

Isaiah 13:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And 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.

Analysis

Terror seizes Babylon's inhabitants: pangs and sorrows like a woman in labor, amazement at each other, faces aflame with shock and fear. The childbirth metaphor describes sudden, intense, unavoidable agony. 'They shall be amazed one at another' suggests mutual shock and helplessness—no one can help anyone else. 'Faces shall be as flames' indicates either shame, terror, or the glow of burning city. This depicts comprehensive panic when God's judgment strikes.

Historical Context

Fulfilled when Babylon fell to Persia (539 BC). Belshazzar's feast (Daniel 5) shows this terror—the king's face changed, joints loosened, knees knocked. The sudden conquest produced panic as prophesied. The imagery also applies to all sudden divine judgments throughout history and ultimately final judgment when terror seizes the wicked. The labor metaphor indicates unavoidable suffering with sudden onset.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does the childbirth metaphor illustrate the sudden, intense nature of divine judgment?
2. What does mutual amazement and helplessness teach about judgment's comprehensive nature?
3. How should certainty of coming judgment produce urgency in our evangelism and holy living?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּבְּקֵה לָוִן	צִיר יָם	וְחִבְלִים	וַיֵּאָחֶז וְ
And they shall be afraid	pangs	and sorrows	shall take hold
H926	H6735	H2256	H270
כַּיֶּלֶד הַ	יָחִיל וְ	אֶל אִישׁ	רֵעֵהּ
as a woman that travaileth	of them they shall be in pain	one	at another
H3205	H2342	H376	H413 H7453
וְתָמָּהּ הִוא	פְּנֵיהֶם:	לִקְהָב יָם	פְּנֵיהֶם:
they shall be amazed	their faces	shall be as flames	their faces
H8539	H6440	H3851	H6440

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 26:17 (Parallel theme): Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy sight, O LORD.

Nahum 2:10 (Parallel theme): She is empty, and void, and waste: and the heart melteth, and the knees smite together, and much pain is in all loins, and the faces of them all gather blackness.

1 Thessalonians 5:3 (Parallel theme): For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

