

Understanding Apocalyptic Language

Isaiah 13.1 The burden against Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw. 2 “Lift up a banner on the high mountain, Raise your voice to them; Wave your hand, that they may enter the gates of the nobles. 3 I have commanded My sanctified ones; I have also called My mighty ones for My anger— Those who rejoice in My exaltation.” 4 The noise of a multitude in the mountains, Like that of many people! A tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together! The LORD of hosts musters The army for battle. 5 They come from a far country, From the end of heaven — The LORD and His weapons of indignation, To destroy the whole land. 6 Wail, for the day of the LORD is at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty. 7 Therefore all hands will be limp, Every man’s heart will melt, 8 And they will be afraid. Pangs and sorrows will take hold of them; They will be in pain as a woman in childbirth; They will be amazed at one another; Their faces will be like flames. 9 Behold, the day of the LORD comes, Cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, To lay the land desolate; And He will destroy its sinners from it. 10 For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not give their light; The sun will be darkened in its going forth, And the moon will not cause its light to shine. 11 I will punish the world for its evil, And the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, And will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. 12 I will make a mortal more rare than fine gold, A man more than the golden wedge of Ophir. 13 Therefore I will shake the heavens, And the earth will move out of her place, In the wrath of the LORD of hosts And in the day of His fierce anger. 14 It shall be as the hunted gazelle, And as a sheep that no man takes up; Every man will turn to his own people, And everyone will flee to his own land. 15 Everyone who is found will be thrust through, And everyone who is captured will fall by the sword. 16 Their children also will be dashed to pieces before their eyes; Their houses will be plundered And their wives ravished. 17 Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, Who will not regard silver; And as for gold, they will not delight in it. 18 Also their bows will dash the young men to pieces, And they will have no pity on the fruit of the womb; Their eye will not spare children. 19 And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, The beauty of the Chaldeans’ pride, Will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.

► **Failure to understand** apocalyptic language is one of the main reasons why Christians get the kingdom of God _____. We think apocalypse means the _____ of the world, but it comes from the Greek and actually means an _____. God uses it to take us backstage and show us what is really going on in selected world events.

► **Examples of apocalyptic** language from the OT:

◆ 1. The rise of Israel as a nation in Isaiah 51.15-16:

15 But I am the LORD your God, Who divided the sea whose waves roared—The LORD of hosts is His name. 16 And I have put My words in your mouth; I have covered you with

the shadow of My hand, That I may plant the heavens, Lay the foundations of the earth, And say to Zion, ‘You are My people.’ ”

◆ 2. The fall of Babylon in our text from Isaiah 13.

What elements do we see?

1) Straightforward language to signal to us what God is really _____ about (vs 1a, 15-19). This prophecy was given ~ _____ BC and was fulfilled ~ _____ BC (cf. Dan 5).

2) Apocalyptic language of de-creation to signal the end of the Babylonian _____ (vs 10, 13).

3) Apocalyptic language of _____ judgment to signal God’s temporal judgment of Babylon (5-6, 9, 11).

4) The language of _____ and _____ to characterize those thru whom God will accomplish his judgment (vs 3).

◆ 3. The fall of Jerusalem as prophesied in Jeremiah 4 – 6:

Jer 4.5 Declare in Judah and proclaim in Jerusalem, and say: “Blow the trumpet in the land; Cry, ‘Gather together,’ And say, ‘Assemble yourselves, And let us go into the fortified cities.’ 6 Set up the standard toward Zion. Take refuge! Do not delay! For I will bring disaster from the north, And great destruction.” 7 The lion has come up from his thicket, And the destroyer of nations is on his way. He has gone forth from his place To make your land desolate. Your cities will be laid waste, Without inhabitant ... 23 I beheld the earth, and indeed it was without form, and void; And the heavens, they had no light. 24 I beheld the mountains, and indeed they trembled, And all the hills moved back and forth. 25 I beheld, and indeed there was no man, And all the birds of the heavens had fled. 26 I beheld, and indeed the fruitful land was a wilderness, And all its cities were broken down At

the presence of the LORD, By His fierce anger. 27 For thus says the LORD: "The whole land shall be desolate; Yet I will not make a full end. 28 For this shall the earth mourn, And the heavens above be black, Because I have spoken. I have purposed and will not relent, Nor will I turn back from it. 29 The whole city shall flee from the noise of the horsemen and bowmen. They shall go into thickets and climb up on the rocks. Every city shall be forsaken, And not a man shall dwell in it. 30 "And when you are plundered, What will you do? ... 5:15 Behold, I will bring a nation against you from afar, O house of Israel," says the LORD ...

This prophecy was given ~ _____ BC and was fulfilled
~ _____ BC (2Kg 24.10; Dan 1.1).

◆ **4. The fall of Egypt** as prophesied in Isaiah 19 – 20:

Isaiah 19.1 The burden against Egypt. Behold, the LORD rides on a swift cloud, And will come into Egypt; The idols of Egypt will totter at His presence, And the heart of Egypt will melt in its midst. ... 4 And the Egyptians I will give into the hand of a cruel master, And a fierce king will rule over them," Says the Lord, the LORD of hosts. 5 The waters will fail from the sea, And the river will be wasted and dried up. ... 15 Neither will there be any work for Egypt, Which the head or tail, Palm branch or bulrush, may do. ... 20.4 so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians as prisoners ...

This prophecy was given ~ _____ BC and was fulfilled
~ _____ BC (Isa 20:1-4).

◆ **5. The fall of Edom** as prophesied in Isaiah 34:

Isa 34.4 All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, And the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll; All their host shall fall down As the leaf falls from the vine, And as fruit falling from a fig tree. 5 "For My sword shall be bathed in heaven; Indeed it shall come down on Edom, And on the people of My curse, for judgment. 6 The sword of the LORD is filled with blood, It is made overflowing with fatness, With the blood of lambs and goats, With the fat of the kidneys of rams. For the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah, And a great slaughter in the land of Edom ... 8 For it is the day of the LORD's vengeance, The year of recompense for the cause of Zion. 9 Its streams shall be turned into pitch, And its dust into brimstone; Its land shall become burning pitch. 10 It shall not be quenched night or day; Its smoke shall ascend forever. From generation to generation it shall lie waste; No one shall pass through it forever and ever. 11 But the pelican and the porcupine shall possess it, Also the owl and the raven shall dwell in it. And He shall stretch out over it The line of confusion and the stones of emptiness ...

This prophecy was given ~ _____ BC and was fulfilled
~ _____ BC.

► **Conclusions and Applications**

◆ **1. You don't have** to understand every detail of an apocalyptic prophecy to get the _____ picture and the _____ point.

◆ **2. The key is to** _____ the straightforward language straightforwardly and the apocalyptic language in a biblically apocalyptic manner.

◆ **3. Not one of these** apocalyptic prophecies pertains to _____ judgment or the _____ of the world; they all pertain to temporal judgment that God worked in history.

◆ **4. The whole point** of apocalyptic language is to show us that God is presiding over _____, and that his judgment does not _____ until the last day.