gold of Ophir^b.
- ¹³ Therefore I will make the heavens tremble^c,
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 children also will be dashed to pieces before their eyes;
their houses will be plundered
and their wives ravished.

^aWordplay of Destruction - shod; Almighty - shad-dai

^bPart of Solomon's trade route. Every use of Ophir in the Bible is about gold.

^cNote the repeated word. It's mentioned 3 times (translated "stirred up" in 14:9) in reference to the heavens, earth, and sheol.

Isaiah 13:17-22 (cont.)

The Desolation of Babylon

- 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 beasts^a 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.

^av21-22 are like a distorted inversion of chapter 11

Cosmic Decreation

Whatever is going on here doesn't seem *only* isolated to Babylon, even if they are the primary audience. There's a cosmic scale of undoing Genesis 1 - land desolation, sun moon and stars losing light, etc.

Cruelty?

Reading v16 makes me personally a little uncomfortable knowing it's Yahweh behind these things, but that's no different of a problem of evil today. Either God is in control or He's not. Here Isaiah highlights that Yahweh is the one "stirring them up", but He is not to blame for the

atrocities that the Medes will be doing here. Isaiah (nor any other biblical author) never expounds too much on how this tension can be resolved, but just say along with Joseph, "What you meant for evil, God meant for good"

No Mercy?

Verses 17-22 didn't happen literally like described here as Babylon ended up surrendering without a fight to Cyrus and the Persians (who took over the Medes). This is more representative of the evil beneath Babylon and all the world powers against God.

Isaiah 14:1-2

Mercy on Israel

¹ For the LORD will have compassion on Jacob and will again choose Israel, and will set them in their own **land**, and sojourners will join them and will attach themselves to the house of Jacob.

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

Rulers in Their Land

Verses 1-2 were fulfilled in the short term in Ezra 1:1-4 where the survivors were assisted by the nations with gold and such. In the long term, we see a fulfillment in Matthew 5:5 and Revelation 5:9-10. In the garden, Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:28 were called to subdue the earth and rule it - God's people again will do so in eternity.

"In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing: 'Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem. And let each survivor, in whatever place he sojourns, be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and with beasts, besides freewill offerings for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.'"
— Ezra 1:1-4

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

— Matthew 5:5

"And they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.'"

— Revelation 5:9-10

Isaiah 14:3-15

Taunt Against the King of Babylon

³ When the LORD has given you rest^a from your pain^b and turmoil and the hard service^c with which you were made to serve,

⁴ you will take up this taunt against the king of **Babylon** :

"How the oppressor has ceased,
the insolent fury ceased!

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

⁶ that struck 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 cypress trees rejoice at you,
the cedars of Lebanon, saying,
'Since you were laid low,
no woodcutter comes up against us.'

⁹ Sheol beneath is **stirred up**
to meet you when you come;
it rouses the shades^d 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 answer
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,
the sound of your harps;
maggots are laid as a bed beneath you,
and worms are your covers.

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;
above the **stars** of God
I will set my throne on high;
I will sit on the **mount** of assembly
in the far reaches of the north^e;

¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;
I will make myself like the Most High^f;

¹⁵ But you are brought down to Sheol,
to the far reaches of the pit.

Isaiah 14:16-23 (cont.)

The Fall of Babylon's King

- 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 did not let his prisoners go home^a?'
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 a loathed branch,
clothed with the slain, those pierced by the sword,
who go down to the stones of the pit,
like a dead body trampled underfoot.
²⁰ You will not be joined with them in burial,
because you have destroyed your **land**,
you have slain your people.
"May the offspring of evildoers
nevermore be named!"
²¹ Prepare slaughter for his sons
because of the guilt of their fathers,
lest they rise and possess the **earth**
and fill the face of the world with cities."
²² "I will rise up against them," declares the LORD of hosts, "and will cut off
from **Babylon** name and remnant, descendants and posterity," declares 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," declares the LORD of hosts.

^aLike Pharaoh (see v3)

Day Star, Son of Dawn

There's an interesting history with how this passage has been read back to refer to the fall of Lucifer (light-bearer, from this passage), but I think there's more going on here with how this imagery is in conversation with the stories of the Canaanite gods. The Day Star itself is likely

referring to Venus where there's this last star that holds on just long enough before the sun finally rules back over it. This is also in conversation with the ancient Canaanite story of how the storm god, Baal, died and then Athtar tried to take the throne on the mount of Zaphon. He couldn't though since he was too weak, so he was cast down.

King of Babylon is described the same way here → Grasping for power wrongfully and being humbled in the process. This fall of Babylon is likely not so figurative to describe Satan but also not so literal to just be talking about one Babylonian ruler. It seems hand-in-hand with something like Revelation 18 where Babylon is both the nation and rule, but also (sometimes more-so) about the evil powers behind it. This is why we can rejoice at evil being destroyed and "gloat" like Israel is doing here. It's not an isolated nation, it's a biblical pattern.

Fill World with Cities?

Cities were not put in the greatest light starting with the first city built by Cain and the continuation of them in the Bible. They ultimately get redeemed though in Revelation.

"In days to come Jacob shall take root, Israel shall blossom and put forth shoots and fill the whole world with fruit."

— Isaiah 27:6

"And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

— Revelation 21:2

Isaiah 14:24-27

Judgment on Assyria

²⁴ The LORD of hosts has sworn:

”As I have planned,

so shall it be,

and as I have purposed,

so shall it stand,

²⁵ that I will break the Assyrian in my **land**,

and on my **mountains** trample him underfoot;

and his yoke shall depart from them,

and his burden from their shoulder.”

²⁶ This is the purpose that is purposed

concerning the **whole earth**,

and this is the **hand** that is stretched out

over all the nations.

²⁷ For the LORD of hosts has purposed,

and who will annul it?

His **hand** is stretched out,

and who will turn it back?

Why Bring Assyria In On This?

What God is doing to Assyria here is what He'll do to Babylon as well.