

Review

Tonight, Isaiah begins a new topic, so I don't think we need to review at all.

13:1 The Oracle Concerning Babylon

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 gives the prophets to carry.

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

The Destruction Of Babylon

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 & 14, Jeremiah 50 & 51, and Revelation 17 & 18. These will give you a complete picture of the subject before us: the total destruction of Babylon.

13:2-5 Mustering The Army

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...

13:6-8 The Day Of The Lord

"The day of the Lord" is a term that tends to bring confusion to Bible students. They try to fit everything that is described in the Bible as "the day of the Lord" into one day. But in fact, the term is generic: it speaks of any time that God brings judgment.

The day of the Lord - judgment - was coming. It would be a horrifying destruction. Notice the vivid imagery as God describes,

Is. 13:8 ...they will look at one another in astonishment, their

faces aflame.

The New Living Translation gives a possible interpretation of this:
Is. 13:8 (NLT) ...They look helplessly at one another as the flames of the burning city reflect on their faces.

But by the time we get to verse 19, I believe that you'll be more inclined to accept the literal interpretation...

13:9-10 Dark Sun, Moon, And Stars

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.

That helps us to understand the following verses...

13:11-16 I Will Punish The World

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.

13:19-22 As When God Overthrew Sodom

Babylon's destruction will be final and complete. It will never be in-

habited again. Chapter 18 of Revelation describes it, saying...

- it will be destroyed in a day (Rev. 18:8), even one hour (Rev. 18:10; 18:19).

- it will be burned up with fire (Rev. 18:8).

- it will be thrown down with violence (Rev. 18:21).

- people will have to stand far away because of "the fear of her torment" (Rev. 18:10; 18:15).

Verse 19 describes it as being similar to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah:

Gen. 19:24-25 Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven, and He overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.

Since this is obviously yet future, think through how these things could be accomplished. It sounds like this city is destroyed by massive bombs, or - more likely - a nuclear assault from the Medes, who will be stirred up against them.

The Medes

So, our big question is logically, "Who are the Medes?"

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.

What Is Babylon?

Next question: "What will be Iran's provocation to destroy Babylon?"

Babylon is in Iraq, about 60 miles south of Baghdad. It's basically just a tourist town right now. It wasn't even that until Saddam Hussein took power in 1979. He ordered the rebuilding of Babylon's walls and had his name placed on the bricks used to rebuild the city. They say, "In the era of President Saddam Hussein, the President of Iraq, God preserve him, who rebuilt Babylon, as protector of the great Iraq and the builder

of civilization." (Now that Saddam is no longer in power, his name has been removed from the bricks by the caretakers of the Babylon museum.)

Mother Of Harlots

Another possible issue people point out is that Babylon is no longer in Iraq at all. They say that Babylon is not a physical city, but more descriptive of the center of idolatry. That is mostly true, and requires a bit of explanation...

Remember Noah had three sons who came with him on the ark. But his son Ham was wicked. As it turns out, Ham's son Cush was worse, and Cush's son Nimrod became the first dictator on the earth (Gen. 10:8).

Gen. 10:10 And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel and EH-*rek* and Ak-KAD and Kal-NEH, in the land of Shinar.

The beginning of Nimrod's kingdom was Babel in Shinar. And although man had already rebelled against God's rule, it was not until Babel that man turned to false gods - to harlotry and abominations.

The tower of Babel was built because of this very thing. The people said,

Gen. 11:4 ..."Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top {will reach} into heaven..."

Notice that the "will reach" is in italics. The true purpose of this tower wasn't to reach as high as heaven, but rather it was built "unto the heavens." This is where the worship of the planets, the Zodiac, and all other false gods began. This was the beginning of every single religious practice and system that deviates from God's revealed Word.

Revelation 17 points out that today, Babylon is...

Rev. 17:1-2 ...the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed acts of immorality, and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality."

It goes on to say that the woman sits on seven mountains, which most Bible teachers believe is the city of Rome.

And so, it is true in effect that Babylon is spirit - not in Iraq, but in

Italy.

But that is not the end of the story. You see, when the antichrist establishes himself as the only lawful religion, Babylon will make a transition from spiritual to commercial. We see that prophesied in Zechariah five:

Zech. 5:9-11 Then I lifted up my eyes and looked, and there two women were coming out with the wind in their wings; and they had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heavens. I said to the angel who was speaking with me, "Where are they taking the ephah?" Then he said to me, "To build a temple for her in the land of Shinar; and when it is prepared, she will be set there on her own pedestal."

The harlot is being relocated to the land of Shinar. She will be stripped of her religious garments and revealed for what she really is - a commercial system. Her false religion removed, she will be relocated to her place of origin - Babylon.

Who Will Not Value Silver Or Gold

So, why would Iran want to destroy Babylon?

God says that the Medes will not value the silver and gold of Babylon, which leads me to believe that Babylon will come to represent everything that the Iranians hate about the United States: greed, capitalism, commercialism, and wealth.

Revelation 18 says that in the future, Babylon will be a world-wide commercial center.

Rev. 18:3 "...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."

And when Babylon is destroyed,

Rev. 18:11-13 "And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their cargoes any

more - cargoes of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet, and every kind of citron wood and every article of ivory and every article made from very costly wood and bronze and iron and marble, and cinnamon and spice and incense and perfume and frankincense and wine and olive oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep, and cargoes of horses and chariots and slaves and human lives."

The merchants of the earth will not be able to do business after Babylon is destroyed. It sounds to me like the future of our world consists of a time when Babylon will be built anew, and will become the financial center of the world.

Just two days ago (June 21, 2005), 80 officials from the UN, the EU, and the USA, along with other countries held a conference in Brussels, Belgium, pledging financial support for Iraq to return to the international community. It is not at all far-fetched to believe that in the very near future, the rebuilding of Iraq's infrastructure and economy could result in the city of Babylon becoming one of the most technologically advanced and computer-connected cities in the world!

But Iran, who has already had an 8-year-long war with Iraq in the 1980's and lost 1.5 million Iranians in the process, has been attempting to become a nuclear power since at least the early 1990's and has been lying to the world about it as recently as this month (June 2005), when it was discovered that they had been experimenting with plutonium and had been trying to obtain sophisticated centrifuges.

Today, many Iranians chant "death to America" during their Friday prayers. Imagine what will happen in the future when they have nuclear weapons, and the center of global capitalism is right next door to them?

Their attack will be indiscriminate. Nuclear warheads do not spare pregnant women or children. Babylon will be utterly destroyed, and people will never again inhabit it.