

Isaiah 13 & 14

- Now we start a new section of Isaiah

[Is. 13:1](#) The oracle concerning Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw.

- This section runs into chapter 23, and it chronicles the coming judgment against a host of nations who have stood against Israel
 - But as usual, there's more than meets the eye in these chapters.
 - Starting tonight, as we look at the nation of Babylon
- In these chapters, we'll see burdens or heavy messages proclaimed against not only Babylon but also Moab, Philistines, Egypt, Arabia and others
 - In most cases, the burden is a literal judgment against the contemporary nations in Isaiah's day or in a nearby future day
 - Even Babylon fits this pattern
 - In chapter 21, Isaiah describes the coming judgment of Babylon at the hands of the Medo Persians
 - But in other cases, particularly in the case of Babylon, there is an important second meaning also described
 - Tonight, the oracle concerning Babylon begins by addressing that future fulfillment
 - So to understand what Isaiah is teaching today and in future weeks, we have to take some time to understand all the ways scripture uses the place name Babylon
- There are four ways scripture uses the name Babylon
 - First, there is the ancient kingdom founded by Nimrod, in which the tower of Babel was constructed after the flood
 - Located in Mesopotamia
 - Secondly, there is kingdom of Babylon ruled by Nebechednezzar
 - The nation that occupied modern day Iraq and Mesopotamia

- Third, there is a physical city reconstructed in the last days from which the antichrist rules the world (Rev 14, 17, 18)
 - It's located in Mesopotamia, modern-day Iraq
- There is a fourth meaning as well
 - To figure out the fourth meaning, we need to take a moment and make some observations concerning the first three places.
 - All three mentions of Babylon are of a physical city located in the same place
 - Mesopotamia
 - What other notable event took place in Mesopotamia?
 - The Garden was located there, and the Fall occurred there
 - What kinds of kingdoms and activities mark this place?
 - It is the place where the enemy worked to bring mankind into slavery to him
 - It is the place of the first manmade kingdom, Babel, that sought to challenge God's authority
 - According to scripture, Babel was the place where idol worship began
 - Occultism begins there
 - Later it is the place God calls Abraham out from so he could be sent to the promised land
 - Then it is the place for the kingdom of Babylon, the first of a series of Gentile world powers God would send to judge His people's sin
 - Later it will again become the dominant seat of world power from where the enemy will rule having indwelt the antichrist's body
- In other words, Babylon's history allows it to stand as a symbol or representative for the enemy's effort to corrupt God's people and steal His glory

- More specifically, Babylon comes to personify false religion in any form
 - Remember, the enemy “wins” anytime the true Gospel is countered by a false view, regardless of what that view may be
 - So, we might think that there are various choices competing for our allegiance and faith
 - But in reality there are only two
 - There is God and His Son and the Gospel He made known
 - And there is everything else (pie chart)
 - And everything else can be called “Babylon” in that all these lies find their source in the father of lies, Satan, and they all got their start in Mesopotamia (Babylon)
 - If someone comes from England, we call them English
 - If someone comes from Canada, we call them Canadian
 - If something comes from, originates, from Mesopotamia, we call it Babylon
 - So, the fourth meaning of the term Babylon in scripture is to mean the enemies counterfeit system of faith, a religion of lies that goes by many names
 - But always leads to the same place
 - It is a system of deception and evil that began in the Garden, continued in Babel, was at work in Babylon during Isaiah’s day
 - And will once again take hold of the world in a future day
- Before we return to Isaiah, let me show you a vivid depiction of this truth in Scripture in Revelation

[Rev. 17:3](#) And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns.

[Rev. 17:4](#) The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality,

[Rev. 17:5](#) and on her forehead a name was written, a mystery, "BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."

[Rev. 17:6](#) And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. When I saw her, I wondered greatly.

- Mother of harlots
 - What's a harlot? A counterfeit love
 - So a false counterfeit faith or religion is like a harlot in the way a harlot counterfeits something good (marriage), but it corrupts and leads to destruction
 - So a false religion is a harlot in comparison to the true Gospel
 - What is the mother of all harlots? The one who gave birth to all the counterfeits
 - Spiritual Babylon is the mother of all false religions, for it's where the enemy gave them their start

[Rev. 17:14](#) "These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful."

[Rev. 17:15](#) ¶ And he said to me, "The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues."

- This harlot sits atop all people and nations
 - No one and no where is immune from it's influence
 - Even those of us who know the Lord were at an earlier point under the influence of this harlot
 - We were rescued from it

[Rev. 17:18](#) "The woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth."

[Rev. 18:1](#) ¶ After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illumined with his glory.

[Rev. 18:2](#) And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, " Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird.

[Rev. 18:3](#) "For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality."

- Here again we see that Babylon is a great city, but it reigns over the kings of the earth
 - Literally, this will be true in the last days
 - And the influence of Spiritual Babylon is such that many nations and leaders have drunk her intoxicating lies
 - Leading to many evil and corrupt leaders yesterday, today and into the future until Christ sets up His perfect government
 - And many businessman have lived according to the enemy's seductive power to bend human lust and pride to his own evil purposes
 - Babylon has been at work in the heart of every person throughout the ages, and it is a force that must be judged
 - God will judge not only the physical place and the people in it, but He will also judge the religious system represented by the name Babylon
 - It would be like saying we are not only going to destroy England, and every Englishman, but also the English language and culture with it.
- With that background, consider Isaiah's burden for the harlot, Babylon
 - We start with a long passage, so that we get the entire context
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- [Is. 13:2](#) Lift up a standard on the bare hill,
Raise your voice to them,
Wave the hand that they may enter the doors of the nobles.
- [Is. 13:3](#) I have commanded My consecrated ones,
I have even called My mighty warriors,
My proudly exulting ones,
To execute My anger.
- [Is. 13:4](#) A sound of tumult on the mountains,
Like that of many people!
A sound of the uproar of kingdoms,
Of nations gathered together!
The LORD of hosts is mustering the army for battle.
- [Is. 13:5](#) They are coming from a far country,
From the farthest horizons,
The LORD and His instruments of indignation,
To destroy the whole land.
- [Is. 13:6](#) Wail, for the day of the LORD is near!
It will come as destruction from the Almighty.
- [Is. 13:7](#) Therefore all hands will fall limp,
And every man's heart will melt.
- [Is. 13:8](#) They will be terrified,
Pains and anguish will take hold of them;
They will writhe like a woman in labor,
They will look at one another in astonishment,
Their faces aflame.
- [Is. 13:9](#) Behold, the day of the LORD is coming,
Cruel, with fury and burning anger,
To make the land a desolation;
And He will exterminate its sinners from it.
- [Is. 13:10](#) For the stars of heaven and their constellations
Will not flash forth their light;
The sun will be dark when it rises
And the moon will not shed its light.
- [Is. 13:11](#) Thus I will punish the world for its evil
And the wicked for their iniquity;
I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud
And abase the haughtiness of the ruthless.
- [Is. 13:12](#) I will make mortal man scarcer than pure gold
And mankind than the gold of Ophir.
- [Is. 13:13](#) Therefore I will make the heavens tremble,
And the earth will be shaken from its place
At the fury of the LORD of hosts
In the day of His burning anger.

[Is. 13:14](#) And it will be that like a hunted gazelle,
Or like sheep with none to gather them,
They will each turn to his own people,
And each one flee to his own land.

[Is. 13:15](#) Anyone who is found will be thrust through,
And anyone who is captured will fall by the sword.

[Is. 13:16](#) Their little ones also will be dashed to pieces
Before their eyes;
Their houses will be plundered
And their wives ravished.

- We need the entire context to understand the setting here
 - First, the opening verses make it clear we are looking at a battle
 - Lift up a standard, raise a call to men who execute God's wrath
 - A thunderous roar of people gathered for battle, mustered by God
 - They come from far around to destroy a certain land
 - Clearly, God is bring about this event to serve some greater purpose
 - Then in verse 6 we get our first hint of a time marker
 - The day of the Lord
 - Repeated in verse 9
 - What does the "day of the Lord" mean? Tribulation
 - Around those verses, we get our confirmation that this is Tribulation
 - It is a time of destruction from God
 - Every man's heart will melt, all hands are limp
 - It is a cruel fire that exterminates the land
 - And it removes sinners from the land (not something that has happened yet)
 - Then as we move into verse 10 and beyond, we see clear confirmation that this is an unprecedented time of supernatural judgment
 - No moon, no stars, no sun

- And it's a punishment for the world and it results in the end of the proud
- Men become scarce and the earth trembles under God's fury
 - Remember, that the natural destruction of an invading army is combined with the supernatural destruction God brings during Tribulation
 - God is at work in many ways during Tribulation
 - So when the world finally turns on Babylon in the last days, it comes in part by the work of a world army that God raises up to destroy the city itself
 - Which explains the explanations in verse 14-16
- So far, we know we're looking at a destruction of Babylon during a period of unprecedented worldwide destruction aimed at exterminating sinners
 - Then we get a puzzling reference

[Is. 13:17](#) Behold, I am going to stir up the Medes against them,
Who will not value silver or take pleasure in gold.

[Is. 13:18](#) And their bows will mow down the young men,
They will not even have compassion on the fruit of the womb,
Nor will their eye pity children.

[Is. 13:19](#) And Babylon, the beauty of kingdoms, the glory of the Chaldeans' pride,
Will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.

[Is. 13:20](#) It will never be inhabited or lived in from generation to generation;
Nor will the Arab pitch his tent there,
Nor will shepherds make their flocks lie down there.

[Is. 13:21](#) But desert creatures will lie down there,
And their houses will be full of owls;
Ostriches also will live there, and shaggy goats will frolic there.

[Is. 13:22](#) Hyenas will howl in their fortified towers
And jackals in their luxurious palaces.
Her fateful time also will soon come
And her days will not be prolonged.

- Why is this a puzzling passage?
 - Well, at first glance it seems to transition from the time of Tribulation to the time of the Medo Persians and their conquering of Babylon in 540 BC
 - Many comes to these verses and leave with that understanding

- But a careful inspection of the text, makes that interpretation impossible
 - First, let's define the term Medes
 - In Hebrew, the term is Maday, who was a son of Japheth, son of Noah
 - Maday settled in present day Iran
 - His name later became associated with the people who occupied that land, the Medes
 - But prophetic scripture commonly uses ancient names to reference modern people groups
 - Look back in chapter 11:11, we're told that the regathering of Israel in the time prior to Christ's return will come from
 - Cush, Elam, Shinar among other places
 - Cush is modern day Egypt, where Ham settled
 - Elam is a son of Shem, who settled in western Iran
 - Shinar is another name for Babylon, modern day Iraq
 - So the Bible often refers to ancient names, often names connected to the direct descendants of Noah, to describe modern locations
 - Therefore, we can't assume that the use of the name Medes necessarily means the same Medes that invaded in 540 BC
 - It can just as likely refer to a later group of Medes, even if by then they are using a different name (like Iranians)
- Secondly, consider that God often repeats circumstances in new ways to reinforce old points
 - Just like the invasion of Judah by Assyrian mirrors or pictures the antichrist's invasion of Judah in a later day
 - Similarly, we shouldn't be surprised if God used the invasion of Babylon by Medo Persians in 540 BC as a prophetic picture of a later invasion by another group of Medes during Tribulation

- A closer look at the details of the invasion that Isaiah describes tells us this is exactly what God does
 - After the Medes invade and destroy every person and level the city
 - It will resemble what was left after God judged Sodom and Gomorrah
 - In other words, nothing
 - Furthermore, it will never be inhabited again
 - Isaiah goes a step further and says an Arab will never live there again
 - Nor will sheep ever be able to graze there again
 - Only desert creatures will live there
 - It's literally the end of Babylon, as Revelation 18 describes
- After the Medes entered Babylon in 540 BC, there wasn't even a fight
 - The King of Babylon, Belshazzar, was killed
 - He was killed by an executioner, because there was no battle at all
 - The city surrendered
 - And it continued to exist intact for another 40 years
 - Even when it was finally abandoned Arabs still occupied the region
 - And today there is a city around the ancient ruins
 - The details of Isaiah's prophecy simply haven't happened yet
 - Leading us to conclude that God will raise up a new form of Babylon the city, as He promises, and that will lead to another invasion of an army from Medes from Persian
- So Isaiah delivered a burden of was of a coming judgment of Babylon during Tribulation that is accomplished in part by an army of many nations led by Medes, who destroy the city utterly
 - Now what follows chronologically from these events?

- If I'm right that this is Tribulation, then we know that the new kingdom follows, with Christ ruling from Israel
- And Israel dwelling peacefully in its land
- Sure enough, look at the rest of this oracle in chapter 14

[Is. 14:1](#) ¶ When the LORD will have compassion on Jacob and again choose Israel, and settle them in their own land, then strangers will join them and attach themselves to the house of Jacob.

[Is. 14:2](#) The peoples will take them along and bring them to their place, and the house of Israel will possess them as an inheritance in the land of the LORD as male servants and female servants; and they will take their captors captive and will rule over their oppressors.

- The time that follows is described as a time when God in compassion again chooses Israel
 - Settles them in their land
 - Strangers will attach themselves to the house of Jacob (Gentile believers)
 - The peoples of the world will serve Israel as servants
 - And those who were previously their oppressors will be subject to Israel's rule as the chief nation of the earth, according to God's purpose
 - These are classic descriptions of Israel during the Messianic Kingdom
- Now Isaiah offers us this humorous and intriguing scene

[Is. 14:3](#) And it will be in the day when the LORD gives you rest from your pain and turmoil and harsh service in which you have been enslaved,

[Is. 14:4](#) that you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon, and say,

“How the oppressor has ceased,
And how fury has ceased!

[Is. 14:5](#) “The LORD has broken the staff of the wicked,
The scepter of rulers

[Is. 14:6](#) Which used to strike the peoples in fury with unceasing strokes,
Which subdued the nations in anger with unrestrained persecution.

[Is. 14:7](#) “The whole earth is at rest and is quiet;
They break forth into shouts of joy.

[Is. 14:8](#) “Even the cypress trees rejoice over you, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying,
‘Since you were laid low, no tree cutter comes up against us.’

- The setting hasn't changed here...Isaiah says it's still "in that day"
 - A time when the Lord has given Israel and those attached to her "rest from pain" and harsh service
 - That they will finally be able to take up a taunt against the king of Babylon
 - Who is the king of Babylon?
 - Neb? Belshazzar? Some other king?
 - Well, if we're talking about the time immediately following Tribulation, then it makes little sense to feature Neb or another ancient king
 - Instead, it makes sense that the king described here is one who ruled Babylon in the days immediately prior to this moment
 - The king of Babylon during Tribulation, who is the antichrist, who dies at mid Tribulation
 - The second half of Tribulation, the antichrist's body continues to live, but only because Satan brings it back to life and inhabits it
 - But the antichrist is a man, whose soul descends to heaven once he dies like any other man
 - And here we see a wild description of what that descent into hell looks like
 - With Israel taunting his descent
- First, we're told the antichrist is a man who used to strike the nations in fury and persecution
 - But now the whole earth is quiet and at rest
 - Another clue that we're in the time of the Messianic kingdom
 - Total peace on earth with Christ ruling

[Is. 14:9](#) " Sheol from beneath is excited over you to meet you when you come;
It arouses for you the spirits of the dead, all the leaders of the earth;
It raises all the kings of the nations from their thrones.

[Is. 14:10](#) " They will all respond and say to you,
'Even you have been made weak as we,
You have become like us.

[Is. 14:11](#) 'Your pomp and the music of your harps
Have been brought down to Sheol;
Maggots are spread out as your bed beneath you
And worms are your covering.'

[Is. 14:12](#) "How you have fallen from heaven,
O star of the morning, son of the dawn!
You have been cut down to the earth,
You who have weakened the nations!

[Is. 14:13](#) "But you said in your heart,
'I will ascend to heaven;
I will raise my throne above the stars of God,
And I will sit on the mount of assembly
In the recesses of the north.

[Is. 14:14](#) 'I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;
I will make myself like the Most High.'

[Is. 14:15](#) "Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol,
To the recesses of the pit.

[Is. 14:16](#) "Those who see you will gaze at you,
They will ponder over you, saying,
'Is this the man who made the earth tremble,
Who shook kingdoms,

[Is. 14:17](#) Who made the world like a wilderness
And overthrew its cities,
Who did not allow his prisoners to go home?'

[Is. 14:18](#) "All the kings of the nations lie in glory,
Each in his own tomb.

[Is. 14:19](#) "But you have been cast out of your tomb
Like a rejected branch,
Clothed with the slain who are pierced with a sword,
Who go down to the stones of the pit
Like a trampled corpse.

[Is. 14:20](#) "You will not be united with them in burial,
Because you have ruined your country,
You have slain your people.
May the offspring of evildoers not be mentioned forever.

[Is. 14:21](#) "Prepare for his sons a place of slaughter
Because of the iniquity of their fathers.
They must not arise and take possession of the earth
And fill the face of the world with cities."

- What a compelling and power testimony
 - The imagery here is simply stunning
 - While the description is poetic to a degree

- It's really gripping to consider the possibility that many of these details may be literal descriptions of life in hell
 - First, there's the prospect that a new arrival are nothing notable, such that it takes the arrival of someone as important as the antichrist to stir up excitement in this place
 - Isaiah describes a scene of other leaders of earth living in hell (I have a few favorites I hope are included in this group) who greet the arriving antichrist
 - And they are astonished to learn he shares their fate
 - He was so powerful and awesome in his day, they can't believe he's here too
- Then look in verse 12...the sense of the text changes
 - The earlier comments regarding the earthly king change to emphasize another leader
 - They call him the star of the morning, son of the dawn
 - The term star of the morning in Hebrew is He El, which in Latin is lucifer
 - It's reminiscent of the Morning star (2Pet 1:19; Rev 22) - Christ
 - One who claims to be Christ, is now mock him because he obviously wasn't God after all
 - In verse 13 this character is quoted as saying he would have entered heaven and had a throne above God Himself
 - And he sat on the mount of the assembly (the temple in Jerusalem)
 - He would be like the Most High (v.14)
 - Instead, he is sent down to Sheol, to the pit
 - This pit is the same as the abyss of Rev 20
- So of course we're talking about Satan
 - The transition between describing the man who is antichrist and the power behind the man, Satan, is not unusual in Scripture

- Ezekiel does a similar transition in Ezek 27
- In verse 16, the text transitions back to the man, the antichrist,
 - There is a contrast between what this man said and did on earth with what has transpired now that he has died
 - Even his body doesn't receive the treatment others received
 - Unlike other kings who received a proper burial, the antichrist's body goes without burial, because it is still walking the earth inhabited by Satan
 - And even the antichrist's natural children are condemned to die so that he may have no one to inherit his earthly throne (v.21)
- The oracle against Babylon ends with a summary of God's judgment

[Is. 14:22](#) "I will rise up against them," declares the LORD of hosts, "and will cut off from Babylon name and survivors, offspring and posterity," declares the LORD.

[Is. 14:23](#) "I will also make it a possession for the hedgehog and swamps of water, and I will sweep it with the broom of destruction," declares the LORD of hosts.

[Is. 14:24](#) The LORD of hosts has sworn saying, "Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand,

[Is. 14:25](#) to break Assyria in My land, and I will trample him on My mountains. Then his yoke will be removed from them and his burden removed from their shoulder.

[Is. 14:26](#) "This is the plan devised against the whole earth; and this is the hand that is stretched out against all the nations.

[Is. 14:27](#) "For the LORD of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate it? And as for His stretched-out hand, who can turn it back?"

- To summarize, God said it, so count on it.
 - Next week we pick up at the end of 14 with a short oracle against the Philistines
 - Followed by Moab in 15, Edom in 16 and Damascus in 17