

# Isaiah 23:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Behold the land of the Chaldeans; this people was not, till the Assyrian founded it for them that dwell in the wilderness: they set up the towers thereof, they raised up the palaces thereof; and he brought it to ruin.

## Analysis

**Behold the land of the Chaldeans; this people was not**—The Chaldeans (כַּשְׁדִּים, Kasdim) were relative newcomers to power. The phrase 'was not' (lo hayah) means they were insignificant, not a recognized nation. **Till the Assyrian founded it for them that dwell in the wilderness**—This historical note is debated: some see it as Assyria founding what would become Babylon's power; others as Assyria's attempt to settle nomadic Aramean tribes. Either way, the point is clear: upstart Chaldeans, recently organized, now destroy ancient Tyre.

**They set up the towers thereof, they raised up the palaces thereof; and he brought it to ruin**—The 'they/he' confusion in Hebrew manuscripts reflects complex fulfillment: Assyria weakened Tyre; Babylon (Chaldean) destroyed her; Alexander (Greek) finished the work. The theological lesson transcends historical details: God raises up new powers to judge old powers. No empire is permanent. Those who trust in antiquity, cultural achievement, or past glory miss the point—all human kingdoms serve God's purposes and are discarded when that purpose is fulfilled. Babylon itself would fall to Persia (Isaiah 21); Persia to Greece; Greece to Rome; Rome to barbarians. Only God's kingdom endures forever (Daniel 2:44).

## Historical Context

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The Neo-Babylonian (Chaldean) Empire under Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar (626-539 BC) rose suddenly after Assyria's collapse. Within decades, this 'insignificant' people dominated the ancient Near East. Their rapid rise and fall (less than a century of dominance) illustrates the transience of human empires—a theme Daniel's visions elaborate.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

**Hebrews 11:1** — Definition of faith

**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

**Psalms 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

## Study Questions

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1. How does the rise and fall of empires demonstrate that political power is temporary and serves God's larger purposes?
2. What comfort and warning does this verse provide: comfort that oppressive powers won't last; warning that judgment comes from unexpected quarters?
3. How should the temporary nature of all human governments shape Christian political engagement and expectations?

## Interlinear Text

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הָאָל	אֶרֶץ	כַּשְׁדִּים	זֶה	הָעָם	לֹא	הָיָה
H2005	<b>Behold the land</b>	<b>of the Chaldeans</b>	H2088	<b>this people</b>	H3808	H1961
	H776	H3778		H5971		
	אֲשֶׁר	יָסַדְהָ	לְצִיִּים		הֵקִי	יָמֵהֶם
	<b>was not till the Assyrian</b>	<b>founded</b>	<b>it for them that dwell in the wilderness</b>		<b>they set up</b>	
	H804	H3245	H6728		H6965	
בְּחִינֵי	עוֹזְרוֹ	אֲרָמְנוֹתַיָּה	שָׁמָּה		לְמַפְלָה:	
<b>the towers</b>	<b>thereof they raised up</b>	<b>the palaces</b>	<b>thereof and he brought</b>		<b>it to ruin</b>	
H971	H6209	H759	H7760		H4654	

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