

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

## 2. BABYLON (Continued)

## a. DESPISED

TEXT: 14:1-11

- 1 For Jehovah will have compassion on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land; and the sojourner shall join himself with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob.
- 2 And the peoples shall take them, and bring them to their place; and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of Jehovah for servants and for handmaids: and they shall take them captive whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors.
- 3 And it shall come to pass in the day that Jehovah shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, and from thy trouble, and from the hard service wherein thou wast made to serve,
- 4 that thou shalt take up this parable against the king of Babylon and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased!
- 5 Jehovah hath broken the staff of the wicked, the sceptre of the rulers;
- 6 that smote the peoples in wrath with a continual stroke, that ruled the nations in anger, with a persecution that none restrained.
- 7 The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet: they break forth into singing.
- 8 Yea, the fir-trees rejoice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, Since thou art laid low, no hewer is come up against us.
- 9 Sheol from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming; it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations.

- 10 All they shall answer and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us?  
11 Thy pomp is brought down to Sheol, and the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and worms cover thee.

## QUERIES

- a. How would the house of Israel "possess" their former captors?  
b. Why was the whole earth at rest at Babylon's downfall?

## PARAPHRASE

And Jehovah will have mercy upon His covenant people; He will yet fulfill all His covenant promises to them. Their blessings will one day be so glorious that those now outside the covenant of Israel will be joined to God's covenant people and become a part of them. God will cause those who once took His covenant people captive to return them to their land and eventually His people will make some of these heathen a possession of God's kingdom and servants of the Most High God. Yes, even people from those nations which once took the covenant people captive will one day be taken "captive" by them. Those who once ruled over God's people will one day come under the rule of God. When that day comes to pass God will have delivered His covenant people from sorrow, trouble and servitude, and His people will proclaim concerning their great enemy, At last our enemy has been defeated and his kingdom destroyed. God has broken the power of the enemy that ruled over us so long in unrestrained terrible-ness. The whole earth and all of nature rejoices at the rest it receives from the defeat of God's enemy. All the citizens of Hades crowd to meet him as he enters the same place where they dwell. World leaders and earth's mightiest rulers, long dead, are there to greet him. With one voice they all cry out, Are you as weak as we are? Have you become like us here? All this enemy's grandeur and power has been stripped from him and all his reveling is over. His covering now is not silk and satin, but worms and maggots.

## COMMENTS

V. 1-6 DELIVERANCE AND DOMINION: Here is an instance of the prophet's use of shortened perspective. It is a favorite vehicle of prophetic literature. The prophet first speaks of the return of the covenant people from the Babylonian captivity when the Persian emperor Cyrus (Cf. Isa. 44:28; 45:1ff) "took the Jews and brought them to their place" by his edict and financial aid to rebuild Jerusalem. But then, skipping over some five centuries between the Persian release of the Jews to the time when their former captors will become their captives, the prophet shortens his perspective. There can be only one meaning to the prophet's indication that "sojourners would join themselves" to the Jews and "cleave to the house of Jacob." We believe there is only one way to interpret the statement that "the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of Jehovah for servants and for handmaids; and they shall take them captive whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors," and that interpretation is one that finds the fulfillment in the Messianic kingdom, the church. This is the only possible interpretation considering the fact that such widespread Jewish domination never literally occurred. This interpretation is also substantiated by parallel passages (Cf. Isa. 2:3; 49:22-26; Zech. 8:20-23). All of these hyperbolic figures of speech find their fulfillment in Ephesians 2:11-14. God delivers the Jews after their period of chastening in captivity. Out of that delivered people comes a faithful remnant which will through five centuries produce a faithful progeny through which the Messiah will be born in the flesh. He will establish God's kingdom, the church, upon the earth. The Gentiles, former enemies and captors of God's covenant people, will become members of God's covenant people. What the prophet leaves out here is all the history of the Jewish people between the restoration from captivity and the establishment of the church. All this history is not important to Isaiah's purpose. The deliverance from Babylonian captivity actually becomes a *type* of the ultimate deliverance from the bondage of Satan and sin, man's greatest enemies. See our comments in

*Minor Prophets* on Obadiah 7-21 and Amos 9:11-12.

v. 7-11 DELIGHT AT DEGRADATION: Whenever God delivers His people and destroys His enemies the whole world is benefited. Most of the world does not realize it as a benefit because the world sees through eyes of flesh not faith. God's people rejoice when His enemies are defeated for they see through eyes of faith their deliverance. Even nature itself benefits when those in rebellion against God are defeated for rebels against God's sovereign rule usually deface and pervert God's natural creation. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had built a road in the Wady Brissa in Lebanon in order to plunder the territory of its magnificent cedars and take them back to Babylon to build pagan temples and palaces.

Sheol is the Old Testament place of the dead. The Old Testament speaks of life hereafter, of judgment and of resurrection. But the whole experience of the hereafter is in the shadows. Nothing really clearly outlined. Here the king of Babylon is said to be welcomed into the region of the dead with a great stirring of those who have gone on before. Especially great world rulers and leaders long ago dead now greet the king of Babylon with the taunt, "So you also are as weak as we were? You died too! All your former pomp and glory has passed away like curs!" Death is inevitable to all, great and small, rich and poor, powerful and weak. Every human body has a cover of worms in its destiny. We wonder which king of Babylon this is. Nebuchadnezzar seems to have acknowledged Jehovah as God in Daniel 4:34-37 (see our comments in *Daniel*, College Press). Perhaps Isaiah is referring to Belshazzar who would not learn from his father's experience (Cf. Daniel 5:17-23). Whoever it may be, the lesson is inescapable—earthly kings and kingdoms dare not lay their hand on "the apple of His eye" (His covenant people) for God will bring all His enemies down to Sheol.

## QUIZ

1. What is shortened perspective as the prophets use it?
2. Why is it improbable that this text is to be taken as figurative hyperbole?
3. What is the Babylonian captivity and deliverance typical of?
4. Why does the world rejoice when God's enemies are defeated?
5. Why mention the fact that the king of Babylon was taunted in Sheol?

## b. DEPOSED

TEXT: 14:12-20

- 12 How art thou fallen from heaven, O day-star, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, that didst lay low the nations!
- 13 And thou saidst in thy heart, I will ascend into the heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; and I will sit upon the mount of congregation, in the uttermost parts of the north;
- 14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.
- 15 Yet thou shalt be brought down to Sheol, to the uttermost parts of the pit.
- 16 They that see thee shall gaze at thee, they shall consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms;
- 17 that made the world as a wilderness, and overthrew the cities thereof; that let not loose his prisoners to their home?
- 18 All the kings of the nations, all of them, sleep in glory, every one in his own house.
- 19 But thou art cast forth away from thy sepulchre like an abominable branch, clothed with the slain, that are thrust through with the sword, that go down to the stones of the pit; as a dead body trodden under foot.

20 Thou shalt not be joined with them in burial, because thou hast destroyed thy land, thou hast slain thy people; the seed of evil-doers shall not be named for ever.

### QUERIES

- a. What is a "day-star"? Who is the "day-star"?
- b. Why would he not be "joined with them in burial"?

### PARAPHRASE

O how you have fallen from the highest place, you brilliant Star! how you are cut down to the ground, you who overpowered nations! However, you said: I will climb as high as the heavens; above the stars of God I will place my throne. I will enthrone myself at the top of the mountain of the gods which is far away in the north. You said: I will climb above the clouds and make myself equal to the Most High. In truth, however, you will be thrust down to the abode of the dead, Sheol, the uttermost abyss. Everyone there will stare at you and ask, Can this be the Star who shook the earth and the kingdoms of the world? Can this be the one who devastated the earth and made it into a desolation and demolished its greatest cities and had no mercy on his enemies? All the kings of the nations like in stately glory in their graves, but your body is thrown out like a broken stick; it lies in an open grave, covered with the dead bodies of those slain in war; it lies as a carcass in the road, trampled and mangled by horses' hoofs. You will not be entombed with the other kings in stately glory for you have destroyed your nation and slain your people. Your offspring will be known as evil because of you.

## COMMENTS

v. 12-14 KING'S BOAST: The Babylonian king, a brilliant star on the stage of human political history, had boasted (Cf. Dan. 4:28ff). This is an occupational hazard of kings and other rulers! (Cf. Dan. 8:10). They are sorely tempted to exalt themselves into various forms of god and savior and ruler of mankind instead of servant. Herod allowed himself this luxury (Acts 12:20-23) and died an excruciating death for it. Many of the Roman Caesars arrogated to themselves the title, god. Here Isaiah is predicting the king of Babylon's exaggerated estimate of himself. Daniel writes down the actual historical fulfillment of the king's boasting some 150 years after Isaiah predicts it. Day-star in Hebrew is *helel ben shachar*, means literally "son of morning dawn." From the highest of political heights, high as the heaven, where he had shone in glory and splendor, he has tumbled to disgrace to the lowest of the low. He boasted he would make himself equal with the highest of the gods and he would enthrone himself at the top of the "mount of congregation" (which is the Semitic counterpart to Mount Olympus of the Greeks and lay in the remote, mythological regions of the north).

Early church fathers and some modern expositors have referred this to the fall of Satan (Cf. Lk. 10:18), but the context indicates it is to be applied primarily to the king of Babylon. There may be here a symbolical or typical allusion to the history of Satan the "god of this world" since ancient world rulers were sometimes considered personifications of the "prince of the power of the air" (Cf. our comments on *Daniel*, ch. 10, College Press). The word *Lucifer* is not in the original text. It is a Latin interpolation. Certainly the Babylonian king's pride reaches satanic proportions. And here is represented the fall of all Satan's earthly helpers who dare to resist God, and presume to sit in places of heavenly authority (Cf. II Thess. 2:2-12).

v. 15-20 KING'S BANISHMENT: The estimate of the king of Babylonia by his long-since-dead predecessors is quite different than that of the king's own self-estimate! When Almighty God deposes the king of Babylon and gives the Babylonian empire

over to another people (Cf. Jer. 27:5ff) and the king of Babylon dies and goes to Sheol, the residents of Sheol scrutinize and stare at him in amazement. They reflect, "So this is what the world's great braggart comes to—so this is the man that made the earth to tremble and shook kingdoms"? The downfall is to be to the uttermost. The one who was so glorified, so powerful, who even attempted to deify himself, has been thrust down so low. It seems almost incredible. Only Almighty God could do it! He is not only deposed, he is despised and humiliated. His carcass will lie like a vile corpse on the earth. He will be cast out upon the ground like a dead and useless branch.

Other kings may have done evil, but not like this one. In his greed and egotism he wasted his nation, both the people in wars and the resources in selfishness. He will not be buried. His body will be trampled by men and horses. For him there is to be no grave, no monument which will cause his name to be remembered. His demise will be so complete that all remembrance of the seed of evildoers will be forgotten forever.

The utter downfall and degradation of the king of Babylon reminds one of tyrants (Hitler, Mussolini, et.al.) whose opposition to God and truth and justice brought about their death and shame. Their bodies were burned and hanged in humiliating defeat.

### QUIZ

1. What is an "occupational hazard" of kings and rulers?
2. Why is the king of Babylon called "day-star"?
3. To whom does this text refer—Satan?
4. Why is *Lucifer* not a good translation?
5. Have other despots been shamed and degraded like this?



## c. DESTROYED

TEXT: 14:21-27

- 21 Prepare ye slaughter for his children for the iniquity of their fathers, that they rise not up, and possess the earth, and fill the face of the world with cities.
- 22 And I will rise up against them, saith Jehovah of hosts, and cut off from Babylon name and remnant, and son and son's son, saith Jehovah.
- 23 I will also make it a possession for the porcupine, and pools, of water: and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith Jehovah of hosts.
- 24 Jehovah of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely, as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand:
- 25 that I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains tread him under foot: then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their shoulder.
- 26 This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth; and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations.
- 27 For Jehovah of hosts hath purposed, and who shall annul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?

## QUERIES

- a. Why such total eradication of Babylon?
- b. What is a "besom"?
- c. Why mention Assyria in the same context as Babylon?

## PARAPHRASE

Let all the world prepare for the slaughter of the descendants of this wicked king and his empire. Let them be destroyed lest they rise up in rebellion against God's intentions for man's

redemption and try to possess the earth and man for the kingdom of darkness. I, Jehovah, will rise against Babylon and destroy his posterity and prevent them from ever taking over the whole human race. I will make the land of the Babylonians to be taken over and possessed by wild animals and I will make it become a territory of swamps and marshes. I will sweep the nation from the face of the earth with my broom of destruction. Jehovah has taken an oath to do all this! It is His immutable purpose to do it! When He purposes to do it, it is as good as done. He says, I will break the Assyrian army when it is in My land and I will crush them utterly; I will take the Assyrian's yoke of servitude off My people. This is My plan for mankind—to break the yoke of paganism and conquer the worldly powers so that man will no longer be a slave of darkness. The Lord God of hosts has declared this as His plan and who can thwart His plan? He has begun to extend His hand to accomplish His purpose and who will stop it?

#### COMMENTS

v. 21-23 **BABYLON DECIMATION:** These verses are God's statement of the complete eradication of some of the most implacable enemies of His covenant people. Babylon was noted for its materialism, paganism and sheer wealth. It was dedicated to exploitation of weaker peoples for its own pleasure and wealth. Many weaker nations prostituted their own national sovereignty to Babylon for survival's sake as well as for indulgence's sake. Israel and Judah were two such nations. Weaker nations adopted the ways of the Babylonians, signed military and trade treaties with her and finally ended up paying extortion in the form of tribute. Babylon was used some 800 years later by the apostle John in Revelation as a symbol of Rome's materialism and spiritual harlotry. Babylon characterized all the most subtle and tempting dangers to the faithfulness of God's people. She posed such a threat that God vowed to make a "clean sweep" of the whole nation. He would so thoroughly "mop up" on Babylon (the word

*besom* means "broom") no Babylonians would be left to rule the world ever again! When God finished with Babylon (see Daniel, chapters 4 and 5) there was none left to claim the throne. During the reign of Darius Hystaspis (a Persian emperor) pretenders rose claiming descent from Belshazzar's grandfather Nabonidus. The pretenders were proven false and executed.

v. 24-27 ASSYRIA'S DEMISE: Assyria and Babylon were world-engulfing empires. They were representatives of mankind in rebellion against God's rule of the earth and man. Man, in sin and rebellion, is carrying out a war against God's sovereignty. Man, by force or by persuasive falsehood, attempts to rule this terrestrial planet and its occupants. God has vowed that He will not permit this to happen. Man may rule in subservience to and in harmony with God's sovereignty but man must conform to the revealed will of God and enter into covenant relationship with Him to receive this honor of ruling *with* God. God's program for providing man with co-rulership would be to establish His kingdom here upon the earth (the church). When men willingly become members of His kingdom He assures them they have entered a kingdom that will be victorious over all rebellious kingdoms of man and will rule with Him. God demonstrated time after time that He has the power to deal with His enemies and did deal with them. So God defeating Babylon and Assyria (and numerous other pagan nations) literally and historically is a typical and symbolic message as well as a literal account. The typical message is that God will keep His word to defeat all His enemies and give rule to His kingdom. Actually, as Revelation portrays, the old dragon, Satan, is the leader of all of mankind's rebellion. Satan's war against God is joined and executed on the earth by godless political forces, godless materialism and sensuality and by godless religion. Through the centuries God proves again and again He and His saints will be the ultimate victors. What His saints must do is believe Him! When has history ever proven God to fail?!

## QUIZ

1. For what was Babylon noted?
2. Why did weak nations prostitute themselves to the "harlot" Babylon?
3. How does the apostle John use Babylon?
4. To what extent did God eliminate Babylon?
5. What did Assyria and Babylon represent in relationship to God's rule?
6. How does their demise symbolize God's purpose for the world?

## d. DOMINATED

TEXT: 14:28-32

- 28 In the year that king Ahaz died was this burden.
- 29 Rejoice not, O Philistia, all of thee, because the rod that smote thee is broken; for out of the serpent's root shall come forth an adder, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent.
- 30 And the first-born of the poor shall feed, and the needy shall lie down in safety; and I will kill thy root with famine, and thy remnant shall be slain.
- 31 Howl, O gate; cry, O city; thou art melted away, O Philistia, all of thee; for there cometh a smoke out of the north, and there is no straggler in his ranks.
- 32 What then shall one answer the messengers of the nation? That Jehovah hath founded Zion, and in her shall the afflicted of his people take refuge.

## QUERIES

- a. What does the "serpent," the "adder" and the "flying serpent" represent?
- b. What "Zion" is here meant?

## PARAPHRASE

At the time of the death of king Ahaz this message concerning Philistia was revealed to me to be proclaimed. Don't begin rejoicing, Philistines, that the oppression upon your nation has been temporarily broken and lifted. This momentary relief does not mean you are going to prosper. In fact, a successive worsening of oppression and destruction is going to overcome your nation. It will be like a succession of snakes getting worse with each; from the snake will come the adder and from the adder a fiery flying serpent will come to destroy you. I will protect and provide for My people Israel; even the lowliest of the low shall not lack food in Israel, and the poor shall enjoy safety. But as for you, O Philistia, I will wipe you out with famine and what is not killed by famine I will kill with war. Weep and wail, O cities of Philistia, because you are destined to go up in the smoke of an invader's destruction. An army from the north will invade your land and will destroy you with methodical diligence. What shall be told all who inquire about these events? They shall be told that Jehovah of hosts has established Zion, His covenant people, on a sure and safe foundation and all those afflicted by Jehovah's enemies will find refuge in Zion.

## COMMENTS

v. 28-32 PHILISTIA PUNISHED: Isaiah clearly remembered the date of his oracle against Philistia. It was 728 B.C., the year that king Ahaz died. It appears the Philistines, for some reason or another, had been relieved of some degree of former oppression or subjugation and were now rejoicing that their future looked bright. They evidently were assuming that now (perhaps that the Assyrian domination was checked by Hezekiah) they could have free reign in the land of Palestine to wrest its control from the Jews. The message of God's prophet, however, is that several military or political situations shall arise successively (likened to first a serpent, then an adder, then fiery flying

serpent), one always worse than the other, which would eventually wipe out the Philistine nation clear down to its roots. The utter destruction and obliteration of Philistia is contrasted with the utter salvation and protection of God's small, weak remnant, Judah. The lowliest of the low, the godly poor will feed and dwell secure in God's remnant. Philistia will wail and cry for a destructive force from the north will come upon her. The "smoke" may refer to the campfires of the army coming or to the Philistine cities being burned. The force from the "north" probably refers to the successive and progressively worsening attacks upon Philistia by the Assyrians after the days of Hezekiah. Sargon, Assyrian emperor (722-705 B.C.) captured the Philistine cities, deported some of the inhabitants and set over them an Assyrian governor. Later struggles between Egypt and Assyria were the cause of great suffering to the Philistine cities, and practically close their history as strictly Philistinian. The Assyrians were very cruel and methodical in their bloody warfare upon the world. There were no "stragglers" in their armies. They went about their work of destruction with diligence.

v. 32 ZION PROTECTED: What should one answer messengers of the nation of Judah when they saw all around the destruction of the neighboring peoples by the bloodthirsty Assyrians? Will Zion (Judah) fall too? The prophet's answer is brief but emphatic. The message is simply, "Jehovah hath founded Zion, and in her shall the afflicted of his people take refuge." Jehovah so powerfully and consistently demonstrated His purpose and ability to save and protect His people from all enemies all the messengers needed to know was, Jehovah hath founded Zion! The same message applies today. God has demonstrated in history His power to save, even from death. He has demonstrated His power and purpose to preserve His church. All we need to know is He has founded the Church. We take refuge in Him.

In contrast to the obliteration of Philistia as a kingdom, God protected Judah. Even when Babylon came and took Judah captive, God preserved them and delivered them and out of them He formed His eternal kingdom, the Church, reigned over by King of kings and Lord of lords, Jesus Christ.

## QUIZ

1. Approximately what year did Isaiah pronounce the doom of Philistia?
2. Why should Philistia not rejoice?
3. When did Philistia probably disappear from history as a nation?
4. What is the "smoke out of the north"?
5. Why such a brief answer to the "messengers" v. 32?

## B. IMPUDENT EASTERNERS - CHAPTERS 15-17

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

## 1. MOAB

## a. INVASION

TEXT: 15:1-9

- 1 The burden of Moab. For in a night Ar of Moab is laid waste, and brought to nought; for in a night Kir of Moab is laid waste, and brought to nought.
- 2 They are gone up by Bayith, and to Dibon, to the high places, to weep: Moab wailleth over Nebo, and over Medeba; on all their heads is baldness, every beard is cut off.
- 3 In their streets they gird themselves with sackcloth; on their housetops, and in their broad places, every one wailleth, weeping abundantly.
- 4 And Heshbon crieth out, and Elealeh; their voice is heard even unto Jahaz: therefore the armed men of Moab cry aloud; his soul trembleth within him.
- 5 My heart crieth out for Moab; her nobles flee unto Zoar, to Eglath-shelishiyah: for by the ascent of Luhith with weeping they go up; for in the way of Horonaim they raise up a cry of destruction.