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Wail, for the Day of the LORD is Near

13: 6-16

Wail, for the Day of the LORD is near DIG: What is meant by the Day of the LORD (13:6,9; also 2:11, 17 and 20), and what will it be like for Babylon? For whom is it a cruel day? For whom is it a wonderful day? What poetic and cosmic images in verses 6 to 16 graphically communicate its power to you? What should the Jews have learned about God from this prophecy against such a powerful nation?

REFLECT: What does the Day of the LORD have to do with you? Is it something to be feared, or to look forward to? Why? Who do you know that will be wailing at the Lord's return? Who do you know that will be rejoicing? Are you praying for those who are lost? What are you doing in preparation for this Day?

Wail, for the day of the LORD is near (13:6a). Here **Isaiah** deals with the issue of **the day of the LORD**, which refers to the time of **the LORD's** judgment on the wicked world and the deliverance of **His** people during the Great Tribulation. **It will come like destruction from Shaddai, the Almighty (136b).** Here we see **the terror of the LORD** as **He** announces its approach. Again, **Isaiah** is using **his** knowledge of Hebrew for alliteration. The translation (to bring out the sounds of the alliteration) in Hebrew is "the **destruction** of the destroyer."

The immediate result of the attack of **ADONAI** and **His** holy ones (**13:3**) will be complete helplessness on the part of the proud. **Isaiah** lists seven results of the **destruction**: (1) **all hands will go limp**, or **their** courage will fail (see **Jeremiah 6:24**), (2) **every man's heart will melt**, (3) **terror will seize them**, (4) **pain and anguish will grip them**, (5) **God's** judgment **will** cause people to be in extreme distress, **they will writhe like a woman in labor**, (6) **they will look aghast at each other**, and (7) **their faces** will be **afame** from total disbelief (**13:7-8**). **Human** greatness will be reduced to nothing. **Their** nerve will leave them, and **their** weapons will fall from **their limp hands**. **They** will stare at each other in disbelief, because **they** will recognize that everything **they** trusted in was worthless to **them** as they stand defenseless before **God's** piercing gaze.

In the next three verses **Isaiah** deals with the destruction of **humanity**. **See, the day of**

the LORD is coming - a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger - to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it (13:9). ADONAI, expressing His anger (13:3 and 13) against sin, will destroy sinners and punish the world for its evil and its proud attitude toward God. The three purposes of the Great Tribulation are: first, to make an end to wickedness and wicked ones (13:9 and 24:19-20), secondly, to bring about a worldwide revival (Revelation 7:1-17 and Matthew 24:14), and thirdly, to break the power of the holy people (Dani'el 12:7b and Ezekiel 20:34-38). The first of the three is emphasized here.



Isaiah deals with blackouts that will be a characteristic of the Great Tribulation. **The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light (13:10).** There are five blackouts mentioned in the Bible in the last days. The first one comes just before the Great Tribulation in **Joel 2:31**. The second one comes in the first quarter of that **Day** of God's judgment in **Revelation 6:12**. The third one comes in the second quarter in **Revelation 9:2**. The fourth one comes in the second half of the Great Tribulation in **Revelation 16:10-11**, and the fifth one comes right after the Great Tribulation in **Matthew 24:29**. Here **Isaiah** merely summarizes that **the Day of the LORD** is characterized by blackouts.

Once again we see that the purpose is to **punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their sins**. The sin of **pride** is identified as the cause of **God's** wrath. **ADONAI** said: **I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless (13:11)**. It is ironic that **man** expects to take advantage of others without being taken advantage of by others (**33:1**). In **the Day of the LORD** the results will be opposite of what **pride** expects. A case in point would be the pride of Hitler's thousand-year Reich that ended in complete destruction about ten years after he proclaimed it. Instead of the earth being full of the glory of **man**, mankind will be hard to find.

I will make man scarcer than pure gold, rarer than the gold of Ophir (13:12). The result is that men and women become more and more scarce because so many are destroyed in the course of **God's** judgments in the Great Tribulation. **The survivors will be so few that they will be rarer even than the rare precious metal (fine gold).**

Isaiah deals with the **destruction** of **Babylon** in the **Day of the LORD**. There is interplay between the **destruction** caused by **ADONAI** and the devastation caused in the midst of the chaos of that **Day**. The magnitude of the **destruction** is seen. **Therefore, I will make the heavens tremble; and the earth will shake from its place at the wrath of the LORD of heavens angelic armies (CJB) in the day of His burning anger (13:13).** Altogether, four results follow. **ADONAI** causes the first two and the last two perpetrated by men in the midst of anarchy, their sin unhindered.

First, we see the flight of all foreigners from the city to where they came from (**Jeremiah 51:9**). **Like a hunted gazelle, like sheep without a shepherd, each will flee to his native land (13:14).** The people attacked would be utterly powerless to stop the invasion. They would be like **gazelle** and **sheep**, defenseless creatures that are easy prey for hunters. Although **Isaiah** doesn't emphasize this point here, **he** and other prophets tell us that any Jews in **Babylon** will also get out of **the city** before its destruction (**Isaiah 48:20; Jeremiah 50:8 and 28; 51:6 and 45; Zechariah 2:6-7; and Revelation 18:4**).

The second result is the violent death of **Babylonians themselves**. There will be no escape. **Whoever is captured will be thrust through** by **God's** holy ones. **All who are caught fleeing from the city will fall by the sword (13:15).** Truly, **the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23a).** Even **their infants will be dashed to pieces before their eyes (13:16a).** Thirdly, with **their** sin unchecked in the chaos of that **day**, **houses will be looted** by **the Babylonians themselves**, **their** fury turned inward. And fourthly, **their** lust unleashed, they would rape each other's **wives** in the resulting anarchy (**13:16b**).

To many, the dashing of **infants**, does not seem to be anything that **God** would have a part in. But we need to remember that coming into the land of Canaan, **Joshua** was instructed by **God** to kill *every one* of **God's** enemies (see the commentary on **the Life of David, to see link click Af - The Problem of Holy War in the TaNaKh**). Little Amalekites grow up to be big Amalekites. Saul was ordered to do the same thing in **First Samuel 15: 1-3**. He failed to obey **ADONAI** with tragic results for both the nation and himself. When **God** decrees a total destruction of a people, a *cherem* judgment (**Joshua 6:21**) that includes everyone - **men, women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys**. Achin learned that lesson the hard way in **Joshua 7**. But some would respond, "Are we not to love one another,

even our enemies (**Luke 6:27**)? And is this not because **God** is love? Can **God** be both loving and warlike?" A solution to this problem is required which will enable us to understand the meaning of the conception of **God the Warrior**.

"Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, 'Are you for us or our enemies?' 'Neither, He replied, 'but as commander of ADONAI's army, I have now come.' Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, 'What message does my Lord have for His servant?' The commander of the LORD's army replied, 'Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy.' And Joshua did so (Joshua 5:13-15)." Who was that warrior? It was a theophany, or a pre-incarnate appearance of **the Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ. Who is the King of Glory? ADONAI, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle (Psalm 24:8)**. Once again we are told that **God** is a warrior, and when **He** returns to the earth a second time, **with justice He judges and makes war (Revelation 19:11b)**, **out of His mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. . . He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of ADONAI, God of heaven's armies (Revelation 19:15)**.

Two points can be made. First, **war** appears to be an ever-present reality of historical experience, both ancient and modern. If **God** is **King**, the ultimate **Ruler** of human history, it is to be expected that **He** will stand in some kind of relationship to war. We perceive, though not always clearly, that war is a form of evil human activity in which **YHVH** participates actively for the purposes of both redemption and judgment; in this participation, **God is a Warrior**.⁴⁷ Secondly, we must be reminded that this is a time of judgment. One of the purposes of the Great Tribulation is **to make an end to wickedness and wicked ones (13:9 and 24:19-20)**. All the opportunities for repentance have passed. Untold millions will have accepted **Christ** during the Great Tribulation and been martyred (**Revelation 6:9**). The ones who are left have *chosen* to be there. **Men gnawed their tongues in agony and cursed the God of heaven, but they refused to repent of what they had done (Revelation 16:10-11)**. The results of **the Day of the Lord** will be clear.