

Isaiah 13:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it.

Analysis

Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger. This prophetic announcement introduces one of Scripture's most sobering themes: the Day of the Lord (yom YHWH). The Hebrew word akzari (אַכְזָרִי) "cruel") describes not divine sadism but the unmitigated severity of God's judgment against sin. The dual emphasis on "wrath" (evrah, עֶבֶרָה) and "fierce anger" (charon af, חָרֹן אָף—literally "burning of nose") employs intensive Hebrew parallelism to convey the totality of divine indignation.

The phrase "to lay the land desolate" uses shamah (שָׁמַח), meaning utter devastation and horror. This prophecy had immediate application to Babylon's judgment (Isaiah 13:1-22) but extends eschatologically to the final Day of the Lord when God judges all wickedness. The comprehensive scope—"destroy the sinners thereof out of it"—reveals God's commitment to purging creation of rebellion.

This verse establishes crucial theological truths:

1. God's holiness demands judgment of sin
2. His patience, while long, has limits
3. judgment serves both punitive and purifying purposes
4. the Day of the Lord brings both terror for the wicked and vindication for the righteous.

The New Testament confirms this Day's certainty (2 Peter 3:10, Revelation 6:17) while urging repentance before it arrives.

Historical Context

Isaiah prophesied during 740-681 BCE, addressing both the immediate crisis of Assyrian aggression and the coming Babylonian exile. Chapter 13 begins Isaiah's oracles against the nations (chapters 13-23), with Babylon receiving prominence as the eventual destroyer of Jerusalem (586 BCE). Historically, Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians in 539 BCE, partially fulfilling this prophecy.

The "Day of the Lord" concept appears throughout the prophets (Joel 2:1-11, Amos 5:18-20, Zephaniah 1:14-18) as both historical judgments and eschatological consummation. Ancient Near Eastern warfare was brutal, and Isaiah's language would have resonated powerfully with audiences familiar with military devastation. The prophets consistently warned that God uses pagan nations as instruments of judgment, then judges those nations for their pride and cruelty.

For Isaiah's original audience, this oracle provided both warning and hope: warning to Judah not to trust in alliances with Babylon, and hope that their future oppressor would ultimately face divine retribution. The prophecy's dual fulfillment pattern—near (Babylon's fall) and far (final judgment)—characterizes much prophetic literature.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does the certainty of God's judgment against sin shape your understanding of His holiness and justice?

2. What does this passage reveal about God's patience and the urgency of repentance before judgment comes?
3. How should the reality of the Day of the Lord influence your daily priorities, relationships, and proclamation of the gospel?
4. In what ways does God's judgment against Babylon demonstrate His sovereignty over all nations and human empires?
5. How does understanding both the historical and eschatological dimensions of this prophecy deepen your appreciation for God's faithfulness to His Word?

Interlinear Text

וְיֹום הַהִיא	יְהוָה	וְאֵצֶר יְמִינָה	וְאֵצֶר הַמִּזְרָח
H2009			
Behold the day	of the LORD	cometh	cruel
H3117	H3068	H935	H394
וְאֵצֶר יְמִינָה	וְאֵצֶר הַמִּזְרָח	לְשָׁמֶן הַמִּזְרָח	לְשָׁמֶן הַיְמִינָה
and fierce	anger	to lay	the land
H2740	H639	H7760	H776
לְשָׁמֶן הַיְמִינָה	לְשָׁמֶן הַמִּזְרָח	מְתַבֵּה	מְתַבֵּה
and he shall destroy			
H8045			H4480

Additional Cross-References

Nahum 1:6 (Parallel theme): Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.

Malachi 4:1 (References Lord): For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

Isaiah 13:6 (References Lord): Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty.

Psalms 104:35 (Sin): Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless thou the LORD, O my soul. Praise ye the LORD.

Nahum 1:2 (Judgment): God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies.

Proverbs 2:22 (Parallel theme): But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it.

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