

Book of Isaiah



Chapter 13

Theme: Destruction in the Day of the Lord and in the immediate future

**Michael Fronczak
564 Schaeffer Dr.
Coldwater, Michigan 49036**

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Chapter 13

[See Chapters 13 & 14. Cf. Jer 50 & 51.]

THEME: Destruction in the Day of the Lord and in the immediate future Chapter 13 brings us to an altogether different section. The tone changes immediately. Chapters 13 -- 23 contain "burdens" imposed on nine surrounding nations. A burden is something that you bear, and these burdens are judgments of God upon these nine nations. You could substitute the word judgment for "burden" and it would be just as accurate. This is a remarkable passage of Scripture, because most of the prophetic judgments have already been fulfilled. They are now facts of history. Each of these nations had some contact with Israel, and most of them were contiguous to her borders or not very far away. Israel suffered at the hands of some of them -- and is suffering today -- and will suffer again in the future.

You will find some names in this chapter that are strangely familiar. Egypt is one of them. While some of these judgments will take place in the future, the chief characteristic of this section is that much has been fulfilled and stands today as an evidence of fulfilled prophecy. All of this adds singular interest and importance to these eleven chapters. In this section the Assyrian is no longer the oppressor; another set of nations headed by Babylon takes his place. It was not pleasant to the prophet to deliver this type of message. This was not the way to win friends and influence people. But God's prophets were not in a popularity contest.

Babylon is the subject of the first burden. It is suggestive of many things to the reverent student of Scripture. First of all, the literal city of Babylon is the primary consideration. This is indeed remarkable, as Babylon in Isaiah's day was an insignificant place. It was not until a century later that Babylon became a world power. God pronounced judgment upon Babylon before it became a nation!

This section does not end with the "burdens" on nine surrounding nations but extends through six woes in chapters 28 -- 33 and concludes with the calm and blessing after the storm in chapters 34 and 35. These last two chapters again give us a millennial picture. In chapter 13 we will see the punishment of Babylon in the Day of the Lord. I believe this looks forward to the Great Tribulation period for its final fulfillment.¹

Chapters 1-12 speak of judgment against the southern kingdom and, to a lesser extent, against the northern kingdom. Chapters 13-23 are about the judgment on other nations. Chapter 13 is an oracle or message from God concerning Babylon. Long before Babylon became a world power and threatened Judah, Isaiah spoke of its destruction. Babylon was the rallying point of rebellion against God after the Flood (Genesis 11). Revelation 17 and 18 use Babylon as a symbol of God's enemies. At the time of this oracle, Babylon was still part of the Assyrian Empire. Isaiah communicated a message of challenge and hope to God's people, telling them not to rely on other

¹Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

nations but to rely on God alone. And he let them know that their greatest enemies would receive from God the punishment they deserved.²

Isaiah 13 begins a section ending at Isaiah 23:18 where he prophesies against the nations. It is fitting for judgment to begin at the house of God, so the LORD has first spoken to Israel and Judah. But now, the LORD speaks against the nations, beginning with Babylon.

". . . somewhat as a picture lacks the dimension of depth, the prophecy often lacks the dimension of time: events appear together on the screen of prophecy which in their fulfillment may be widely separated in time. Thus the student may find a prophecy having all the external marks of literary unity, yet referring to some event in the *near* future connected with the historical phase of the Kingdom and also to some *far-off* event connected with the Messiah and His Millennial Kingdom. When the first event arrives, it becomes the earnest and divine forecast of the more distant and final event. An excellent example may be found in Isaiah 13:17—14:4, a prediction which begins with the defeat of Babylon by the Medes and moves from that point immediately to a Babylon of the end-time, 'in the day' when Israel is finally delivered from 'sorrow' and 'fear' and 'hard bondage' (14:3)."

Punishment Of Babylon In The Day Of The Lord (13:1-12)

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

[100 years *before* the Babylonian Empire!]

Babylon's rise is revealed in Chapter 39; 2 Kgs 20:12-19.

Symbol of the Enemy of God: Gen 11:9 - Rev 14:8.

Now, before we get too deep into these two chapters, I'd like to recommend that you take some time in the next day or two and read six chapters of the Bible in one sitting: Isaiah 13 and 14, Jeremiah 50 and 51, and Revelation 17 and 18. These will give you a complete picture of the subject before us: the total destruction of Babylon.

[Burden] (*massa*): a prophecy of impending judgment. Since it describes a plurality of kingdoms (v.4) attacking Babylon, including the Medes (v.17), many assume it refers to fulfilled history (539 B.C., etc.); however, careful analysis of the passage implies that this predicted destruction is yet to happen.³

Burden: In the prophets, a burden is a "heavy" message of weighty importance, heavy in the sense that it produces sorrow or grief.

"*Massa* comes from the verb 'to lift up' (*nasa*), and so it can mean 'to carry' or 'to lift up the voice.' From the first meaning comes the translation 'burden,' or 'load'; and from the second

² Life Application Study Bible.

³ Notes from Chuck Missler, Isaiah Study, Khouse.org

meaning we get the translation ‘oracle,’ or ‘utterance.’” (Wolf) Grammatically, we may be able to say “oracle.” But since these are *heavy* oracles, we are justified in calling them *burdens*!

Against Babylon: Isaiah finished his prophetic career in 685 B.C., almost 100 years before Judah finally fell before the Babylonian Empire (586 B.C.). At the time of this prophecy, Babylon was a significant nation, but they were definitely behind the Assyrian Empire in status. Yet the LORD who knows the end of all things can speak of the judgment on the pride of Babylon hundreds of years before the judgment comes.

This burden against Babylon will last until the end of Isaiah 14. Clarke says of this passage, “The former part of this prophecy is one of the most beautiful examples of that can be given of the elegance of composition, variety of imagery, and sublimity or sentiment and diction, in the prophetic style; and the later part consists of an ode of supreme and singular excellence.”

ii. Why is God speaking to Babylon? This prophecy was probably never published in Babylon, so it wasn’t really given as a warning to them. Instead, the reason was for the help of the people of God. First, by showing them that God was indeed just, and would judge the wicked nations around them. Israel and Judah were feeling the sting of God’s discipline, and in those times we wonder if God is unfairly singling us out. This is assurance to them that He isn’t. Second, Babylon (and other nations in this section) were nations that had come against Israel and Judah, and God showed His love to His people by announcing His vengeance against their enemies.⁴

[burden] Hebrew: massa' (HSN-<H4853>), a burden as a material load (Ex. 23:5; Num. 4:15-49; Jer. 17:21-27), and an utterance of doom or responsibility (Isa. 13:1; 14:28; 15:1; 17:1; 19:1; 21:1,11,13; 22:1,25; 23:1; 30:6; Jer. 23:33-38; Ezek. 12:10; Hos. 8:10; Nah. 1:1; Hab. 1:1; Zech. 9:1; 12:1; Mal. 1:1). It is also translated prophecy (Prov. 30:1; 31:1).⁵

Babylon, called Sheshach (Jer. 25:25; 51:41) and Shinar (Isa. 11:11; Gen. 11:1-9; 14:1-9; Dan. 1:2; Zech. 5:11), was one of the earliest and most celebrated cities of antiquity. Its hanging gardens were among the wonders of the ancient world. At the time of this prophecy Babylon was of little importance, but about 100 years later it reached its height under Nabopolassar and his son, Nebuchadnezzar, who overthrew the Assyrian Empire which had ruled this part of the world so long. According to Herodotus the city was square in plan and measured 14 miles each side or 56 miles around -- an area of 196 square miles. It had a broad water-filled moat around the outside and a wall which was over 800 feet high and 87 feet thick. According to Ctesias, the city, which was on the Euphrates, was divided into two parts, the eastern and western, and was connected by a bridge 1,080 feet long and 30 feet wide. At each end of the bridge was a royal palace defended by 3 walls, the outer one being 7 miles around, the second one 4.5 miles around, and the inner wall being 2.5 miles around. The height of the middle one was 300 feet and that of the towers on it 420 feet. The inner wall was higher than this and the outer wall somewhat lower. Streets ran from the outer walls east and west to the edge of the river and each was guarded by brass gates set in walls which lined the river. The houses were 3 and 4 stories high. Babylon was started by Nimrod (Gen. 10:8-10), and as an empire it was the third world power to oppress Israel in the times of the Gentiles.⁶

⁴ <http://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-13.html>

⁵ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁶ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

Three Symbols of Babylon:

1. A great eagle (Ezek. 17)
2. The head of gold (Dan. 2:37-38)
3. A lion (Dan. 7:3-4)

The literal city of Babylon in history is in view in this chapter and also in chapter 14. It became one of the great cities of the ancient world. In fact, it became the first great world power and is so recognized in Daniel's prophecy. Nebuchadnezzar was the "head of gold" of Babylon. He was the king of the first great world power.

The city of Babylon will be rebuilt in the future. Babylon is the symbol of united rebellion against God, which began at the Tower of Babel and will end in Revelation 17-18 where we will see religious Babylon and political Babylon ruling the world. During the Great Tribulation period Babylon will go down by a great judgment from God. This possibly is the first mention of it in Scripture.⁷

Isaiah will be giving a total of ten oracles from here through chapter 30. Of course, most people would ask, "What's an oracle?"

"Oracle" is the Hebrew word "mas-SAW." It comes from a root word that means, "to lift, carry, take." So an oracle is a burden - a message, that the Lord gave the prophets to carry.

This oracle, or burden, is a vision that Isaiah saw concerning Babylon.⁸

The literary structure of this oracle, omitting the introduction (v. 1), is chiasmic.

A The day of the Lord: the beckoning hand, a universal purpose declared (13:2-16)

B The overthrow of Babylon: the end of the kingdom, the fact of divine overthrow (13:17-22)

C The security and future of the Lord's people: a contrasting universal purpose (14:1-2)

B' The overthrow of Babylon: the end of the king, the explanation of divine overthrow (14:3-23)

A' The end of Assyrian power: the outstretched hand, a universal purpose exemplified and validated (14:24-27)"175

A general title for chapters 13—23, and particularly the oracle against Babylon (13:2—14:27), opens chapter 13. An oracle (or burden) is a message from God. Babylon was at this time an ancient city, it would later be an empire, and it had been in the past the historical source of arrogant self-sufficiency (Gen. 11:1-9). When Isaiah wrote, it was a town within the Assyrian Empire that was asserting itself and was a real threat to Assyrian supremacy. Merodach-baladan was its king at this time (ca. 702 B.C.; cf. ch. 39). Isaiah "saw" the oracle in the sense that God enabled him to understand the things He proceeded to reveal (cf. 1:1).⁹

⁷ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁸ <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah1301.php>

⁹ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

²Lift 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.

It was customary for a banner to be lifted up on a high place so that men could see it and rally around it when mobilizing an army. This pictures God gathering His forces to come to the earth to destroy Antichrist and take over the governments of this world. There could also be a double fulfillment in the calling of earthly nations together to fight at Armageddon (Isa. 13:2-6).¹⁰

The LORD of hosts musters the army for battle: This is an army of judgment against the Babylonian Empire, prophesied decades before they were even a superpower. This powerful army is described vividly, with sights and sounds of battle presented.

They will be amazed at one another: When Babylon fell suddenly by a clever, surprise attack by Cyrus, the citizens of the city were completely shocked (Daniel 5).¹¹

This section is an introduction to all 10 oracles that follow in chapters 13—23, as well as to the first oracle against Babylon. It explains why God will judge Gentile nations: they refuse to acknowledge Yahweh's sovereignty and instead exalt and glorify themselves. The story of the building of the tower of Babel is the classic expression of this hubris (overweening pride; Gen. 11:1-9).

Isaiah related a message from God, summoning His warriors to assemble, so they could carry out His will in judging those with whom He was angry. Raising a flag on a hilltop and calling warriors to assemble pictures God doing this (vv. 2-3; cf. Rev. 9:16). Many warriors from many kingdoms far away would respond to the Lord's command, and gather together to do battle as His instruments (vv. 4-5; cf. Dan. 11:40-45; Rev. 14:14-20; 16:12-16; 19:17-19). The day of the Lord, the day in which He will actively intervene in history, would be close by (Heb. qarob). The Hebrew word describes the total preparedness of that day to dawn whenever the Lord decides that its time has come. It does not necessarily mean that the day is imminent. Therefore everyone should wail (or howl; cf. Amos 5:16-17). It would be a day when the Almighty would send destruction (v. 6; cf. vv. 9, 13).¹²

"In the Hebrew Bible the title 'Almighty' (Heb. 'Shaddai') depicts God as the sovereign king and judge of the world who both gives and takes away life."

The prospect of sudden, inevitable, inescapable destruction at the hand of the Almighty would make everyone tremble with fear. They would not know where to turn (vv. 7-8; cf. 1 Thess. 5:3). The coming judgment would desolate the whole earth and exterminate sinners from it, specifically, those who miss the mark of righteousness (v. 9). This judgment would involve the darkening of the sun, moon, and stars (cf. 34:4; Ezek. 32:7; Joel 2:10, 30-31; 3:15; Zech. 14:6-7; Matt. 24:29; Rev. 8:12). Since the pagans worshipped these objects, this announcement signals the judging of them as idols as well (v. 10).

The reason for this wrathful judgment is the evil of wicked people, especially their pride and haughtiness (v. 11). Rather than human pride resulting in increasing good conditions for ever-expanding numbers of people, it will result in the cutting back of the human population (v. 12; cf. Rev. 6:8; 9:15). The heavens and the earth would shake at the fury of Yahweh of armies when

¹⁰ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

¹¹ <http://www.study-light.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-13.html>

¹² <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

His anger would burn against the wicked (v. 13; cf. 24:18; Joel 2:10; 3:16; Hag. 2:6-7, 21-22; Rev. 6:12; 8:5; 11:13, 19; 16:18). People will scatter like frightened gazelles and sheep in that day as they seek security (cf. Rev. 6:15-17). God's warriors will slay all the wicked that they can find. Children will be unmercifully slaughtered in the sight of their parents. Houses will be looted and women raped (vv. 14-16).

"If we don't have a just God to trust in, we will have no logical reason not to become violent ourselves. It is Isaiah's vision of God's final justice that moderates our anger and frustration right now."¹³

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

It has been held by many that these sanctified ones were the Medes of Isa. 13:17. This may be true as an immediate reference, but it would be best to understand this in connection with the saints coming with Christ as part of the armies of heaven to destroy the future king of Babylon -- the Antichrist -- for the whole two chapters (except Isa. 13:17-18) have a future fulfillment. Furthermore, this is in perfect harmony with mighty ones of this verse, who could be understood as the angels coming with Christ and the resurrected saints as described in Joel 2:1-11; Zech. 14:1-5; Mt. 25:31; 2Th. 1:7-10; Jude 1:14-15; Rev. 19:11-21.¹⁴

[mighty ones] See Joel 2:7-9; 2Th. 1:7-10.

[for mine anger] That execute My anger.

[that rejoice in my highness] Only redeemed human beings and holy angels rejoice in God's highness, plainly indicating these sanctified and mighty ones to be the saints and angels who accompany Christ to earth (Zech. 14:5; Mt. 25:31; 2Th. 1:7-10; Jude 1:14-15; Rev. 19:14).¹⁵

In this verse the word sanctified means "set apart for a specific use by some agency." God says, "I have also called my mighty ones for mine anger." God has "sanctified" or raised up Babylon for a specific purpose. He did the same thing with Assyria. In Isaiah 10:5 God said through the prophet Isaiah, "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation." God used Assyria to punish His people, and then He judged Assyria. This is what He is going to do with Babylon. Anything can be sanctified if it is set apart for God. Assyria and Babylon were set aside to punish Israel. They were instruments in His hands for a specific purpose.¹⁶

¹³ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

¹⁴ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

¹⁵ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

¹⁶ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁴The 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.

Note kingdoms (plural).

[noise of a multitude in the mountains, like as of a great people; a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together] The same description as Joel 2:1-11.

[the LORD of hosts mustereth the host of the battle] This reveals that God will be personally leading these heavenly armies at Armageddon in the day of the Lord (Isa. 13:4-6; Dan. 7:9-22; Joel 2:1-11; Zech. 14:1-5; Tit. 2:13).¹⁷

This verse explains what we mean by "sanctified ones." Babylon will come against the southern kingdom of Judah (as Assyria did against the ten northern tribes of Israel) and take it into captivity.¹⁸

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

Includes the Medes (v.17). The scope of the language seems to go far beyond the conquest of the Medes and Persians in 539 B.C. (which occurred without a battle and does not fit the detail).¹⁹

[from the end of heaven] This could refer to far places of the earth, as in Mt. 24:31, but since other statements could not refer to earth it is better to understand this literally as meaning the army will come from heaven (Zech. 14:5; Mt. 24:29-30; 25:31; 2Th. 1:7-10; Jude 1:14-15; Rev. 19:11-21).

[the LORD] This emphasizes the fact that the Lord is coming from heaven, so the army referred to here must be the army of heaven.

[the weapons of his indignation] This refers to the saints and angels that will come with the Lord from heaven with their weapons to destroy the whole land. What kind of weapons they will have is not fully revealed, but it is known that angels do kill with swords (Josh. 5:13; 1Chr. 21:16). See other ways that the armies of Antichrist will be killed (Ezek. 38:17-21; Zech. 14:12-14; 2Th. 2:8; Rev. 11:11-19).²⁰

[the whole land] "The whole land" refers to the destruction of much of the land of Palestine. The term is used of the destruction by Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 4:20,27; 12:11; 25:11), and there could be a much greater one in the future battle of Armageddon.²¹

¹⁷ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

¹⁸ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee

¹⁹ Notes from Chuck Missler, Isaiah Study, Khouse.org

²⁰ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

²¹ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

The Babylonians will be the "weapons of his indignation."

The Lord announces that He is preparing an army to execute His judgment. It is possible that this army is like so many others God has used: ungodly nations who unwittingly accomplish His plans. But the language in verse five could allow for a supernatural judgment as well. We'll have to keep reading to see if we get any more clues...²²

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

[Day of the Lord]: final judgment upon the earth (Cf. v.9).

Almighty (*Shaddai*): rare use by prophets: Joel 1:15-2:1; Ezek 1:24; 10:5; here.

[Howl] Hebrew: yalal (HSN-<H3213>), to howl with a wailing tone. Used in this sense 29 times (Isa. 13:6; 14:31; 15:2-3; 16:7; 23:1,6,14; 52:5; 65:14; Jer. 4:8; 25:34; 47:2; 48:20,31,39; 49:3; 51:8; Ezek. 21:12; 30:2; Hos. 7:14; Joel 1:5,11,13; Amos 8:3; Mic. 1:8; Zeph. 1:11; Zech. 11:2; cp. Jas. 5:1).

[the day of the LORD] The day of the Lord -- the day of the second coming and Millennium.

[is at hand] It will only be at hand at the second coming of Christ, proving that this destruction of Babylon as Sodom and Gomorrah were overthrown will be at that time (Isa. 13:6,9; Rev. 14:8; 16:17-21; 18:1-24).²³

This prophecy looks beyond anything that now is in history and projects into the Great Tribulation²⁴

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

The day of the LORD comes: Isaiah now speaks in the "prophetic tense," having in mind both a *near* fulfillment (the day of judgment against the Babylonian Empire), and an *ultimate* fulfillment (the final day of judgment at the return of Jesus).

The day of the LORD is an important phrase, used some 26 times in the Bible. It speaks of not a single day of judgment, but of the season of judgment when the LORD sets things right. It is as if today is man's day, but the LORD's day is coming!²⁵

²² <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah1301.php>

²³ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

²⁴ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

²⁵ <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-13.html>

⁸And 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*.

“Woman that travaileth”: Isa 21:3; Jer 31:8; Ps 48:6; 1Thess 5:3.

[faces shall be as flames] This refers to blushing in shame for opposing God.

⁹Behold, 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.

Land desolate: cf. v.5.

During the Great Tribulation God will again use the power (called Babylon here) to judge these people, just as He did in the past. The Tribulation is spoken of as a time of travail, with men in travail. The Day of the Lord opens with this time of travail.

Now this identifies it as the Great Tribulation:²⁶

¹⁰For 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.

Isa 24:21-23; Ezek 32:7; Joel 2:10, 31; 3:15; Mt 24:39; Mk 13:24; Lk 21:25.

Constellations, (“orions”) et al., worshipped by Nimrod and his tower to the heavens (Bab-El). (Cf. Job 9:9; 38:31; Amos 5:8.)

See Isa. 34:4; Ezek. 32:7-8; Joel 2:2,31; 3:15; Amos 8:9; Mt. 24:29-30.

[constellations] Hebrew: keciyl (HSN-<H3685>), translated constellations (Isa. 13:10); and Orion (Job 9:9; 38:31; Amos 5:8).²⁷

This is prophesied again by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 24:29: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken." Revelation 8:12 tells us, "And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise."²⁸

The stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be darkened: Several prophetic passages describe the cosmic disturbances that will precede and surround the return of Jesus (Joel 2:10, Revelation 6:12-14, Isaiah 34:4). In fact, Jesus was probably quoting

²⁶ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee

²⁷ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

²⁸ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

or paraphrasing this passage from Isaiah in Matthew 24:29 : Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

In the near fulfillment of the judgment of Babylon, they felt like the whole world was coming apart. In the ultimate fulfillment connected with the return of Jesus, the whole world will be falling apart.²⁹

God's promise to Babylon: the land will be a desolation. He is going to exterminate sinners from it. And in verse ten, we get some idea as to the time frame He's talking about: the sun, moon, and stars are darkened. This should lead us towards a familiar passage, when Jesus talks about the antichrist committing the abomination of desolation, and the Jews hiding in the wilderness from his genocidal attempts.

Matt. 24:29-30 "But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory."

This gives us a pretty good time frame. Between the antichrist's defilement of the temple, and the return of Christ, we can expect to see the destruction of Babylon.³⁰

¹¹And I will punish the world for *their* evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.

Punish the world: scope broader than just 539 B.C.
Pride of Assyria: Isa 10:7-11; of Moab: Isa 16:6;
Ultimate: Isa 14:12ff.

[arrogancy] Arrogancy, four times in Scripture (Isa. 13:11; 1Sam. 2:3; Prov. 8:13; Jer. 48:29).

[haughtiness] Haughtiness, five times in Scripture (Isa. 13:11; 2:11,17; 16:6; Jer. 48:29).³¹

"I will punish the world for their evil" -- We are living in a world today that is moving toward judgment.³²

I will punish the world for its evil: This prophetic identification of Babylon with the world, ripe for ultimate judgment, is consistent through the Scriptures. We aren't surprised that Isaiah has prophetically combined the vision of Babylon's judgment with the judgment of the whole world for its evil.

Babylon is mentioned 287 times in the Scriptures, more than any other city except Jerusalem. Babylon was a literal city on the Euphrates river; right after the flood (Genesis 11:1-10), Babylon

²⁹ <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-13.html>

³⁰ <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah1301.php>

³¹ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

³² Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

“Was the seat of the civilization that expressed organized hostility to God.” (Tenney, Interpreting Revelation). Babylon was later the capitol of the empire that cruelly conquered Judah. “Babylon, to them (the Jews), was the essence of all evil, the embodiment of cruelty, the foe of God’s people, and the lasting type of sin, carnality, lust and greed.” (Tenney) To those familiar with the Old Testament, the name Babylon is associated with organized idolatry, blasphemy and the persecution of God’s people. In the New Testament, the worlds system of the last days is characterized both religiously and commercially as Babylon (Revelation 17, 18). Therefore, Babylon is a “Suitable representation . . . of the idolatrous, pagan world-system in opposition to God.” (Martin)³³

Coinciding with the destruction of Babylon, God is going to punish the world for its evil. Mankind is going to suffer huge population losses. The earth and heavens will be rocking and rolling. This sounds very much like the events in the book of Revelation.³⁴

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

There will be such scarcity of men after this destruction that one will be more valuable than gold, even wedges of gold.

When Christ died for you and me on the cross, that added value to us.³⁵

Ophir was known for its rare and valuable gold. It is thought to have been located on the southwestern coast of Arabia.³⁶

13Therefore 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.

Verses 13-16 go on to tell us that the Tribulation will be a time of worldwide destruction when no "flesh would survive" except for the fact that God will preserve a remnant for Himself.³⁷

Isa 24:18-20; Jer 4:24; Joel 3:16; Hag 2:6,7; Mt 24:29; Heb 12:25-29; Zech 14:4,5; 2 Pet 3:10; Rev 6:9-17; 20:11.

Every man for himself. Jer 50:16; 51:9.

[shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place] Although this particularly refers to the second coming when the day of the Lord begins (Isa. 13:6,9,10,14), the heavens will be affected at least five times during the future tribulation.³⁸

³³ <http://www.studyLight.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-13.html>

³⁴ <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah1301.php>

³⁵ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

³⁶ Life Application Study Bible

³⁷ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

³⁸ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth will move out of her place: Haggai 2:6 and Hebrews 12:25-28 echo this same thought. Since God can shake the heavens and move the earth, and since God Himself is unshakable, it makes a lot more sense to trust in God than even the ground we stand on and the air we breathe.³⁹

¹⁴And 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.

[Rapture?]

[as the chased roe] The gazelle on the first alarm flees like an arrow, leaving the best mounted hunter and even the dogs far behind. Hunters use falcons to impede its flight so the dogs can catch up.⁴⁰

[as a sheep that no man taketh up] This refers to a scattered flock of sheep with no shepherd to collect or protect them. As they are very timid and defenseless, so the people of Babylon will become alarmed and scattered and afraid of everything in the day of the Lord (Isa. 13:13-16).⁴¹

It shall be as the hunted gazelle: The picture of God's judgment, upon both Babylon and the world in general, is unrelenting. It is like one of the nature movies where the hunted gazelle is overtaken by the lion, and it utterly consumed. There is no escape from God's unrelenting judgment.

If you take comfort in Jesus, remember that this is the same unrelenting judgment that was poured out upon Him on the cross. In this picture from Isaiah, Jesus was the hunted gazelle, and willingly made Himself so!⁴²

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

All who gather in companies for common defense will fall by the sword.

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

Cruelty: Hos 13:13; Nah 3:10. Wives: Deut 28:32; Zech 14:2 (Cf. Ps 137:9).

³⁹ <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-13.html>

⁴⁰ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁴¹ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁴² <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-13.html>

Destruction Of Babylon In The Day Of Man (13:17-22)

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

Medes: in Isaiah's day, were allies of Babylon against Assyria! They allied with the Persians were to conquer Babylon in 539 B.C. They are known as the Kurds, presently hostile towards Iraq. Also mentioned in Jer 51;11; 2 Kgs 17:6.⁴³

Who are the Medes? Media and Persia became a dual nation and a mighty empire that conquered Babylon. Isaiah is speaking of that which was going to take place in the immediate future. He identifies those who will destroy Babylon: "the Medes."⁴⁴

I will stir up the Medes against them: If this prophecy was made decades before the Babylonian Empire defeated the Assyrian Empire and became a superpower, it was even more before the time when the Medes came against the Babylonians, conquering them as instruments of God's judgments.

It is specifically worded passages like this that drive skeptics of the Bible crazy, pushing them to regard the Isaiah as written after the events prophesied. But doesn't God know the future, and know it specifically?⁴⁵

The location of Media was basically the southwest corner of the Caspian Sea, where today Tehran, Iran is located. We could also look at the Median Empire, which extended from Media northwest and to the east, which encompassed some of modern-day Turkey, but is mainly composed of the country of Iran. Either way, you end up with the disturbing prospect that the Medes are Iran.

This pericope foretells the destruction of Babylon. Prophecies of the day of the Lord may describe the eschatological judgment coming (vv. 2-16), or a more recent, limited judgment coming (vv. 17-22). Each soon-coming judgment on a particular segment of humanity foreshadows the great eschatological judgment that will fall on the whole human race in the Tribulation. This destruction of Babylon was a judgment of the Lord in a day that would be closer to Isaiah's own time, a near and limited fulfillment of the day that the prophet just described. The fall of Assyria (14:24-27) was one fulfillment, and the later fall of Babylon (13:17-22) was another. The same principles that operate in the eschatological day of the Lord just described also operate in the earlier days of the Lord.

Part of the Lord's warriors would be the Medes, who occupied what is now central Iran. In Isaiah's day, the Medes were already a powerful people that the Assyrians dreaded. They would destroy Babylon. They united with the Babylonians to destroy the last vestiges of the Assyrian Empire in 609 B.C. Still later, it was the Medes and the Persians who overthrew Babylon in 539 B.C. (cf. Esth. 10:2; Dan. 5:30-31; 6:8, 12, 15).

The Medes valued silver and gold less than military conquest; they
Could not be bought off, but mercilessly slew every enemy (vv. 17-18).

⁴³ Notes from Chuck Missler, Isaiah Study, Khouse.org

⁴⁴ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁴⁵ <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-13.html>

Revenge motivated them more than booty.

In the late 700s B.C., Babylon was the showcase of the ancient world, specifically the showcase of the Assyrian Empire. She was culturally and economically superior to Assyria and was ascending politically. The Chaldeans were the ruling class that had been responsible for the supremacy of Babylon. However, Isaiah announced, Babylon would experience the same fate as Sodom and Gomorrah: destruction from the Lord's hand (v. 19). After her judgment, Babylon would be uninhabitable even by nomads. Wild animals would be the only residents of the once great city. This destruction would come soon, and it would not be delayed (vv. 20-22).

Babylonia was under the Assyrian yoke when Isaiah gave this prophecy, probably during Hezekiah's reign (715-686 B.C.). She was one of the nations, along with Egypt, to which Judah was looking as a possible savior. This prophecy showed that Babylon was not a safe object for trust because God would destroy her. Has this prophecy been fulfilled? Babylon suffered defeat in 689 B.C. when Assyria (including the Medes), under Sennacherib, devastated it (cf. 23:13), but the city was rebuilt. Many interpreters believe that the fall of Babylon in 539 B.C. to Cyrus fulfilled this prophecy, but Cyrus left the city intact. Others believe the destruction—that Darius Hystaspes began in 518 B.C., and that Xerxes later completed—was the fulfillment.

Some scholars believe that what Isaiah predicted here never took place literally, at least completely, so the fulfillment lies in the future.¹⁸⁴ Many conservatives argue for a near and a far fulfillment. I think the destruction in 689 B.C. that resulted in Babylon's temporary desolation fulfilled this prophecy (cf. v. 22b), and I believe there will also be an eschatological judgment of Babylon (Rev. 17—18), though not necessarily one that requires the rebuilding of the city. Destruction terminology, such as appears in this passage, is common in the annals of ancient Near Eastern nations. It speaks generally and hyperbolically of devastating defeat and destruction, but it did not always involve exact or detailed fulfillment.⁴⁶

¹⁸Their 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.

Bow was chief weapon. Herodotus: "Every youth was to learn to ride, draw a bow, and speak the truth." ["Bows" to dash in pieces? *Key-sheth* refer to "launchers?"]

[dash the young men to pieces] It seems very clear that after predicting children would be dashed to pieces in the day of the Lord (Isa. 13:16), the prophet then predicted the same thing in the immediate invasion of Babylon by Medes.⁴⁷

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

Chaldeans = southern part of the country. Like Sodom and Gomorrah? Hasn't happened yet.

If Babylon is ever to be destroyed in the way that God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (that is, completely), this must be in the future, for such has not happened in the past (Isa. 13:19; Jer.

⁴⁶ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

⁴⁷ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

50:40). This is one reason for associating the prophecy with the future destruction of Babylon, as described in Rev. 14:8; 16:17-21; 18:1-24.⁴⁸

[the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency] Fourfold description of Babylon:

1. The glory of the kingdoms (Isa. 13:19)
2. The beauty of the Chaldees' excellency
3. The golden city (Isa. 14:4)
4. The lady of the kingdoms (Isa. 47:5,7)⁴⁹

Will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah: "The phrase 'Sodom and Gomorrah' suggests not only complete destruction but also its moral cause." (Grogan)

This prophecy has been fulfilled. Babylon was the greatest kingdom that has ever existed upon this earth. The Macedonian Empire was great; the Egyptian Empire was great, as was the Roman Empire. At one time Great Britain could have been named a great nation, but I don't think anything can compare to the glory of Babylon. God's Word calls it "the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency," and that excellency God overthrew as He did Sodom and Gomorrah. All you have to do is to look at the ruins of ancient Babylon to recognize that that has happened.

It was a great city that was never rebuilt. Other great cities have been rebuilt. This is especially true of Jerusalem. Rome was destroyed and rebuilt. Cities in Germany were bombed out -- absolutely obliterated -- and were rebuilt. Frankfurt, Germany, was leveled, and it arose out of the ashes a great city. But Babylon did not arise. God said that it would never again be inhabited. It is true that Babylon will be rebuilt in the future, but not on the ancient site of Babylon. It will be built in a different place.

Babylon represents confusion, and the future Babylon will be a great commercial center, a great religious center, a great political center, a power center, and the educational center of the world again.⁵⁰

²⁰It 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.

Isa 47:1; Rev 18:7.

When Koldewey, the German archaeologist, excavated in the 19th century, he was able to hire local residents. Saddam Hussein has spent hundreds of millions over the past 20 years rebuilding the key buildings. [Shown on aeronautical charts as "numerous large buildings" 14 miles SE of Al Hillah, about 62 miles S of Baghdad. Not a military target in the Persian Gulf War.]⁵¹

How can Babylon be destroyed and yet appear in the last days as a literal city again? Already the ancient site of the ancient Babylon is seven to nine miles from the Euphrates River. The river ran in a canal right through the ancient city of Babylon. The ancient site will never be rebuilt, but

⁴⁸ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁴⁹ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁵⁰ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁵¹ Notes from Chuck Missler, Isaiah Study, Khouse.org

Babylon will be rebuilt on another site. The ruins of ancient Babylon stand as a monument to the accuracy of fulfilled prophecy.

Several archaeologists of the past who have excavated Babylon say that they were never able to get the Arabians to stay in the camp beside the ruins. The Arabians would always go outside the area and stay. They were superstitious. It is interesting that God said they would not pitch their tents in Babylon.⁵²

Even before Babylon became a world power, Isaiah prophesied that, though it would shine for a while, Babylon's destruction would be so complete that the land would never again be inhabited. Babylon, in present-day Iraq, still lies in utter ruin, buried under mounds of dirt and sand.⁵³

It will never be inhabited: The ancient city of Babylon, once conquered, will never be inhabited again. "When Cyrus conquered Babylon, he did not devastate the city. The walls were left standing until 518 B.C., and general desolation did not set in until the third century B.C. Babylon gradually fell into decay, and the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled. Babylon became completely depopulated by the time of the Muslim conquest in the seventh century A.D., and to this day it lies deserted." (Wolf)

This is also true in its ultimate fulfillment. When Jesus returns in glory and conquers the world system, He will rule the earth for 1,000 years. As He does, there will be no more "world system" in opposition to God as we know it. In this sense, the world system in opposition to God will never be inhabited again.⁵⁴

²¹But 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.

[doleful creatures] Hebrew: 'oach (HSN-<H255>), a howling animal. Found only here and refers to the yells of wild animals, not any particular kind.

[owls] The Hebrew could mean owls or ostriches. Both give doleful sounds at night; the ostrich gives a hideous noise and even groans as if in great agony.

[satyrs] Satyrs were mythological creatures with the head and body of a man (including pointed ears and short horns), and the legs, feet and tail of a goat. Images of such were worshiped by Edomites (Isa. 13:21; 34:14). The Hebrew: sa`iyir (HSN-<H8163>) is translated hairy (Gen. 27:11,23); devils (note a, Lev. 17:7); goats and kid of the goat 46 times (Lev. 16:5-27; Num. 7:16-82; etc.); and rough goat (Dan. 8:21). The word properly denotes that which is hairy or rough. Here it may refer to any wild, rough, or shaggy animal that will inhabit this desolate place.⁵⁵

"Wild beasts of the desert shall lie there." Lions have been found making their homes amid the ruins.

⁵² Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁵³ Life Application Study Bible.

⁵⁴ <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-13.html>

⁵⁵ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

"Satyrs shall dance there." Satyrs are demons. Satyrs shall dance in Babylon. If you want to go to the dance of the demons, Babylon is the place to go. I hear of folk here in Southern California who worship Satan. One young fellow who claims to belong to a church that worships Satan came to me after a meeting and attacked me in a very vitriolic manner. He insisted that demons are real, and he worshiped them. I agreed that demons are real, but I cautioned him about worshipping them. Then I asked him if he had ever danced with the demons. He looked at me with amazement and said, "No!" So I told him where their dance hall is. I told him that demons dance in the ruins of Babylon. I said to him facetiously, "Why don't you go over there? Brother, if you are going to go halfway, go all the way." Babylon was the headquarters for idolatry in the ancient world. Apparently demons have this spot as a rallying place.

The future Babylon will become a great center on earth. The Man of Sin, the willful king, called the Antichrist, will reign in that place. It will be destroyed just as the ancient Babylon was destroyed. Babylon is a memorial to the fact of the accuracy of fulfilled prophecy and a testimony to the fact that God will also judge the future Babylon.⁵⁶

'oach, doleful creatures: howling animal; jackal; hyena.

ya'anah: an unclean bird; owl, ostrich, literally translated as "daughters of the owl"; perhaps an extinct bird, exact meaning unknown.

sa'iyr: 59X: kid 28, goat 24, devil 2, satyr 2, hairy 2, rough 1. Hairy;

he-goat, buck; as sacrificial animal; satyr, may refer to a demon possessed goat like the swine of Gadara (Mt 8:30-32). Terms also used of demons (Lev 17:7; 2 Chr 11:15).⁵⁷

Owls . . . ostriches . . . wild goats . . . hyenas: The animals mentioned here are impossible to identify precisely. The picture is of the darkness and confusion surrounding the fall of Babylon.

"The 'wild goats' (Isaiah 13:21) are sometimes associated with demons in goat form that are called 'satyrs' (Leviticus 17:7; 2 Chronicles 11:15)." (Wolf)⁵⁸

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.

Wild beasts: howling creatures.

Coastlands: islands.

Cry: shriek.

Dragons: jackals.

Cf Jer 51:33.

[wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses] Wild beasts of the coast lands, referring to the unknown and uninhabited regions in general.

[time is near to come] This is the same as references to the nearness of "the day of the Lord" in Isa. 13:6,9.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁵⁷ Notes from Chuck Missler, Isaiah Study, Khouse.org

⁵⁸ <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/guz/isaiah-13.html>

⁵⁹ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible