

is gone. In the city is left desolation, and the gate is smitten with destruction. When thus it shall be in the midst of the land among the people"

The mention of "city" in the singular in verse 10 suggests that one country, rather than the whole world, is in view. The use of the word "land" in verses 1, 11, and 13 strongly supports this impression. We would not expect this term, in the singular, to be used in a picture of devastation affecting the whole world, or of earthquakes and calamities involving the entire planet.

Quite a different impression, however, is gained when we begin reading the chapter with the first verse, as translated in the King James Version: "Behold, the LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof." The third phrase, "turneth it upside down," suggests that the chapter is describing earthquakes and cosmic upheavals, rather than the devastation of a single country. Yet, after all, this phrase comes third, rather than first. It seems to describe a result, rather than a cause, and would fit very naturally into a description of the devastation of a single country, if the word "land" were used (as in the margin of the American Standard Version) instead of "earth."

A similar impression is made by verses 4, 5, and 6, where "earth" is used again. Yet these verses, even more than verse 1, are made up principally of statements which would apply more naturally to the devastation of a single nation than to a description of great cosmic disturbances, if it were not for their use of the word "earth" instead of "land."

In our present passage -- verses 1-13a -- the King James Version uses "earth" six times, and "land" three times, thus giving contradictory impressions. The preponderance of the term "earth" suggests that cosmic disturbances are being described, but this conclusion is rudely checked when we observe the fact that the same Hebrew word is used in all nine instances. Thus the translators of the King James Version have been inconsistent. Three times they have rendered the word one way, and six times the other way. They evidently were not sure of their own mind on the matter, but leaned toward the idea that cosmic disturbances were in view, rather than a local upheaval.