



• The Gentiles need a Saviour just as much as the two parts of Israel

At Isaiah 13:1 we reach the third major section of the book of Isaiah, which occupies 13:1–27:13. In the forward movement of the thinking of the great prophet the point of this section is that the gentiles are in as great a crisis as the two parts of Israel. Isaiah has spent twelve chapters (as we arrange his material) showing in general<sup>1</sup> and in detail<sup>2</sup> that Israel desperately needs a Saviour. Now he will spend fifteen chapters (in our Bibles) showing that the gentiles are equally under the judgement of God, but they too will experience the coming of a Saviour. We can analyse these fifteen chapters as again going round in circles, but this time there are not two<sup>3</sup> but three. We may set it out as follows; I follow J.A. Motyer's Isaiah<sup>4</sup> but express it in my own simplified manner.

1 chapters 1-5  
2 chapters 6-12  
3 as in 7:1-11:16  
4 IVP, 1993

• Songs about nations

First Isaiah goes round a 'circle' of songs about nations, beginning with Babylon.

<i>Isaiah 13:1–14:27</i>	<i>Babylon &amp; Assyria</i>
<i>Isaiah 14:28–32</i>	<i>Philistia</i>
<i>Isaiah 15:1–16:14</i>	<i>Moab</i>
<i>Isaiah 17:1–18:7</i>	<i>Damascus &amp; Ephraim</i>
<i>Isaiah 19:1–20:6</i>	<i>Egypt</i>

• Again, songs about nations

Then he does the same thing again; he goes around a circle of songs about nations, beginning with Babylon.

<i>Isaiah 21:1–10</i>	<i>Babylon</i>
<i>Isaiah 21:11–12</i>	<i>Edom</i>
<i>Isaiah 21:13–17</i>	<i>Arabia</i>
<i>Isaiah 22:1–25</i>	<i>Jerusalem</i>
<i>Isaiah 23:1–18</i>	<i>Tyre</i>

• Applying these principles to the whole world

The style is similar to 7:1–11:16. He is going over a similar sequence of topics – twice. Then he carries on in the same style, but now what he says is not so tied to particular nations. He is extending the principles he has established and applying them to the whole world.

<i>Isaiah 24:1–20</i>	<i>The world in chaos</i>
<i>Isaiah 24:21–23</i>	<i>The conquering King</i>
<i>Isaiah 25:1–12</i>	<i>The world comes to Zion</i>
<i>Isaiah 26:1–21</i>	<i>Secure salvation</i>
<i>Isaiah 27:1–13</i>	<i>Worldwide victory</i>

The nations need a Saviour as much as Israel does

The basic point of this entire section<sup>1</sup> is that the nations need a Saviour as much as Israel does. Isaiah begins with a title.

1 13:1-27:13

<sup>1</sup>*A burden concerning Babylon that Isaiah son of Amoz saw.*

Then he goes on to describe God as the one calling the Babylonians to conquer his people.

1. The Lord is in control of all the nations and their history

1. The Lord is in control of all the nations and their history. God calls Babylon to achieve something that is his plan for his people.

<sup>2</sup>*Raise a banner on a bare hilltop, shout to them; raise a hand to them to enter the gates of the nobles.*

<sup>3</sup>As for me, I have commanded my holy ones;  
I have summoned my warriors to carry out my wrath,  
my arrogant, exulting agents.

• The agents  
in history are  
serving God  
without knowing it

The agents in history think they are doing their own will but they are actually serving God without knowing it. The 'nobles' (the leaders of the land) are gathering at the gates (the place where important meetings are held). But they are working for God without knowing it. Babylon would one day be allowed to rise to power and become a persecutor of Judah. Although in Isaiah's day Babylon was not the mighty empire it would one day become, yet the nation was already becoming powerful and Isaiah foresaw a day when it would become the enemy of God's people. But it would be God who would arrange for Babylon to be the conqueror of his people.

• God would  
arrange for  
Babylon to  
conquer His  
people

<sup>4</sup>Listen, a noise on the mountains,  
like that of a great multitude!  
Listen, an uproar among the kingdoms,  
like nations massing together!  
Yahweh Almighty is mustering  
an army for war.

<sup>5</sup>They come from faraway lands,  
from the ends of the heavens –  
Yahweh and the weapons of his wrath –  
to destroy the whole world.

• Jerusalem can  
hear the  
Babylonian  
armies gathering

The 'mountains' of verse 4 are the hills surrounding Jerusalem. Jerusalem is (in Isaiah's vision) able to hear the Babylonian armies gathering together ready to march on God's chosen city. God uses sinners. It is not that he creates sin, but he so minutely controls it that it achieves his will.

2. In the  
midst of world  
history, God  
judges all  
sinners

**2. In the midst of world history, God judges all sinners.** Babylon is raised up to chastise Israel. They are the 'weapons of his wrath'. They will inspire terror in God's people.

<sup>6</sup>Wail, for the day of Yahweh is close by; it  
will come like destruction from Shaddai.

<sup>7</sup>Because of this, all hands will go limp,  
every man's heart will melt.

<sup>8</sup>They will be terrified,  
pain and anguish will grip them; they will  
writhe like a woman in labour. They will  
look at each other in bewilderment, their  
faces aflame.

3. Worldly  
militarism is  
the foretaste  
of God's final  
anger against  
all sin

**3. Worldly militarism is the foretaste of God's final anger against all sin.** The 'Day of Yahweh' is the final day of world history. All nations will be involved. Yet there are anticipations of that day. It is **always** near.

<sup>9</sup>See, the day of Yahweh is coming,  
a savage day, with wrath and fierce anger,  
to make the earth desolate  
and destroy the sinners within it.

<sup>10</sup>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.

<sup>11</sup>I will visit the world for its evil,  
the guilty for their iniquity.  
I will put an end to the arrogance of the conceited  
and will humble the pride of the tyrannical.

<sup>12</sup>I will make man scarcer than pure gold,  
more rare than the gold of Ophir.

<sup>13</sup>Therefore I will make the heavens tremble;  
and the earth will shake from its place  
at the wrath of Yahweh Almighty,  
in the day of his burning anger.

• 'Day of Yahweh'  
– the final day of  
world history –  
always near

• Under God's  
judgement the  
environment  
and universe  
suffer

• The blessings of creation are reversed

Under God's judgement the environment suffers<sup>1</sup> and even the universe beyond the earth<sup>2</sup>. The universe suffers with men and women for whom it was created. Population-figures are affected<sup>3</sup>. The blessings of creation are put into reverse.

<sup>1</sup> 13:9

<sup>2</sup> 13:10

<sup>3</sup> 13:12

4. The judgement of God is irresistible and inescapable

#### 4. The judgement of God is irresistible and inescapable.

<sup>14</sup>*Like a hunted gazelle,  
like sheep without a shepherd,  
each will return to his own people,  
each will flee to his native land.*

<sup>15</sup>*Everyone who is found will be thrust through; everyone who has to run away will fall by the sword. <sup>16</sup>Their infants will be dashed to pieces before their eyes; their houses will be looted and their wives ravished.*

• The only hope is for a Saviour from God Himself

We must remember the point of all this. Isaiah is working his way towards a description of a Saviour for all of the nations, a suffering Servant who will redeem Israel but at the same time provide a salvation for all nations. The anger of God is being revealed (right now!) against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men and women who suppress the truth in their unrighteousness. The only hope is a Saviour from God himself, the Arm of the Lord coming down to save us.

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