

21:1 The oracle concerning the wilderness of the sea.

J. Vernon McGee says about this phrase “the wilderness of the sea” because he ties it in with John’s description of Mystery Babylon in Revelation 17 and 18.

McGee - Isa 21:1 ... Before Babylon became a world power, her doom was again predicted. We have already seen that. The first burden in chapters 13-14 was against Babylon. Babylon became so awe-inspiring and frightful, and represented so much in Scripture, that we have this further word concerning its doom. It was the first place of united rebellion against God at the Tower of Babel, and it represents the last stronghold of rebellion against God. We find this in Revelation 17 and 18. Religious Babylon is presented in Revelation 17, and commercial Babylon is set forth in Revelation 18.

The expression, “desert of the sea,” is a paradoxical phrase. Babylon was geographically located on a great desert plain beside the Euphrates River. It was irrigated by canals from the river. Jeremiah gives this description of Babylon, “O thou that dwellest upon many waters, abundant in treasures, thine end is come, and the measure of thy covetousness” (Jer 51:13). The desert and the sea form a weird amalgamation here. This same fusion of desert and sea is made by John in Revelation. “So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns” (Rev 17:3). This is the desert where John beheld the mystery Babylon: “... Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters” (Rev 17:1). It was in the desert that John saw the “many waters.” These two verses are symbolic, but they carry through the same pattern. We will find it again in Jeremiah.

Babylon, with its glitter and glamour and as the fountainhead of idolatry and false religion, was a mirage upon the desert. Isn’t this tremendous! – “desert of the sea” – what a picture! Babylon was not a wonderful place. It was a mirage in the desert. It wasn’t a spring or an oasis at all, but a place filled with idols and false religion. There was no life-giving water there for the souls of men. This is something that every pastor, every radio preacher, every church, and every church member ought to turn over in his mind. Is my church or am I a life-giving fountain, or am I just a mirage upon the desert of life?

The Bible Knowledge Commentary has a different view in that he applies the destruction of Babylon to the “old” Babylonian Empire rather than the Neo-Babylonian Empire of which Nebuchadnezzar was the “head of gold” (see Daniel 2:28). Read what he says, bearing in mind the Jewish understanding of prophecy that there are “many fulfilments but one ultimate fulfilment” and “prophecy is pattern”.

Isa 21:1 Many interpreters assume that since Elam (Isa 21:2), Media (Isa 21:2), and Babylon (Isa 21:9) are mentioned, Isaiah must have been referring to the fall of Babylon to the Medo-Persian Empire in 539 B.C. However, passages referring to the fall of Babylon in 539 indicate that it was something about which Israel was to rejoice (because it soon resulted in the return of the Jews to their homeland), whereas this fall of Babylon was terrifying, something to be feared. “The Desert by the Sea” (Isa 21:1) most likely refers to the area around the gulf known today as the Persian Gulf, that is, territory near Babylon.

As already mentioned, in Isaiah’s previous oracles (chaps. 13-20) he wrote of the Assyrian incursion into other countries in the ancient world and the effects it had on the Syro-Palestine region. In 722 B.C. a Chaldean prince from the Persian Gulf region, named Marduk-apal-iddina (called Merodach-Baladan in Isa 39:1), revolted against Assyria, captured Babylon, and was crowned king of Babylon. Elam, a nation northeast of Babylon, supported his revolt. Not till 710 B.C. was Sargon able to evict Marduk-apal-iddina from Babylon. After the death of Sargon in 705 Marduk-apal-iddina along with Elamite troops revolted against Sennacherib. In 702 Sennacherib finally defeated him (and Elam) and devastated his home area around the Persian Gulf. Undoubtedly Isaiah was prophesying about this situation. Hezekiah, king of Judah, and other members of his royal court felt that Marduk-apal-iddina would be able to break the strength of the Assyrian Empire. But Isaiah was warning them that this would not happen.

In this oracle... Isaiah pictured an invasion of the Desert by the Sea (i.e., Babylon by the Persian Gulf) as being like an approaching desert storm. The invader was probably Marduk-apal-iddina (Mero-dach-Baladan) who arose suddenly from the desert regions to revolt against Assyria.

JFB - **dealeth treacher-ously** - referring to the *military* stratagem employed by Cyrus in taking Babylon. It may be translated, "is repaid with treachery"; then the subject of the verb is *Babylon*. She is repaid in her own coin; Isa_33:1; Hab_2:8, favor this.

The Oracle about the wilderness of the Sea (21:1-10)

21:1 The oracle concerning the wilderness of the sea.

MH - Babylon is here called the *desert or plain of the sea*; for it was a flat country, and full of lakes, or loughs (as they call them in Ireland), like little seas, and was

21:2 abundantly watered with the many streams of the river Euphrates. JFB - until Semiramis raised great dams against it. Cyrus removed these dykes, and so converted the whole country again into a vast desert marsh.

21:3 JFB whirlwinds in the south - (Job_37:9; Zec_9:14). The south wind comes upon Babylon from the deserts of Arabia, and its violence is the greater from its course being unbroken along the plain (Job_1:19).

21:4 (Job_1:19).

As windstorms in the Negev sweep on,
It comes from the wilderness, from a terrifying land.

A harsh vision has been shown to me;
The treacherous one still deals treacherously, and the destroyer still destroys.

Go up, Elam, lay siege, Media;

I have made an end of all the groaning she has caused.

For this reason my loins are full of anguish;
Pains have seized me like the pains of a woman in labor.

I am so bewildered I cannot hear, so terrified I cannot see.

My mind reels, horror overwhelms me;

The twilight I longed for has been turned for me into trembling.

21:5 They set the table, they spread out the cloth, they eat, they drink;

"Rise up, captains, oil the shields," Cf. Daniel 5:1-4

JFB - **Elam** — a province of Persia, the original place of their settlement (Gen_10:22), east of the Euphrates. The name "Persia" was not in use until the captivity; it means a "horseman"; Cyrus first trained the Persians in horsemanship. It is a mark of authenticity that the name is not found before Daniel and Ezekiel [Bochart].

JFB - Isaiah imagines himself among the exiles in Babylon and cannot help feeling moved by the calamities which come on it. So for Moab (Isa_15:5; 16:11).

BKC - Isa 21:2 God gave Isaiah a **vision** about the Babylonian uprising against Assyria. The prophet heard the battle cry for **Elam** and **Media** (north of Elam) to attack Babylon and free it from Assyria. I refers to the invader in the vision...; he said he would stop the **groaning... caused by the traitor**, the Assyrian Empire which had caused most nations in the region to "groan" under the devastation caused by her conquests. Apparently Marduk-apal-iddina felt that he would be able to stop the Assyrian advance and thereby liberate the entire region.

Isa 21:3-5 Isaiah now contrasted his feelings with the actions of those around him. Because of this prophecy he was about to utter he was in **pain like that of a woman in labor**, a simile often used by the prophets (see ... Isa_13:8 and cf. 26:17). **Bewildered**, he trembled and was in a state of **horror** (cf. Isa_15:5-7; 22:4). **By contrast**, the people around him were living as if nothing was happening. They continued in a festive attitude (Isa_21:5) not realizing the implications of what was happening. Perhaps Isaiah had in mind the feasting which would be done when Marduk-apal-iddina's (Merodach-Bala-dan's) men came to Jerusalem (Isa_39:1-8). Isaiah realized that Babylon under Marduk-apal-iddina's control could not change what God had ordained. So rather than eating they should have prepared for battle, implied by the words **oil the shields**. Shields made of animal skins needed to be rubbed with olive oil to prevent their cracking.

Barnes - Isa 21:5 Prepare the table - This verse is one of the most striking and remarkable that occurs in this prophecy, or indeed in any part of Isaiah. It is language supposed to be spoken in Babylon. The first direction - perhaps supposed to be that of the king - is to prepare the table for the feast. Then follows a direction to set a watch - to make the city safe, so that they might revel without fear. Then a command to eat and drink: and then immediately a sudden order, as if alarmed at an unexpected attack, to arise and anoint the shield, and to prepare for a defense. The "table" here refers to a feast - that impious feast mentioned in Dan. 5 in the night in which Babylon was taken, and Belshazzar slain. Herodotus (i. 195), Xenophon (Cyr. 7, 5), and Daniel (Dan. 5) all agree in the account that Babylon was taken in the night in which the king and his nobles were engaged in feasting and revelry. The words of Xenophon are, "But Cyrus, when he heard that there was to be such a feast in Babylon, in which all the Babylonians would drink and revel through the whole night, on that night, as soon as it began to grow dark, taking many people, opened the dams into the river; that is, he opened the dykes which had been made by Semiramis and her successors to confine the waters of the Euphrates to one channel, and suffered the waters of the Euphrates again to flow over the country so that he could enter Babylon beneath its wall in the channel of the river. Xenophon has also given the address of Cyrus to the soldiers. 'Now,' says he, 'let us go against them. Many of them are asleep; many of them are intoxicated; and all of them are unfit for battle (ασυντακτοι असुताकौ). Herodotus says (i. 191), 'It was a day of festivity among them, and while the citizens were engaged in dance and merriment, Babylon was, for the first time, thus taken.' Compare... Dan. 5.

Watch in the watch-tower - place a guard so that the city shall be secure. Babylon had on its walls many "towers," placed at convenient distances (see... Isa. 13), in which guards were stationed to defend the city, and to give the alarm on any approach of an enemy. Xenophon has given a similar account of the taking of the city: 'They having arranged their guards, drank until light: ...

Eat, drink - Give yourselves to revelry during the night (see Dan. 5)

Arise, ye princes - This language indicates sudden alarm. It is the language either of the prophet, or more probably of the king of Babylon, alarmed at the sudden approach of the enemy, and calling upon his nobles to arm themselves and make a defense. The army of Cyrus entered Babylon by two divisions - one on the north where the waters of the Euphrates entered the city, and the other by the channel of the Euphrates on the south. Knowing that the city was given up to revelry on that night, they had agreed to imitate the sound of the revellers until they should assemble around the royal palace in the center of the city. They did so. When the king heard the noise, supposing that it was the sound of a drunken mob, he ordered the gates of the palace to be opened to ascertain the cause of the disturbance. When they were thus opened, the army of Cyrus rushed in, and made an immediate attack on all who were within. It is to this moment that we may suppose the prophet here refers, when the king, aroused and alarmed, would call on his nobles to arm themselves for battle (see Jahns' *Hebrew Common-wealth*, p. 153, Ed. Andover, 1828).

Anoint the shield - That is, prepare for battle. Gesenius supposes that this means to rub over the shield with oil to make the leather more supple and impenetrable (compare 2Sa_1:21). The Chaldee renders it, 'Fit, and polish your arms.' The Septuagint, 'Prepare shields.' Shields were instruments of defense prepared to ward off the spears and arrows of an enemy in battle. They were usually made of a rim of brass or wood, and over this was drawn a covering of the skin of an ox or other animal in the manner of a drum-head with us. Occasionally the hide of a rhinoceros or an elephant was used. Burckhardt ("Travels in Nubia") says that the Nubians use the hide of the hippopotamus for the making of shields. But whatever skin might be used, it was necessary occasionally to rub it over with oil lest it should become hard, and crack, or lest it should become so rigid that an arrow or a sword would easily break through it. Jarchi says, that 'shields were made of skin, and that they anointed them with the oil of olive.' The sense is, 'Prepare your arms! Make ready for battle!'



The Oracle about the wilderness of the Sea (21:1-10)

21:6 **For thus** the Lord says to me,
"Go, station the lookout, let him report what he sees."

21:7 **"When** he sees riders, horsemen in pairs,
 A train of donkeys, a train of camels,
Let him pay close attention, very close attention."

21:8 **Then** the lookout called,
"O Lord, I stand **continually by day** on the watchtower,
 And I am stationed **every night** at my guard post.

21:9 **"Now behold,** here comes a troop of riders, horsemen in pairs."
 And one answered and said, **"Fallen, fallen is Babylon;**
 And all the **images** of her gods are shattered on the ground."

21:10 **O my threshed people,** and **my afflicted of the threshing floor!**
What I have heard from the LORD of hosts,
The God of Israel, I make known to you.

BKC - Isa 21:6-10 God told Isaiah to have someone be on the **lookout** for the battle between Babylon and Assyria. The watchman was to look for anyone who would come his way to **report** on the battle (Isa_21:6-7). The watchman looked **day after day** till finally someone came with the message that **Babylon** had **fallen** and **its gods** lay **shattered on the ground** (Isa_21:9). The emotional impact of this message on the people of Judah, who were hoping Babylon's revolt would be successful, would be stunning. They had hoped that the alliance Hezekiah made with Babylon would break the Assyrian domination. But it was not to be. Sennacherib pushed Marduk-apal-iddina out of Babylon and as stated earlier..., the Assyrian king eventually destroyed the city in 689 B.C. Babylon's fall seemed like the last straw. Now no one could stop the Assyrian Empire. So Judah felt **crushed** emotionally like grain **on the threshing floor** (cf. Jer_51:33).

Isaiah reiterated that his message was from **God**. He was only telling what he had **heard from the Lord Almighty** (cf. comments on Isa_1:9). Judah must not rely on the Babylonians to save them. This man from the Desert by the Sea (Marduk-apal-iddina) would not be successful.

JFB - fallen...fallen - The repetition expresses emphasis and certainty (Psa_92:9; 93:3; compare Jer_51:8; Rev_18:2).

images — Bel, Merodach, etc. (Jer_50:2; 51:44, 52). The Persians had no images, temples, or altars, and charged the makers of such with madness [Herodotus 1.131]; therefore they dashed the Babylonian "images broken unto the ground."

JFB - Hebrew, "my son of the floor," that is, my people, treated as corn laid on the floor for threshing; implying, too, that by affliction, a remnant (grain) would be separated from the ungodly (chaff) [Maurer]. Horsley translates, "O thou object of my unremitting prophetic pains." See Isa_28:27, 28.

Gill - 21:8 And he cried, a lion (KJV),.... That is, the watchman cried, a lion, or that he saw a lion; not Uriah the priest, as the Septuagint; nor Habakkuk, as some Jewish writers; but Cyrus, at the head of the Persian and Median armies, compared to a lion for his fierceness, courage, and strength; see 2Ti_4:17 a type of Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, by whom antichrist, or mystical Babylon, will be destroyed, Rev_5:5. The Targum is, "the prophet said, the voice of armies, coming with coats of mail, as a lion."

Aben Ezra interprets it, the watchman cried as a lion, with a great voice; upon sight of the chariots and horsemen, he lifted up his voice, and roared like a lion, to express the terror he was in, and the greatness of the calamity that was coming upon the city.



21:11 The oracle concerning Edom.
 One keeps calling to me from Seir,
 "Watchman, how far gone is the night?
 Watchman, how far gone is the night?"

21:12 The watchman says,
 "Morning comes but also night.
 If you would inquire, inquire;
Come back again.

BKC - Isa 21:11-12 Dumah is Idumea, or Edom. An anxious Edomite asks the watchman how far gone the night is, that is, if the Assyrian menace is almost over. The answer is: The night of your present turmoil will end, and a new day will follow, but soon another night will come. If you seek a comforting answer to your anxious inquiries, you must first "return," a word which also means "repent." Only then will the answer be such as you hoped for; the night of your suffering will end, and a new bright morning of deliverance will dawn upon you.

JFB - Watchman — the prophet (Isa_62:6; Jer_6:17), so called, because, like a watchman on the lookout from a tower, he announces future events which he sees in prophetic vision (Hab_2:1, 2).

what of the night - What tidings have you to give as to the state of the night? Rather, "What remains of the night?" How much of it is past? [Maurer]. "Night" means calamity (Job_35:10; Mic_3:6), which, then, in the wars between Egypt and Assyria, pressed sore on Edom; or on Judah (if, as Barnes thinks, the question is asked in mockery of the suffering Jews in Babylon). The repetition of the question marks, in the former view, the anxiety of the Idumeans.

Barnes - The prophet is represented as having been placed on a watch-tower long and anxiously looking for the issue. It is night; that is, it is a time of calamity, darkness, and distress. In this state of darkness and obscurity, someone is represented as calling to the prophet from Idumea, and tauntingly inquiring, what of the night, or what the prospect was. He asks, whether there was any prospect of deliverance; or whether these calamities were to continue, and perhaps whether Idumea was also to be involved in them with the suffering Jews. To this the prophet answers, that the morning began to dawn - that there was a prospect of deliverance. But he adds that calamity was also coming; calamity probably to the nation that made the inquiry - to the land of Idumea - "perhaps" calamity that should follow the deliverance of the Hebrew captives, who would thus be enabled to inflict vengeance on Edom, and to overwhelm it in punishment. The morning dawns, says the watchman; but there is darkness still beyond. Light is coming - but there is night also: light for us - darkness for you.

This interpretation is strengthened by a remarkable coincidence...in the 137th Psalm. The irritated and excited feelings of the captive Jews against Edom; their indignation at the course which Edom pursued when Jerusalem was destroyed; and their desire of vengeance, are all there strongly depicted, and accord with this interpretation, which supposes the prophet to say that the glad morning of the deliverance of the "Jews" would be succeeded by a dark night to the taunting Idumean. The feelings of the captured and exiled Jews were expressed in the following language in Babylon Psa_137:7:

*Remember, O Jehovah, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem;
 Who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation.*

That is, we desire vengeance on Idumea, who joined with our enemies when Jerusalem was destroyed; and when Jerusalem shall be again rebuilt, we pray that they may be remembered, and that punishment may be inflicted on them for exulting over our calamities. The watchman adds, that if the Idumean was disposed to inquire further, he could. The result could be easily ascertained. It was clear, and the watchman would be disposed to give the information. But he adds, 'return, come;' perhaps meaning, 'repent; then come and receive an answer;' denoting that if the Idumeans "wished" a favorable answer, they should repent of their treatment of the Jews in their calamities, and that "then" a condition of safety and prosperity would be promised them.

The Oracle about Arabia (21:13-17)

21:13 The oracle about Arabia.

In the thickets of Arabia you must spend **the night**,
O caravans of Dedanites.

21:14 **Bring water for the thirsty**,

O inhabitants of the land of Tema,
Meet the fugitive with bread.

21:15 **For they have fled from the swords**,
From the drawn sword, and from the bent bow,
And from the press of battle.

21:16 **For thus** the Lord said to me, "**In a year**, as a hired man would count it, all the
splendor of Kedar will terminate;

Isaiah 60:1-7

21:17 and the remainder of the number of bowmen, the mighty men of the sons of Kedar,
will be few; **for the LORD God of Israel has spoken.**"

BKC - Isa 21:13-17 The Assyrian threat is the background of this **oracle**...too. The **Dedanites** (Isa_21:13) were a tribe from southern Arabia. **Tema** (Isa_21:14; cf. Job_6:19; Jer_25:23) was a well-known oasis in northwestern Arabia, and **Kedar** (Isa_21:16-17; cf. 42:11) was in northern Arabia. This oracle discusses the difficult times the people of **Arabia** would soon experience at the hands of the Assyrians.

JFB - Tema - a kindred tribe: an oasis in that region (Jer_25:23). The Temean give water to the faint and thirsting Dedanites; the greatest act of hospitality in the burning lands of the East, where water is so scarce. (And)... anticipated the wants of the fugitive Dedanites by supplying bread (Gen_14:18).

McGee - Isa 21:13 BURDEN OF ARABIA - "Arabia" seems clear enough, but again this is a word with a double meaning. It can be made to mean *evening* by changing the vowel points. The Hebrew language is a language of consonants with no vowels. Instead it had vowel points, which are little marks above the consonants. Scholars have added vowels to the Hebrew words to make them more readable. In this verse the meaning is quite obvious: *it was evening in the history of Arabia. It was later than they thought.* Arabia was the land of the Ishmaelites, the Bedouin tribes of the desert – the modern Arabs. It is interesting that God speaks of them. Abraham's sons, Ishmael and Isaac, never did get along. Their descendants don't get along today either. The Arabs and the Jews are still at each other's throats. If Abraham could see what is going on now, I wonder if he would think the sin he committed was a small sin. My friend, sin never ceases working itself out in the human story.

Isa 21:14-16 There was a coming judgment upon this land and its people. This chapter of poetic beauty and heart sorrow should not end on this note. It may be "evening" here, but God's day is reckoned "the evening and the morning" – "...the evening and the morning were the first day" (Gen_1:5).

The morning is coming; the night of weeping will soon be over, and the new day will dawn. Man's evening of failure, sin, and darkness will end, and God's morning will be ushered in by the coming of the Sun of Righteousness.

BKC - Within one year Kedar's pomp would end (Kedar was known for its tents, Psa_120:5; Son_1:5; also cf. Jer_49:28-29, which were a beautiful black). **The warriors of Kedar** would experience a great defeat (Isa_21:16-17). The Arabians would be fugitives, running for their lives from the sword. The oracle would be fulfilled, for **the Lord, the God of Israel**, had spoken (Isa_21:17). In 715 Sargon II wrote that he had defeated a number of Arabian tribes and had them deported to Samaria.



The Oracle concerning the Valley of Vision (Judah) (22:1-14)

22:1 The oracle concerning the valley of vision.

What is the matter with you now, that you have all gone up to the housetops?

22:2 You who were full of noise,
You boisterous town, you exultant city;

Your slain were not slain with the sword,
Nor did they die in battle.

22:3 All your rulers have fled together,
And have been captured without the bow;
All of you who were found were taken captive together,
Though they had fled far away.

22:4 Therefore I say, "Turn your eyes away from me,
Let me weep bitterly,
Do not try to comfort me concerning the destruction of the daughter of my people."

MH - Fittingly enough is Jerusalem called a valley... But most emphatically is it called a *valley of vision* because there God was known and his name was great, there the prophets were made acquainted with his mind by visions, and there the people saw the goings of their God and King in his sanctuary. Babylon, being a stranger to God, though rich and great, was called the desert of the sea; but Jerusalem, being entrusted with his oracles, is a valley of vision. Blessed are their eyes, for they see, and they have seers by office among them.

Gill - a tumultuous city; through the throng of people, and the noise of thorn: a joyous city; some on business, others on pleasure; some hurrying from place to place about their trade and commerce, and others amusing themselves with pastime, mirth, and jollity; which is commonly the case of populous cities in prosperity. This had been Jerusalem's case, but now it was otherwise.

BKC - Isa 22:1-4 It is not certain which Assyrian invasion Isaiah was speaking of in these verses. Perhaps it was the invasion of Sennacherib, who surrounded Jerusalem in 701 B.C. (chaps. 36-37). From God's perspective the purpose of that invasion was to encourage Judah to turn to Him and repent of her sinful ways. Unfortunately the people did not respond positively to the invasion and used it as a time for revelry (Isa 22:2) and for shoring up the city's defenses (Isa 22:8-11).

This oracle...pertains to the **Valley of Vision** (cf. Isa 22:5). Often Jerusalem is referred to as a mountain (e.g., Mount Zion), but here the city is called a valley. This also fits because a valley – the Kidron – runs between two hills directly east of the city. From this city God was revealing Himself to Isaiah; hence it was called the Valley of Vision. Jerusalem was filled with people (in **commotion** and **tumult**; cf. Isa 22:5) from the surrounding towns and villages in Judah. (Sennacherib wrote that he had captured 46 towns of Judah.) The important people (**leaders**) had escaped but were **captured** (v. 3) by the Assyrians. People still inside the city of Jerusalem went **up on the flat housetops** (v. 1) to observe the enemy outside the city walls. Because the Assyrian advance had caused the **destruction** of many of Isaiah's **people** (Isa 22:4), he lamented....

JFB - *Prophecy as to an attack on Jerusalem.*

That by Sennacherib, in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah; Isa 22:8-11, the preparations for defense and securing of water exactly answer to those in 2Ch 32:4, 5, 30. "Shebna," tor (Isa 22:15), was scribe at this time (Isa 36:3) [Maurer]. The language of Isa 22:12-14, to the infidelity and consequent utter ruin of the Jews, seems rather to foreshadow the destruction by Nebuchadnezzar in Zedekiah's reign, and cannot be restricted to Hezekiah's time [Lowth].

Gill - **look away from me**; turn away from me, look another way; cease from me, let me alone; leave me to myself, that I may weep in secret, take my fill of sorrow, and give full vent to it: **I will weep bitterly**; or, "I will be bitter", or, "bitter myself in weeping"; it denotes the **vehemence of his grief, the greatness of his sorrow, and the strength of his passion**: **labour not to comfort me**; make use of no arguments to persuade me to lay aside my mourning; do not be urgent and importunate with me to receive consolation, for my soul refuses to be comforted: **because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people**; his countrymen, which were as dear to him as a daughter to a tender parent, now spoiled, plundered, and made desolate by the ravages of the enemy, in many cities of Judea.



The Oracle concerning the Valley of Vision (Judah) (22:1-14)

22:5

For the Lord GOD of hosts has a day of panic, subjugation, and confusion

In the valley of vision,

A breaking down of walls

And a crying to the mountain.

22:6

And Elam took up the quiver

With the chariots, infantry, and horsemen;

And Kir uncovered the shield.

22:7

Then your choicest valleys were full of chariots,

And the horsemen took up fixed positions at the gate.

22:8

And He removed the defense of Judah.

Gill - 22:5 For *it is a day of trouble*,.... To Hezekiah, and also Jerusalem, and all the inhabitants of the land: **and of treading down**; the people of it by Sennacherib's army, like mire in the streets, when their cities were taken by him: **and of perplexity by the Lord of hosts in the valley of vision**; in Jerusalem, besieged, and threatened with desolation; which threw the king and his nobles, and all the inhabitants, into the utmost perplexity, confusion, and distress; and all this was not merely from men, nor was it by chance, but by the permission and appointment of God, to humble his people for their sins, and bring them to a sense and acknowledgment of them: **breaking down the walls**: of the fenced cities, with their battering rams, at the time they besieged and took them, 2Ki_18:13, **and of crying to the mountains**: looking and running to them for help and succour, for shelter and protection; and crying so loud, by reason of their distress, as that it reached the distant mountains, and made them echo with it.

BKC - Isa 22:5-8 Jerusalem was being besieged and the people inside the walls could do nothing about it. The people realized that the enemy's advancing to the very walls of Jerusalem was a day of judgment brought on by the Lord, the Lord Almighty (cf. Isa_22:12, 14-15, 25). The attack was not happenstance; it had come because of the people's disobedience (cf. Isa_22:12-14). In the city people were in **tumult** and **terror** as they saw the enemy camped outside waiting for an opportunity to get inside to sack and burn the city (Isa_22:5). The Hebrew words for "tumult," **trampling**, and "terror" sound much alike. They are *mehumah*, *mebusah*, and *mebukah*. Soldiers from **Elam**, east of Assyria with its capital at Susa, and **Kir**, perhaps an Assyrian province (2Ki_16:9; Amo_1:5; 9:7), **joined the Assyrian warriors**. Perhaps Isaiah mentioned these two areas of the Assyrian Empire to point out (by a figure of speech known as a merism) that troops from all over the empire were now gathered at Jerusalem's very door. **Enemy chariots** were in the **valleys** around Jerusalem, and **at the city gates** enemy **horsemen** were ready to attack (Isa_22:7). Since Judah was defenseless, this was certainly a frightening time!

JFB - 22:6 Elam - the country stretching east from the Lower Tigris, answering to what was afterwards called Persia... Later, Elam was a province of Persia (Ezr_4:9). In Sennacherib's time, Elam was subject to Assyria (2Ki_18:11), and so furnished a contingent to its invading armies. Famed for the bow (Isa_13:18; Jer_49:35), in which the Ethiopians alone excelled them.

with chariots of men and horsemen - that is, they used the bow both *in* chariots and on horseback. "Chariots of men," that is, chariots in which men are borne, war chariots (compare Isa_21:7; 9).

Kir - another people subject to Assyria (2Ki_16:9); the region about the river Kur, between the Caspian and Black Seas.

uncovered - took off for the battle the leather covering of the shield, intended to protect the embossed figures on it from dust or injury during the march. "The quiver" and "the shield" express two classes - light and heavy armed troops.

JFB - 22:7 valleys - east, north, and south of Jerusalem: Hinnom on the south side was the richest valley.

in array at the gate — Rab-shakeh stood at the upper pool close to the city (Isa_36:11-13).

22:8 he discovered the covering - rather, "the veil of Judah shall be taken off" [Horsley]: figuratively for, exposing to shame as a captive (Isa_47:3; Nah_3:5). Sennacherib dismantled all "the defended cities of Judah" (Isa_36:1).

The Oracle concerning the Valley of Vision (Judah) (22:1-14)

In that day you depended on the weapons of the house of the forest,

22:9 And you saw that the breaches in the wall of the city of David were many;

And you collected the waters of the lower pool.

22:10 **Then** you counted the houses of Jerusalem,

And you tore down houses to fortify the wall.

22:11 And **you made a reservoir** between the two walls

For the waters of the old pool.

But you did not depend on Him who made it,

Nor did you take into consideration Him who planned it long ago.

JFB - **thou didst look** - rather, "thou shalt look." **house of ... forest** - The house of armory built of cedar from the forest of Lebanon by Solomon, on a slope of Zion called Ophel (1Ki_7:2; 10:17; Neh_3:19). Isaiah says (Isa_22:8-13) his countrymen will look to their own strength to defend themselves, while others of them will drown their sorrows as to their country in feasting, but none will look to Jehovah.

BKC - Isa 22:8-11 One would think that in such a precarious position the nation would turn back to God and repent. Obviously the city could not deliver itself (Isa_22:8). However, in their sinful condition the people still tried to do things their own way. Rather than count on God for protection they wanted to depend on their own strength. So they got out the weapons from the **Palace of the Forest**, which Solomon had built (1Ki_7:2; cf. 10:17, 21). It got its name from the huge cedar columns brought to Jerusalem from Lebanon. Apparently armaments were stored in that building in Isaiah's day.

At the time of Sennacherib's threat Hezekiah took several defense measures: (a) he repaired broken parts of the wall (cf. 2Ch_32:5) of the **City of David** (cf. 2Sa_5:7, 9); (b) he collected **water in the Lower Pool** (cf. 2Ch_32:4); (c) he demolished some houses to use their material for repairing the wall; and (d) he preserved the city's **water supply in a reservoir between the two walls**. The exact location of this reservoir and the meaning of the two walls and of the **Old Pool** are not known. Perhaps the reservoir refers to the Pool of Siloam which Hezekiah connected to the Gihon Spring (2Ch_32:30) by his now-famous under-ground water tunnel, which extends 1,777 feet and was carved out of solid rock. This marvelous feat of engineering was successful. But it could not be a means of the nation's deliverance, for the people refused to look for help to God who had given them the water **long ago**.

JFB - **22:11 Ye made ... a ditch** - rather, "Ye shall make a reservoir" for receiving the water. Hezekiah surrounded Siloah, from which the old (or king's, or upper) pool took its rise, with a wall joined to the wall of Zion on both sides; between these two walls he made a new pool, into which he directed the waters of the former, thus cutting off the foe from his supply of water also. The opening from which the upper pool received its water was nearer Zion than the other from which the lower pool took its rise, so that the water which flowed from the former could easily be shut in by a wall, whereas that which flowed from the latter could only be brought in by subterranean conduits (compare see on Isa_22:9; 7:3; 2Ki_20:20; 2Ch_32:3-5, 30; Ecclesiasticus 48:17). Both were southwest of Jerusalem. **have not looked ... neither had respect** - answering by contrast to "Thou didst look to the armor, ye have seen" ('had respect', or 'regard to') the breaches" (Isa_22:8, Isa_22:9). **maker thereof** - God, by whose command and aid these defenses were made, and who gave this fountain "long ago." G. V. Smith translates, "Him who doeth it," that is, has brought this danger on you - "Him who hath prepared it from afar," that is, planned it even from a distant time.

Clarke - 22:11 Unto the maker thereof "To him that hath disposed this" - That is, to God the Author and Disposer of this visitation, the invasion with which he now threatens you. The very same expressions are applied to God, and upon the same occasion, Isa_37:26: -

"Hast thou not heard of old, that I have disposed it;
And of ancient times, that I have formed it?"

The Oracle concerning the Valley of Vision (Judah) (22:1-14)

22:12 **Therefore in that day** the Lord GOD of hosts, called *you* to weeping, to wailing, To shaving the head, and to wearing sackcloth.

22:13 **Instead**, there is gaiety and gladness, Killing of cattle and slaughtering of sheep, Eating of meat and drinking of wine:

"Let us eat and drink, **for tomorrow** we may die."

22:14 **But** the LORD of hosts revealed Himself to me, **"Surely** this iniquity shall not be forgiven you **Until** you die," says the Lord GOD of hosts.

Crossing the line into certain judgment

- * before - 2 Kings 13:22-23; 14:26-27
- * judgment of Israel - 2 Kings 17:1-24
- * judgment of Judah - 2 Kings 21:10-16; 24:18-25:21

Sins that caused final judgment to come

What is the last straw?

- * Genesis 6:1-14
- * Genesis 19:1-26
- * Hebrews 6:4-8
- * 2 Peter 2:12-22
- * 1 John 5:16-17
- * Jude 1:22-23
- * Revelation 14:9-11

BKC - Isa 22:12-14 When the people saw the enemy they should have repented, realizing they were helpless before the Assyrians. Pulling out their hair (cf. Ezr_9:3; Neh_13:25) and wearing sack-cloth...were signs of mourning. But instead of mourning (Isa_22:12) the Jerusalemites "lived it up" in revelry (cf. Isa_22:2), banqueting, and wine-drinking in the face of their impending death (**tomorrow we die**, Isa_22:13). They did not believe God was powerful enough to save them and to follow through on His promises. Therefore a pronouncement of woe came to the people through Isaiah: this sin of lack of trust in the Lord would not be atoned for. Eventually the curses of the Mosaic Covenant (Lev_26:14-39; Deu_27:15-26; 28:15-68) would come on the nation of Judah.

MH - They were now in a great fright, and in this fright they manifested two things much amiss: -
I. A great contempt of God's goodness, and his power to help them. They made use of all the means they could think of for their own preservation; and it is not for doing this that they are blamed, but, in doing this, they did not acknowledge God. Observe,

1. How careful they were to improve all advantages that might contribute to their safety....(1.) They inspected the magazines and stores, to see if they were well stocked with arms and ammunition...(2.) They viewed the fortifications, the *breaches of the city of David*; they walked round the walls, and observed where they had gone to decay for want of seasonable repairs, or were broken by some former attempts made upon them....(3.) They made sure of water for the city, and did what they could to deprive the besiegers of it: *You gathered together the water of the lower pool*... (4.) They *numbered the houses of Jerusalem*, that every house might send in its quota of men for the public service...(5.) Because private property ought to give way to the public safety, those houses that stood in their way, when the wall was to be fortified, were broken down...(6.) They made a ditch between the outer and inner wall, for the greater security of the city; and they contrived to draw the water of the old pool to it, that they might have plenty of water themselves and might deprive the besiegers of it...

2. How regardless they were of God in all these preparations: *But you have not looked unto the Maker thereof* (that is, of Jerusalem, the city you are so solicitous for the defence of) and of all the advantages which nature has furnished it with for its defence - the *mountains round about it* (Psa_125:2), and the rivers, which were such as the inhabitants might turn which way soever they pleased for their convenience.

II. A great contempt of God's wrath and justice in contending with them, Isa_22:12-14. Here observe, 1. What was God's design in bringing this calamity upon them: it was to humble them, bring them to repentance, and make them serious....2. How contrary they walked to this design of God (Isa_22:13): Behold, joy and gladness, mirth and feasting, all the gaiety and all the jollity imaginable.... They made a jest of dying.

3. How much God was displeased at it....It is a sin against the remedy, a baffling of the utmost means of conviction and rendering them ineffectual; and therefore it is not likely they should ever repent of it or have it pardoned. The Chaldee reads it, *It shall not be forgiven you till you die the second death.* Those that walk contrary to them; with the froward he will show himself froward.



Shebna Removed, Eliakim Established (22:15-25)

22:15 **Thus** says the Lord GOD of hosts,
"Come, go to this steward,
To Shebna, who is in charge of the royal household,
22:16 'What right do you have here,
And whom do you have here,
That you have hewn a tomb for yourself here,
You who hew a tomb on the height,
You who carve a resting place for yourself in the rock?
22:17 '**Behold**, the LORD is about to hurl you headlong, O man.
And He is about to grasp you firmly,
22:18 **And roll you tightly like a ball,**
To be cast into a vast country;
There you will die,
And there your splendid chariots will be,
You shame of your master's house.'
22:19 "And I will depose you from your office,
And I will pull you down from your station.

JFB - In Isa 36:3, 22; 37:2, we find Shebna "a scribe," and no longer prefect of the palace ("over the household"), and Eliakim in that office, as is here foretold. Shebna is singled out as the subject of prophecy (the only instance of an *individual* being so in Isaiah), as being one of the irreligious faction that set at naught the prophet's warnings (Isaiah 28:1-33:24); perhaps it was he who advised the temporary ignominious submission of Hezekiah to Sennacherib.

JFB - 22:18 violently turn and toss - literally, "whirling He will whirl thee," that is, He will, *without intermission*, whirl thee [Maurer]. "He will whirl thee round and round, and (then) cast thee away," as a stone in a sling is first whirled round repeatedly, before the string is let go [Lowth].
large country - perhaps Assyria.
chariots ... shall be the shame of thy lord's house - rather, "thy splendid chariots shall be there, O thou disgrace of thy lord's house" [Noyes]; "chariots of thy glory" mean "thy magnificent chariots." It is not meant that he would have these in a distant land, as he had in Jerusalem, but that he would be borne thither in ignominy instead of in his magnificent chariots. The Jews say that he was tied to the tails of horses by the enemy, to whom he had designed to betray Jerusalem, as they thought he was mocking them; and so he died.

BKC - Isa 22:15-19 ...**Shebna** was a high court official, a **steward**, involved in the negotiations with Sennacherib when he besieged Jerusalem (2Ki 18:18, 26, 37; 19:2; Isa 36:3, 11, 22; 37:2)....Why he was to be deposed from this important **position** is not stated. Perhaps he opposed Isaiah's message of impending judgment. He apparently shared the attitudes of the Jerusalemites Isaiah had described (Isa 22:2, 11-13).

The impiety of Shebna apparently involved his trying to make a permanent name for himself by fashioning a **grave**, as people did in many of the surrounding nations. Perhaps he thought that by being buried in a prominent **grave site (on the height)** his name would live on in spite of the current conditions. However, Isaiah prophesied that Shebna, rather than having a permanent resting place, would be demoted and would **die in a large foreign country**, probably Assyria....

Shebna Removed, Eliakim Established (22:15-25)

- 22:20 "Then it will come about in that day,
That I will summon My servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah
- 22:21 And I will clothe him with your tunic,
And tie your sash securely about him,
I will entrust him with your authority,
And he will become a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.
- 22:22 "Then I will set the key of the house of David on his shoulder,
When he opens no one will shut,
When he shuts no one will open.
- 22:23 "And I will drive him like a peg in a firm place,
And he will become a throne of glory to his father's house.
- 22:24 "So they will hang on him all the glory of his father's house, offspring and issue, all the least of vessels, from bowls to all the jars.
- 22:25 "In that day," declares the LORD of hosts, "the peg driven in a firm place will give way; it will even break off and fall, and the load hanging on it will be cut off, for the LORD has spoken."

BKC - Isa 22:20-25 Eliakim, the palace administrator and a godly man, would fill Shebna's important position (Isa 22:20-21). Eliakim also was involved in the negotiations with Sennacherib (2Ki 18:18, 26, 37; Isa 36:3, 11, 22; 37:2). He would be a respected leader (like a father to the Judahites) and a faithful administrator who would make wise decisions (Isa 22:22). In contrast with Shebna, who was to be cast away, Eliakim was to be like a well-driven peg (Isa 22:23), a firm foundation for the nation. He would be an honorable person (Isa 22:23), and would cause his family name to be well known to humble people (figuratively called lesser vessels) and to more influential family members (called bowls and jars). However, Isaiah warned that eventually even this peg would come to an end (Isa 22:25), signifying that eventually the kingdom of Judah would be taken away into captivity.

JFB - 22:22 key - emblem of his office over the house; to "open" or "shut"; access rested with him.
upon...shoulder - So keys are carried sometimes in the East, hanging from the kerchief on the shoulder. But the phrase is rather figurative for sustaining the government on one's shoulders. Eliakim, as his name implies, is here plainly a type of the God-man Christ, the son of "David," of whom Isaiah (Isa 9:6) uses the same language as the former clause of this verse. In Rev 3:7, the same language as the latter clause is found (compare Job 12:14).

The Fall of Tyre (23:1-12)

23:1 The oracle concerning Tyre.
Wail, O ships of Tarshish,
For Tyre is destroyed, without house or harbor;
It is reported to them from the land of Cyprus.

isle - strictly applicable to New Tyre: in the sense coast, to the mainland city, Old Tyre (compare Isa 23:6; 20:6).

JFB - Menander, the historian, notices a siege of Tyre by Shalmaneser, about the time of the siege of Samaria. Sidon, Acco, and Old Tyre, on the mainland, were soon reduced; but New Tyre, on an island half a mile from the shore, held out for five years. Sargon probably finished the siege. Sennacherib does not, however, mention it among the cities which the Assyrian kings conquered (thirty-sixth and thirty-seventh chapters). The expression, "Chaldeans" (Isa 23:13), may imply reference to its siege under Nebuchadnezzar, which lasted thirteen years. Alexander the Great destroyed New Tyre after a seven months' siege.

23:2 "struck dumb with awe"
Be silent, you inhabitants of the coastland,
You merchants of Sidon;
Your messengers crossed the sea
And were on many waters.

"struck dumb with awe"

Zidon — of which Tyre was a colony, planted when Zidon was conquered by the Philistines of Ascalon. Zidon means a "fishing station"; this was its beginning. Here "Zidon," as the oldest city of Phoenicia, includes all the Phoenician towns on the strip of "coast." Thus, Eth-baal, king of Tyre (Josephus, Antiquities, 8.3. 2), is called king of the Sidonians (1Ki 16:31); and on coins Tyre is called the metropolis of the Sidonians.

those already in the country, eye-witnesses of its ruin

23:3 The grain of the Nile, the harvest of the River was her revenue;
And she was the market of nations.

JFB - harvest of the river - the growth of the Delta; the produce due to the overflow of the Nile: Egypt was the great granary of corn in the ancient world (Gen 41:1-57; 42:1-38; 43:1-34).

23:4 Be ashamed, O Sidon;
For the sea speaks, the stronghold of the sea, saying,
"I have neither travailed nor given birth,
I have neither brought up young men nor reared virgins."

her revenue - Tyrian vessels carried Egyptian produce obtained in exchange for wine, oil, glass, etc., into various lands, and so made large profits.

JFB - Zidon - called on, as being the parent country of Tyre (Isa 23:12), and here equivalent to Phoenicia in general, to feel the shame (as it was esteemed in the East) of being now as childless as if she never had any.

23:5 When the report reaches Egypt,
They will be in anguish at the report of Tyre.

JFB - "When the report (shall reach) the people of Egypt, they shall be sorely pained at the report concerning Tyre" (namely, its overthrow). So Jerome, "When the Egyptians shall hear that so powerful a neighboring nation has been destroyed, they must know their own end is near" [Lowth, etc.].

BKC - 23:1 As in the other prophecies (chaps. 13-22) this one about Tyre also pertains to the Assyrian aggression at the end of the eighth century B.C. Though Tyre was not destroyed until some 200 years later, the trade of this great city was cut off between about 700 and 630 B.C.

23:2-5 Phoenicia, with its chief city ports of Tyre (Isa 23:1, 3, 8, 15, 17) and Sidon (Isa 23:2, 4, 12), depended on seafaring trade for its economy. The Phoenicians greatly benefited by the wares she received in international commerce, and in turn those other countries, including the island of Cyprus, were enriched by Phoenician trade. Grain from Egypt was one of the staples channeled through the Phoenician trading centers of Tyre and Sidon. Shihor (cf. Jos 13:3; 1Ch 13:5; Jer 2:18) was in eastern Egypt and may be a branch of the Nile River. The grain of the Shihor referred to grain grown in the fertile land watered by that part of the Nile. The wealth of Sidon and Tyre (the fortress, ma'oz, trans. "stronghold" in Psa 27:1; 37:39; 43:2; 52:7 and "refuge" in Nah 1:7) did not come from their own efforts. It came by trading with the Mediterranean nations. Thus the sea, personified, could say that it had not gone through the birth experience; it had produced quick wealth without going through the pain (Isa 23:4; cf. 66:7-8). But the demise of Tyre was bad not only for Phoenicia; it was also bad for the places from which the trade came, such as Egypt (Isa 23:5).

The Fall of Tyre (23:1-12)

23:6

Pass over to Tarshish;

JFB - Pass ... over - Escape from Tyre to your colonies as Tarshish (compare Isa 23:12).

The Tyrians fled to Carthage and elsewhere, both at the siege under Nebuchadnezzar and that under Alexander.

23:7

JFB - antiquity - The Tyrian priests boasted in Herodotus time that their city had already existed 2300 years: an exaggeration but still implying that it was ancient even then.

Wail, O inhabitants of the coastland.

Is this your jubilant city,

Whose origin is from antiquity,

Whose feet used to carry her to colonize distant places?

JFB - crowning - crown-giving; that is, the city from which dependent kingdoms had arisen, as Tartessus in Spain, Citium in Cyprus, and Carthage in Africa (Eze 27:33).

23:8

Who has planned this against Tyre, the bestower of crowns,

Whose merchants were princes, whose traders were the honored of the earth?

23:9

The LORD of hosts has planned it to defile the pride of all beauty, To despise all the honored of the earth.

BKC - Isa 23:6-9 People in **Tarshish** were to **wail** too (cf. Isa 23:1, 5, 14) because of their **economic losses**. Tarshish was rich in silver (Jer 10:9), iron, tin, and lead (Eze 27:12). Therefore **Tarshish** was probably in the **West Mediterranean** where **mineral deposits** were plentiful. Many scholars identify Tarshish with Tartessus in southwest Spain. The people of that region would be in despair because of the fall of that great trading center, **Tyre**, which was a **city of revelry** (cf. Isa 23:12) and an ancient **city**. According to Herodotus **Tyre** was founded **around 2700 B.C.** However, **the people of Tarshish** needed to **realize that their difficulty came directly from the God of Israel. The Lord Almighty** (Isa 23:9) **planned** the humbling of this great and wealthy city (**the bestower of crowns**), proud of its **glory** and **renowned** for its commercial enterprise.

JFB - stain - rather, "to profane"; as in Exo 31:14, the *Sabbath*, and other objects of religious reverence; so here, "the pride of all glory" may refer to the Tyrian temple of Hercules, the oldest in the world, according to Arrian (Isa 2:16); **the prophet of the true God would naturally single out for notice the idol of Tyre** [G. V. Smith]. **It may, however, be a general proposition; the destruction of Tyre will exhibit to all how God mars the luster of whatever is haughty** (Isa 2:11).

Gill - whose antiquity is of ancient days; the most ancient city in Phoenicia, excepting Zidon, as Strabo says; and it was in being in the days of Joshua, Jos 19:29 if the words there are rightly rendered; and if so, Josephus must be mistaken, unless he speaks of insular Tyre, when he says, that from the building of Tyre to the building of the temple (of Solomon) were two hundred and forty years, which must fall very short of the times of Joshua; such seem to be nearer the truth, who make Agenor, the father of Cadmus, to be the builder of this city, who lived about the times of Joshua. The Tyrians indeed boasted of a still greater antiquity, and to which boasts perhaps reference is here had; for one of the priests of Tyre told Herodotus that their city had been inhabited two thousand three hundred years; and Herodotus lived in the times of Artaxerxes and Xerxes, about the year of the world 3500. According to Sanchoniatho, it was inhabited by Hypsuranius, who first built cottages of rushes, &c. in it; but these things are beyond all credit; however, certain it is that it was a very ancient city; it had the name of Palaetyrus, or old Tyre:



23:10

Overflow your land like the Nile, O daughter of Tarshish,

There is no more restraint.

23:11

He has stretched His hand out over the sea,

He has made the kingdoms tremble;

The LORD has given a command concerning Canaan to demolish its strongholds.

23:12

And He has said, "You shall exult no more, O crushed virgin daughter of Sidon.

Arise, pass over to Cyprus; even there you will find no rest.

23:13

Behold, the land of the Chaldeans – this is the people *which* was not; Assyria appointed it for desert creatures – they erected their siege towers, they stripped its palaces, they made it a ruin.

23:14

Wail, O ships of Tarshish,

For your stronghold is destroyed.

Barnes - Founded it - Semiramis reclaimed it from the waste of waters; built dikes to confine the Euphrates in the proper channel; and made it the capital of the kingdom. This is the account given by Herodotus (Hist. i.): 'She (Semiramis) built mounds worthy of admiration, where before the river was accustomed to spread like a sea through the whole plain.' **For them that dwell in the wilderness** - Hebrew, לְצִיִּים *letsiyim* - 'For the *tsiim*.' This word (from צִי *tsiy* or צִיָּה *tsiyah*, a waste or desert) denotes properly the inhabitants of the desert or waste places, and is applied to people in Psa_72:9; 74:14; and to animals in Isa_13:21...; 34:14. Here it denotes, I suppose, those who had been formerly inhabitants of the deserts around Babylon - the wandering, rude, uncultivated, and predatory people, such as the Chaldeans were (Job_1:17); and means that the Assyrian who founded Babylon collected this rude and predatory people, and made use of them in building the city. The same account Arrian gives respecting Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great, who says, that 'Philip found them wandering and unsettled (πλανητας και απορους *planetas kai aporous*), feeding small flocks of sheep upon the mountains, that he gave them coats of mail instead of their shepherd's dress, and led them from the mountain to the plain, and gave them cities to dwell in, and established them with good and wholesome laws.' (Hist. Alex vii.) **They set up the towers thereof** - That is, the towers in Babylon, not in Tyre (see...Isa. 13) Herodotus expressly says that the Assyrians built the towers and temples of Babylon (i. 84). **And he brought it to ruin** - That is, the Babylonian or Chaldean brought Tyre to ruin: to wit, Nebuchadnezzar, the king of a people formerly unknown and rude, would be employed to destroy the ancient and magnificent city of Tyre.

Barnes - Isa 23:13 Behold the land of the Chaldeans - This is a very important verse, as it expresses the source from where these calamities were coming upon Tyre; and as it states some historical facts of great interest respecting the rise of Babylon. In the previous verses the prophet had foretold the certain destruction of Tyre, and had said that whoever was the agent, it was to be traced to the overruling providence of God. He here states distinctly that the agent in accomplishing all this would be the Chaldeans - a statement which fixes the time to the siege of Nebuchadnezzar, and proves that it does not refer to the conquest by Alexander the Great.... **The land of the Chaldeans** - Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Chaldea or Babylonia. The names Babylon and Chaldea are often interchanged as denoting the same kingdom and people (see Isa_48:14, 20; Jer_50:1; 51:24; Eze_12:13).... **Was not** - Was not known; had no government or power; was a rude, nomadic, barbarous, feeble, and illiterate people. The same phrase occurs in Deu_32:21, where it also means a people unknown, rude, barbarous, wandering. That this was formerly the character of the Chaldeans is apparent from Job_1:17, where they are described as a nomadic race, having no established place of abode, and living by plunder. **Till the Assyrian** - Babylon was probably founded by Nimrod..., but it was long before it rose to splendor. Belus or Bel, the Assyrian, is said to have reigned at Babylon A.M. 2682, or 1322 B.C., in the time of Shamgar, judge of Israel. He was succeeded by Ninus and Semiramis, who gave the principal celebrity and splendor to the city and kingdom, and who may be said to have been its founders. They are probably referred to here.



Her Trading Partners Weep over Her (23:13-16)

23:15

Now it will come about in that day that Tyre will be forgotten for seventy years like the days of one king. At the end of seventy years it will happen to Tyre as in the song of the harlot:

23:16

Take your harp, walk about the city,

O forgotten harlot;

Pluck the strings skillfully, sing many songs,

That you may be remembered.

JFB - shall Tyre sing as ... harlot — It shall be to Tyre as the song of the harlot, namely, a harlot that has been forgotten, but who attracts notice again by her song. Large marts of commerce are often compared to harlots seeking many lovers, that is, they court merchants of all nations, and admit any one for the sake of gain (Nah_3:4; Rev_18:3). Covetousness is closely akin to idolatry and licentiousness, as the connection (Eph_5:5; Col_3:5) proves (compare Isa_2:6-8, 16).

Tyre Restored after 70 years (23:17-18)

23:17

And it will come about at the end of seventy years that the LORD will visit Tyre. Then she will go back to her harlot's wages, and will play the harlot with all the kingdoms on the face of the earth.

23:18

And her gain and her harlot's wages will be set apart to the LORD; it will not be stored up or hoarded, but her gain will become sufficient food and choice attire for those who dwell in the presence of the LORD.

BKC - Isa 23:15-18 The 70 years mentioned by Isaiah (Isa_23:15) were probably from about 700 to 630 B.C. when Phoenicia's trading was greatly restricted by the Assyrians. In 701 Assyria installed Tubu'alu (Ethbaal III) over Tyre. But around 630 Assyria declined in power, enabling Tyre to regain its autonomy and restore its trade.

This 70-year span is called **the span of a king's life** (cf. Psa_90:10). But after 70 years... Tyre would again become a trading center, like a prostitute (Isa_23:15-17) who was forgotten but who returned to her illicit practice, singing to attract lovers to her again. Tyre would again ply her trade with various nations. But this time the profits from her trading would somehow benefit those who feared the Lord (Isa_23:18). It is difficult to know exactly what Isaiah was referring to. Some have suggested that the 70 years referred not to the time from about 700 to 630 but to the coming Babylonian Captivity of Judah (605-536 B.C.) and that at the end of those years materials from Tyre were used in construction of the temple complex in Jerusalem which was built by the postexilic community. But Tyre's trading was not restricted during those years (except for Nebuchadnezzar's 13-year siege of the city from 587 to 574).

Barnes - Isa 23:15 Tyre shall be forgotten - Shall cease to be a place of importance in commerce; shall be unheard of in those distant places to which ships formerly sailed.

Seventy years, according to the days of one king - 'That is, of one kingdom (see Dan_7:17; 8:20).' (Lowth) The word 'king' may denote dynasty, or kingdom. The duration of the Babylonian monarchy was properly but seventy years. Nebuchadnezzar began his conquest in the first year of his reign, and from thence to the taking of Babylon by Cyrus was seventy years. And at that time the nations that had been conquered and subdued by the Babylonians would be restored to liberty. Tyre was, indeed, taken toward the middle of that period, and its subjugation referred to here was only for the remaining part of it. 'All these nations,' says Jeremiah (Jer_25:11), 'shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.' Some of them were conquered sooner, and some later; but the end of this period was the common time of deliverance to them all....



- 23:17 And it will come about **at the end of seventy years** that the LORD will visit Tyre. **Then** she will go back to her harlot's wages, and will play the harlot with all the kingdoms on the face of the earth.
- 23:18 And her gain and her harlot's wages will be set apart to the LORD; it will not be stored up or hoarded, **but** her gain will become sufficient food and choice attire for those who dwell in the presence of the LORD.

Barnes - Isa 23:17 The Lord will visit Tyre - He will restore her to her former wealth and magnificence.

And she shall turn to her hire - The word 'hire' here denotes the wages or reward that is given to an harlot; and the idea which was commenced in the previous verses is here continued - of Tyre as an harlot - frivolous, splendid, licentious, and holding intercourse with strangers and foreigners. The gains of that commerce with other nations are here represented as her hire.

And shall commit fornication ... - Shall again be the mart of commerce (Isa 23:3) shall have contact with all the nations, and derive her support, splendor, luxury, from all. The idea is, that she would be restored to her former commercial importance, and perhaps also, the prophet intends to intimate that she would procure those gains by dishonest acts, and by fraudulent pretxts. After the destruction of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar, it remained desolate until the close of the Babylonian monarchy. Then a new city was built on the island that soon rivaled the former in magnificence. That new city was besieged and taken by Alexander the Great, on his way to the conquests of the East.

Barnes - Isa 23:18 And her merchandise - The prophecy here does not mean that this would take place immediately after her rebuilding, but that subsequent to the seventy years of desolation this would occur.

Shall be holiness to the Lord - This undoubtedly means, that at some future period, after the rebuilding of Tyre, the true religion would prevail there, and her wealth would be devoted to his service. That the true religion prevailed at Tyre subsequently to its restoration and rebuilding there can be no doubt. The Christian religion was early established at Tyre. It was visited by the Saviour (Mat 15:21), and by Paul. Paul found several disciples of Christ there when on his way to Jerusalem (Act 21:3-6). It suffered much, says Lowth, under the Diocletian persecution. Eusebius (Hist. x. 4.) says that 'when the church of God was founded in Tyre, and in other places, much of its wealth was consecrated to God, and was brought as an offering to the church, and was presented for the support of the ministry agreeable to the commandments of the Lord.' Jerome says, 'We have seen churches built to the Lord in Tyre; we have beheld the wealth of all, which was not treasured up nor hid, but which was given to those who dwelt before the Lord.' It early became a Christian bishopric; and in the fourth century of the Christian era, Jerome (Commentary in Eze 26:7; 27:2) speaks of Tyre as the most noble and beautiful city of Phenicia, and as still trading with all the world. Reland enumerates the following list of bishops as having been present from Tyre at various councils; namely, Cassius, Paulinus, Zeno, Vitalis, Uranius, Zeno, Photius, and Eusebius (see Reland's Palestine, pp. 1002-1011, in Ugolin vi.) Tyre continued Christian until it was taken by the Saracens in 639 A.D.; but was recovered again by Christians in 1124. In 1280, it was conquered by the Mamelukes, and was taken by the Turks in 1516. It is now under the dominion of the Sultan as a part of Syria.