

Lesson 9
Isaiah 12:1 – 13:22
A Song of Salvation and the Babylon Burden

Memory verse: “Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.” John 15:4 NIV

Isaiah chapter 11 spoke powerfully of the reign of the Messiah as king over all the earth. Chapter 12 is psalm of praise and redemption which concludes the section dealing with Israel's choice between trusting God or trusting Assyria (7:1—12:6). It expresses the trust in God that Isaiah's revelations in this section encouraged and that the remnant will sing "in that day" of Messiah's triumph which the prophet anticipated in his own (cf. Exod. 15) at the end of chapter 11.

Yet, this song speaks about the heart of the one that has surrendered to the Messiah as king, and enjoys the benefits of His reign. Here, he decides to praise the LORD, even though he has felt the LORD's anger against him.

Under the New Covenant, does God get angry with us? There is a sense in which all the anger and wrath of God against us was poured out upon the Son of God on the cross. In this sense, there is no more anger from God towards us, because His anger has been “exhausted.” But there is also a sense in which we receive chastening or discipline from the LORD, which certainly feels like His anger. This chastening feels unpleasant (Hebrews 11:11), but it really shows the fatherly love of God instead of His hatred. How glorious when the anger of God is turned away! In the larger sense, His anger is turned away because of what Jesus did on the cross. Jesus put Himself in between us and the anger of the LORD, and receiving that anger in Himself, He turned away God's anger!

The section preceding it shows how King Ahaz trusted in Assyria and experienced destruction (chapters 7 to 12). The section following it shows how King Hezekiah trusted in the Lord and experienced deliverance (chapters. 36 to 39). In this present section, the prophet expanded his perspective from Israel to include the world. The God of Israel is also Lord of the nations. This whole section of the book expands the idea that all the kingdoms of the world will become the kingdom of God and His Christ, Immanuel (cf. Dan. 2:44)

Isaiah 13 begins a section ending at Isaiah 23:18 where Isaiah prophesies against the nations. There are ten prophecies against the nations (Isa. 13:1; 14:28; 15:1; 17:1; 19:1; 21:1, 11, 13; 22:1; 23:1). It is fitting for judgment to begin at the house of God, so the LORD has first spoken to Israel and Judah. But now, the LORD speaks against the nations, beginning with Babylon.

Isaiah finished his prophetic career in 685 B.C., almost 100 years before Judah finally fell before the Babylonian Empire (586 B.C.). At the time of this prophecy, Babylon was a significant nation, but they were definitely behind the Assyrian Empire in status. Yet the LORD who knows the end of all things can speak of the judgment on the pride of Babylon hundreds of years before the judgment comes.

The word Babel means “gateway to a god” and sounds like the Hebrew word balal, which means “confusion” (Gen. 10:8–10; 11:1–9). In Scripture, Babylon symbolizes the world system man has built in defiance of God. Jerusalem and Babylon are contrasting cities: One is the chosen city of God, the other the wicked city of man. The city of God will last forever, but the rebellious city of man will ultimately be destroyed (Rev. 14:8; 16:19; 17–18). Babylon is mentioned 287 times in the Scriptures, more than any other city except Jerusalem. Babylon was a literal city on the Euphrates river; right after the flood (Genesis 11:1-10). Babylon was later the capitol of the empire that cruelly conquered Judah.

Scripture reading: Isaiah Chapter 12

Things to learn: 1) Trust in God's favour 2) A true worshipper's response 3) Divine Judgment of Babylon

Discussion Questions:

Q1. In what ways could the nation of Israel be encouraged by the song in chapter 12?

Q2. How should worshippers today apply this song of salvation (Isaiah 12)?

Q3. In Isaiah 13:1, the word “burden” (NKJV) is used. In the prophets, a burden is a “heavy” message of weighty importance, heavy in the sense that it produces sorrow or grief. Why is Isaiah burdened for Babylon?