
Observations from Isaiah

LESSON XII : THE COMING DESTRUCTION OF BABYLON (13:1-14:23)

General outline (from Young's *Isaiah*):

- I. The Crisis and the Messiah (1:1-12:6)
 - A. Introduction to the Entire Prophecy (1:1-31)
 - B. Early Messages of Isaiah (2:1-5:30)
 - C. Judah's True Hope: The Messianic King (6:1-12:6)
 - 1. Isaiah's Vision of the Holy God (6:1-13)
 - 2. The Crisis and the Promise (7:1-25)
 - 3. The Assyrian Invader (8:1-9:7)
 - 4. The Threat of Assyria (9:8-10:34)
 - 5. Judah's Hope in the Messiah (11:1-12:6)
- II. The Theocracy and the Nations (13:1-39:8)
 - A. Judah and the World Power (13:1-27:13)
 - 1. The Growth of the Mesopotamia Power (13:1-14:32)
 - a. The Judgement Will Come (13:1-8)
 - b. The outpouring of judgement (13:9-22)
 - c. The Fall of the Babylonian King (14:1-11)
 - d. The End of the Babylonian King (14:12-21)
 - e. The Destruction of Babylon, Assyria, and Philistia (14:22-32)

OVERVIEW — The thirteenth and the fourteenth chapters, with the exception of the last few verses of chapter 14, contain one entire prophecy foretelling the destruction of Babylon. The main design is to predict the destruction of that city, but involved within that prophecy is another concerning Israel's future captivity as well as the comfort given by the return out of captivity. Chapter 13 opens with a cry to arms against Babylon, with the Babylonians aghast at the coming horrors of war. A picture of the war is given, with details being both brutal and accurate. Chapter 14 is the redeemed Israel's song of praise for the Lord's doings. Involved in that song is a lament concerning the king of Babylon. "These verses [chapter 14] have their own special interest to the Bible student who is sensitive to historical and literary echoes, for they are saturated with allusions to the Exodus from Egypt and the entry into Canaan. The New Exodus theme, which is so important later in the book, is the controlling motif here. The clue to this is given in the words 'once again he will choose Israel' (14:1).... *The expulsion of Israel from Canaan at the Exile would certainly make it look as if the covenant, so often flagrantly broken by the people, had finally been set aside by God. In fact, however, such was the depth and persistence of his steadfast love that his covenant purpose was never eclipsed by their unfaithfulness. His new choice was really a reaffirmation of the old in the return from Babylonia.*" [Grogan, *Isaiah*]
Note: for the sake of division within the Sunday School lessons, I am combining 14:22,23 with the previous section.

1. The Growth of the Mesopotamia Power (13:1-14:32)

a. The Judgement Will Come (13:1-8)

An oracle concerning Babylon that Isaiah son of Amoz saw: Raise a banner on a bare hilltop, shout to them; beckon to them to enter the gates of the nobles. I have commanded my holy ones; I have summoned my warriors to carry out my wrath — those who rejoice in my triumph. Listen, a noise on the mountains, like that of a great multitude! Listen, an uproar among the kingdoms, like nations massing together! The LORD Almighty is mustering an army for war. They come from faraway lands, from the ends of the heavens — the LORD and the weapons of his wrath — to destroy the whole country. Wail, for the day of the LORD is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty. Because of this, all hands will go limp, every man's heart will melt. Terror will seize them, pain and anguish will grip them; they will writhe like a woman in labor. They will look aghast at each other, their faces aflame. (NIV)

The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see. Lift ye up a banner upon the high mountain, exalt the voice unto them, shake the hand, that they may go into the gates of the nobles. I have commanded my sanctified ones, I have also called my mighty ones for mine anger, even them that rejoice in my highness. The noise of a multitude in the mountains, like as of a great people; a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together: the LORD of hosts mustereth the host of the battle. They come from a far country, from the end of heaven, even the LORD, and the weapons of his indignation, to destroy the whole land. Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt: And they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames. (KJV)

The burden of Babylon that Isaiah son of Amoz hath seen: 'On a high mountain lift ye up an ensign, Raise the voice to them, wave the hand, And they go in to the openings of nobles. I have given charge to My sanctified ones, Also I have called My mighty ones for Mine anger, Those rejoicing at Mine excellency.' A voice of a multitude in the mountains, A likeness of a numerous people, A voice of noise from the kingdoms of nations who are gathered, Jehovah of Hosts inspecting a host of battle! They are coming in from a land afar off, From the end of the heavens, Jehovah and the instruments of His indignation, To destroy all the land. Howl ye, for near [is] the day of Jehovah, As destruction from the Mighty it cometh. Therefore, all hands do fail, And every heart of man doth melt. And they have been troubled, Pains and pangs they take, As a travailing woman they are pained, A man at his friend they marvel, The appearance of flames — their faces! (YLT)

“AN AMAZING PROPHECY” — These two chapters are greatly attacked by liberal critics due to the amazing prophetic detail. “Many modern scholars have been reluctant to accept it as an authentic utterance of Isaiah, assigning it to the sixth century B.C., shortly before the taking of Babylon by Cyrus the Great of Persia.” [Grogan, *Isaiah*] We however will accept the orthodox traditional view. “It is certain that it was delivered either during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, or Hezekiah (Isa 1:1), the reign of the last of whom closed 710 years before the Christian era; and, since the Jews were carried captive to Babylon 586 years before that era, the prophecy must have been delivered 124 years before that event; and, as Babylon was taken by Cyrus 536 years before Christ, *it must have been delivered at least 174 years before its accomplishment....*

At the time when this prophecy was delivered, the Jews were in the secure possession of their own capital and country. They were harassed, indeed, by surrounding nations, but they were still free. They had no controversy with Babylon; nor had they reason to apprehend danger from that distant people. Their being borne to that land, was itself, in the time of Isaiah, a distant event, and one that then was not likely to occur. ***It is remarkable that Isaiah does not distinctly foretell that event here, but throws himself to a period of time beyond that, when they would be in captivity, and predicts their deliverance. His prophecy supposes that event to have occurred....*** This prophecy of the destruction of Babylon was delivered, we have seen, at least 174 years before the event occurred. ***At the time when it was delivered, nothing was more improbable than the ruin of that city as described by Isaiah (Isa 13:19-22). It was one of the largest, most flourishing, and perhaps the most strongly fortified city of the world. The prediction that it should be like ‘Sodom and Gomorrah;’ that it should ‘never be inhabited;’ that the wild beast of the desert should lie there; and that dragons should be in their pleasant palaces, was wholly improbable; and could have been foreseen only by God. There were no natural causes that were leading to this which man could perceive, or of which a stranger and a foreigner, like Isaiah, could have any knowledge....*** The Medes (v17): This is one of the places in which the prophet specified, by name, the instrument of the wrath of God. ***Cyrus himself is subsequently mentioned (Isa 44:28; 45:1) as the agent by which God would accomplish his purposes. It is remarkable, also, that the Medes are mentioned here many years before they became a separate and independent nation.*** It was elsewhere predicted that the Medes would be employed in this siege of Babylon; thus, in Isa 21:2: ‘Go up, O Elam (that is, Persia), besiege, O Media;’ ***In looking at this prophecy, therefore, we are to bear in mind: (1) the fact that, when it was uttered, Media was a dependent province of the kingdom of Assyria; (2) that a long time was yet to elapse before it would become an independent kingdom; (3) that it was yet to secure its independence by the aid of that very Babylon which it would finally destroy; (4) that no human foresight could predict these revolutions, and that every circumstance conspired to render this event improbable. The great strength and resources of Babylon; the fact that Media was a dependent province, and that such great revolutions must occur before this prophecy could be fulfilled, render this one of the most striking and remarkable predictions in the sacred volume....*** Which shall not regard silver (v17): ... It is remarkable, says Lowth, that Xenophon makes Cyrus open a speech to his army, and, in particular, to the Medes, who made the principal part of it, with praising them for their disregard of riches. ‘Ye Medes and others who now hear me, I well know, that you have not accompanied me in this expedition with a view of acquiring wealth.’ ... ***This is a remarkable prediction, because this is a very unusual circumstance in the character of conquerors. Their purpose has been chiefly to obtain plunder, and, especially, gold and silver have been objects to them of great value. Few, indeed, have been the invading armies which were not influenced by the hope of spoil; and the want of that characteristic among the Medes is a circumstance which no human sagacity could have foreseen.*** [Barnes, Notes on OT]

THE CITY OF BABYLON — “BABYLON (derived from BABEL, and probably built on the same spot as the tower of Babel) was the capital of Babylonia, or Chaldea, and was probably built by Nimrod; but it was a long period before it obtained its subsequent size and splendor. It was enlarged by Belus, and so greatly beautified and improved by Semiramis, that she might be called not improperly the foundress of it. It was subsequently greatly increased and embellished by Nebuchadnezzar. It stood in the midst of a large plain, and on a very deep and fertile soil. It was on both sides of the river Euphrates, and of course was divided by that river into two parts. The two parts were connected by a bridge near the center of the city; and there is also said to have been a

tunnel, or subterranean passage, made from the palace on the east of the river to the palace on the west, made under the river. The old city was on the east, and the new city, built by Nebuchadnezzar, was on the west. Both these divisions were enclosed by one wall, and the whole formed a complete square, which Herodotus, who visited it, and who is the most ancient author who has written on it, says, was 480 furlongs in compass, or 120 furlongs on each side: that is, it was fifteen miles on each side, or sixty miles in compass.... [It] was at least eight times as large in extent as London and its appendages; and somewhat larger than the entire district of Columbia. It is not to be inferred, however, that all this vast space was compactly built. It was enclosed with a wall; but a considerable portion of it might have been occupied with the public squares, with palaces, and with hanging gardens, or, possibly, might have been unoccupied. The walls of Babylon are said by Herodotus to have been eighty-seven feet thick, and 350 high. They were built of brick, or clay dried in the sun, and not burned; and were cemented by a kind of glutinous earth, or bitumen, with which the adjacent region abounded. The whole city was surrounded by an immense ditch, from which this clay had been taken to make the walls of the city, and which, being always filled with water, contributed materially to its defense. There were 100 gates to the city, twenty-five on each side. These gates were of solid brass. Between every two of them there were three towers, raised ten feet above the walls. From the gates there were streets, each 151 feet in width, which ran through the city, so that there were fifty streets in all, cutting each other at right angles, and forming 676 squares in the city. A bridge sixty feet in width crossed the Euphrates in the center of the city, and at the extremities of the bridge were two palaces, the old palace on the east, and the new palace on the west. The temple of Belus, which occupied almost a square, was near the old palace on the east. Babylon was celebrated for its hanging gardens, built on arches, near 400 feet square, and which were elevated one above another, by terraces, until they reached the height of the walls of the city. On the highest terrace was an aqueduct for watering the gardens, supplied with water by a pump, or probably by the 'Persian wheel,' by which the water of the Euphrates was raised to this extraordinary height. In order to prevent the danger of being overflowed by the rise in the Euphrates, two canals were cut from the river at a considerable distance above the town, by which the superabundant waters were carried into the Tigris. ***It is to be borne in mind, however, in order to a just view of this prophecy, that Babylon did not attain its highest splendor and magnificence until after the time of Isaiah. It was under Nebuchadnezzar, who ascended the throne of Babylon about 100 years after Isaiah died, that it rose to its highest degree of splendor and power. When Isaiah lived, though it was a city of great wealth and power, and distinguished for great commercial advantages, yet it was then dependent on Assyria....*** Among those advantages respecting Babylon, was the fact that it was the center of a vast fertile region; that it naturally received the productions of Armenia on the north; and that its midway position rendered it the natural thoroughfare for the caravan trade between Eastern and Western Asia. Accordingly, Babylon was early distinguished for its commerce and manufactures. Babylonian garments, of uncommon value, had made their way to Palestine as early as the times of Joshua (Josh 7:21). Tapestries embroidered with figures of griffons, and other monsters of Eastern imagination, were articles of export. Carpets were made there of the finest material and workmanship, and formed an article of extensive exportation. They were in high repute in the time of Cyrus, whose tomb at Pasargada was adorned with them. Babylonian robes were also highly esteemed for the fineness of their texture and the brilliancy of their purple, and were used by the royal family of Persia. The commerce of that city and of Babylonia consisted in the traffic in emeralds and other precious stones; silver and gold; carpets, tapestries, and other manufactured cloths; cotton and pearls; cinnamon and other spicery, obtained from the East; and, in general, of whatever articles were produced in the eastern parts of Asia, which were naturally brought to

Babylon on the way to Western Asia and to Europe. *Thus, by the fertility of the soil; by its size and strength; by its strong and lofty walls; by its commercial advantages; and by everything that could contribute to the defense of an ancient city, Babylon seemed to be safe; and if there was any ancient city that appeared to bid defiance to the attacks of enemies, or to the ravages of time, it was Babylon. Yet Isaiah said that it should be destroyed; and in the course of our exposition we shall be greatly struck, not only with the certain fulfillment of the prediction, but with the wonderful accuracy and minuteness of the entire prophetic statement.*" [Barnes, *Notes on OT*]

THE MEDES — "Media was a country east of Assyria, which is supposed to have been populated by the descendants of Madai, son of Japheth (Gen 10:2). Ancient Media extended on the west and south of the Caspian Sea, from Armenia, on the north, to Faristan or Persia proper, on the south. It was one of the most fertile regions of Asia. It was an ancient kingdom. Ninus, the founder of the Assyrian monarchy, is said to have encountered one of its kings, whom he subdued, and whose province he made a part of the Assyrian empire. For 520 years, the Medes were subject to the Assyrians; but, in the time of Tiglath-pileser and Shalmaneser, they revolted, and, by the destruction of the army of Sennacherib before Jerusalem — an event which was itself subsequent to the delivery of this prophecy respecting Babylon — they were enabled to achieve their independence. At the time when this prophecy was uttered, therefore, Media was a dependent province of the kingdom of Assyria. Six years they passed in a sort of anarchy, until, about 700 years B.C., they found in Dejoces an upright statesman, who was proclaimed king by universal consent. His son and successor, Phraortes, subdued the Persians, and all upper Asia, and united them to his kingdom. He also attacked Assyria, and laid siege to Nineveh, the capital, but was defeated. Nineveh was finally taken by his successor, Cyaxares, with the aid of his ally, the king of Babylon; and Assyria became a province of Media. This widely-extended empire was delivered by him to his son Astyages, the father of Cyrus. Astyages reigned about 35 years, and then delivered the vast kingdom to Cyrus, about 556 years B.C., under whom the prediction of Isaiah respecting Babylon was fulfilled. In this way arose the Medo-Persian kingdom, and henceforward 'the laws of the Medes and Persians' are always mentioned together (Esth 1:9; 10:2; Dan 6:8,12). From this time, all their customs, rites, and laws, became amalgamated. In looking at this prophecy, therefore, we are to bear in mind: (1) the fact that, when it was uttered, Media was a dependent province of the kingdom of Assyria; (2) that a long time was yet to elapse before it would become an independent kingdom; (3) that it was yet to secure its independence by the aid of that very Babylon which it would finally destroy; (4) that no human foresight could predict these revolutions, and that every circumstance conspired to render this event improbable. The great strength and resources of Babylon; the fact that Media was a dependent province, and that such great revolutions must occur before this prophecy could be fulfilled, render this one of the most striking and remarkable predictions in the sacred volume." [Barnes, *Notes on OT*]

THE CALL TO WAR — "The summons is urgent: hence a threefold signal, viz., the banner-staff planted on a mountain 'made bald', the voice raised high, and the shaking of the hand, denoting a violent beckoning — all three being favorite signs with Isaiah. The destination of this army is to enter into a city of princes, namely, to enter as conquerors; for it is not the princes who invite them, but Jehovah." [K&D, *Isaiah*]

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD OVER THE NATIONS — We have seen this fact taught by Isaiah previously (Isa 10). "*I have commanded*: This is the language of God in reference to those who were about to destroy Babylon. *He claimed the control and direction of all their movements; and though the command was not understood by them as coming from him, yet it was by his*

direction, and in accordance with his plan.... *Even the LORD (v5):* ... The prophet means to say that Yahweh is coming at the head of those armies, which are the weapons of his indignation. *The weapons of his indignation:* The assembled armies of the Medes and Persians, called ‘the weapons of his indignation,’ because by them he will accomplish the purposes of his anger against the city of Babylon.” [Barnes, *Notes on OT*] “Like the Assyrians (cf. 10:5), this army is the instrument of the Lord. ‘Holy’ (v. 3) has no character reference here; but like all words from the root *qds*, it implies that the persons so designated have been set apart from others, set apart, that is, by the Lord for his purpose of punitive destruction. This is emphasized by the use of the emphatic personal pronoun ‘I’ at the start of v. 3.... The opening verses of the oracle have made it clear that the armies are the instruments of the Lord and that they are coming to execute his wrathful judgment (vv. 3, 5).” [Grogan, *Isaiah*] “To execute His wrath He had summoned His ‘sanctified ones’, i.e., according to Jer 22:7, ***those who had already been solemnly consecrated by Him to go into the battle***, and had called the heroes whom He had taken into His service, and who were His instruments in this respect, that they rejoiced with the pride of men intoxicated with victory.” [K&D, *Isaiah*]

THIS WAR WAS A JUDICIAL ACT OF GOD — This is seen in various statements made throughout the prophecy. In 3:3,5 it is stated the Lord was moving the Medes upon Babylon out of wrath and anger for the Babylonians’ sin. In 3:6 we see the war as “destruction from the Almighty”, not as a desolation from man but as destruction sent from him who has all power in heaven and on earth. “*Cruel (13:9):* This does not mean that ‘God’ is cruel, but that ***the ‘day of Yahweh’ that was coming should be unsparing and destructive to them. It would be the exhibition of justice, but not of cruelty; and the word stands opposed here to mercy, and means that God would not spare them.*** The effect would be that the inhabitants of Babylon would be destroyed. *Fierce anger:* Hebrew, ‘A glow, or burning of anger.’ The phrase denotes the most intense indignation.... *And I will cause the arrogancy (3:11):* This was the prevailing sin of Babylon, and it was on account of this pride mainly that it was overthrown.” [Barnes, *Notes on OT*]

FEAR AND TREMBLING AT THE DAY OF THE LORD — “The ‘day of the LORD’ (v.6) is a frequent prophetic theme, emphasizing the certainty and decisiveness of the Lord’s historical judgment in the future. It may be conceived in local or in universal terms. In this chapter it seems to move from the one to the other.” [Grogan, *Isaiah*] ***The “Day of the Lord” has been described by one pastor as “it is God’s day, the day when God has His way!”*** (not to deny His sovereignty but rather as a revelation of His will to the inhabitants of the earth). “*Therefore shall all hands be faint:* This is designed to denote the consternation and alarm of the people. They would be so terrified and alarmed that they would have no courage, no hope, and no power to make resistance. They would abandon their plans of defense, and give themselves up to despair.... *And every man’s heart shall melt:* Or, shall faint, so that he shall have no courage or strength.... *They shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth:* This comparison is often used in the Scriptures to denote the deepest possible pain and sorrow, as well as the suddenness with which any calamity comes upon a people (Ps 48:6; Isa 21:3; 42:14; Jer 6:24; 13:21; 22:33; 49:24; 50:43; Hos 13:13; Mic 4:9,10; John 16:21; Gal 4:19; 1 Thes 5:3).... *They shall be amazed one at another:* They shall stare with a stupid gaze on one another, indicating a state of great distress, anxiety, and alarm. They shall look to each other for aid, and shall meet in the countenances of others the same expressions of wonder and consternation.” [Barnes, *Notes on OT*]

b. The outpouring of judgement (13:9-22)

See, the day of the LORD is coming — a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger — to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it. The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light. I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless. I will make man scarcer than pure gold, more rare than the gold of Ophir. Therefore I will make the heavens tremble; and the earth will shake from its place at the wrath of the LORD Almighty, in the day of his burning anger. Like a hunted gazelle, like sheep without a shepherd, each will return to his own people, each will flee to his native land. Whoever is captured will be thrust through; all who are caught will fall by the sword. Their infants will be dashed to pieces before their eyes; their houses will be looted and their wives ravished. See, I will stir up against them the Medes, who do not care for silver and have no delight in gold. Their bows will strike down the young men; they will have no mercy on infants nor will they look with compassion on children.

Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir. Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger. And it shall be as the chased roe, and as a sheep that no man taketh up: they shall every man turn to his own people, and flee every one into his own land. Every one that is found shall be thrust through; and every one that is joined unto them shall fall by the sword. Their children also shall be dashed to pieces before their eyes; their houses shall be spoiled, and their wives ravished. Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver; and as for gold, they shall not delight in it. Their bows also shall dash the young men to pieces; and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb; their eyes shall not spare children. And Babylon, the

Lo, the day of Jehovah doth come, Fierce, with wrath, and heat of anger, To make the land become a desolation, Yea, its sinning ones He destroyeth from it. For the stars of the heavens, and their constellations, Cause not their light to shine, Darkened hath been the sun in its going out, And the moon causeth not its light to come forth. And I have appointed on the world evil, And on the wicked their iniquity, And have caused to cease the excellency of the proud, And the excellency of the terrible I make low. I make man more rare than fine gold, And a common man than pure gold of Ophir. Therefore the heavens I cause to tremble, And the earth doth shake from its place, In the wrath of Jehovah of Hosts, And in a day of the heat of his anger. And it hath been, as a roe driven away, And as a flock that hath no gatherer, Each unto his people — they turn, And each unto his land — they flee. Every one who is found is thrust through, And every one who is added falleth by sword. And their sucklings are dashed to pieces before their eyes, Spoiled are their houses, and their wives lain with. Lo, I am stirring up against them the Medes, Who silver esteem not, And gold — they delight not in it. And bows dash young men to pieces, And the fruit of the womb they pity not, On sons their eye hath no pity.

Babylon, the jewel of kingdoms, the glory of the Babylonians' pride, will be overthrown by God like Sodom and Gomorrah. She will never be inhabited or lived in through all generations; no Arab will pitch his tent there, no shepherd will rest his flocks there. But desert creatures will lie there, jackals will fill her houses; there the owls will dwell, and there the wild goats will leap about. Hyenas will howl in her strongholds, jackals in her luxurious palaces. Her time is at hand, and her days will not be prolonged. (NIV)

glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged. (KJV)

And Babylon, the beauty of kingdoms, The glory, the excellency of the Chaldeans, Hath been as overthrown by God, With Sodom and with Gomorrah. She doth not sit for ever, Nor continueth unto many generations, Nor doth Arab pitch tent there, And shepherds lie not down there. And Ziim have lain down there, And full have been their houses of howlings, And dwelt there have daughters of an ostrich, And goats do skip there. And Aiim have responded in his forsaken habitations, And dragons in palaces of delight, And near to come [is] her time, And her days are not drawn out! (YLT)

— THE HORRORS OF WAR —

NATION-WIDE ANARCHY AND CHAOS — What follows is typically taken as figurative by the commentators. While accepting those explanations, we should be reminded the Lord did darken heaven and earth during the crucifixion of Christ, and He can do it again! “The meaning of the figure evidently is, that those calamities would be such as would be appropriately denoted by the sudden extinguishment of the stars, the sun, and the moon. *As nothing would tend more to anarchy, distress, and ruin, than thus to have all the lights of heaven suddenly and forever quenched, this was an apt and forcible representation of the awful calamities that were coming upon the people.* Darkness and night, in the Scriptures, are often the emblem of calamity and distress.... *Therefore I will shake the heavens:* A strong, but common figure of speech in the Scriptures, to denote great commotions, judgments, and revolutions.... *And the earth shall remove out of her place:* A common figure in the Scriptures to denote the great effects of the wrath of God; as if even the earth should be appalled at his presence, and should tremble and flee away from the dread of his anger. It is a very sublime representation, and, as carried out often by the sacred writers, it is unequalled in grandeur, probably, in any language. Thus the hills, the mountains, the trees, the streams, the very heavens, are represented as shaken, and thrown into consternation at the presence of God; see Hab 3:6,10: ‘*He stood and measured the earth; He beheld and drove asunder the nations; And the everlasting mountains were scattered. The perpetual hills did bow; His ways are everlasting. The mountains saw thee and they trembled; The overflowing of the water passed by; The deep uttered his voice, And did lift up his hands on high.*’ See Rev 20:11: ‘*And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away.*’ The figure in Isaiah is a strong one to denote the terror of the anger of God against Babylon.” [Barnes, *Notes on OT*]

WIDESPREAD DEATH — “I will so cut off and destroy the men of Babylon, that a single man to defend the city will be more rare and valuable than fine gold. *The expression indicates that there would be a great slaughter of the people of Babylon.*” [Barnes, *Notes on OT*]

FLEEING FOR THEIR LIVES IN FEAR — “*As the chased roe*: Once so proud, lofty, arrogant, and self-confident; it shall be as the trembling gazelle, or the timid deer pursued by the hunter, and panting for safety.... *As a sheep*: Or like a scattered flock of sheep in the wilderness that has no shepherd, and no one to collect them together; an image also of that which is timid and defenseless.... *They shall every man turn unto his own people*: Babylon was the capital of the pagan world. It was a vast and magnificent city; the center of many nations. It would be the place, therefore, where numerous foreigners would take up a temporary residence, as London and other large cities are now.... The idea ... is that this great and mixed multitude would endeavor to escape the impending calamities, and flee to their own nations.” [Barnes, *Notes on OT*]

THE VICIOUSNESS OF WAR — “*Every one that is found*: In Babylon, or that is overtaken in fleeing from it. This is a description of the capture of the city, and of the slaughter that would ensue, when the invaders would spare neither age nor sex. *Every one that is joined unto them*: Their allies and friends. There shall be a vast, indiscriminate slaughter of all that are found in the city, and of those that attempt to flee from it.... *Their children also shall be dashed to pieces*: This is a description of the horrors of the capture of Babylon; and there can be none more frightful and appalling than that which is here presented. That this is done in barbarous nations in the time of war, there can be no doubt. Nothing was more common among American savages, than to dash out the brains of infants against a rock or a tree, and it was often done before the eyes of the afflicted and heartbroken parents. That these horrors were not unknown in Oriental nations of antiquity, is evident.” [Barnes, *Notes on OT*] Keil and Delitzsch translates 3:18 as follows: “*And bows dash down young men; and they have no compassion on the fruit of the womb: their eye has no pity on children.* The bows do not stand for the bowmen, but the bows of the latter dash the young men to the ground by means of the arrows shot from them. They did not spare the fruit of the womb, since they ripped up the bodies of those that were with child (2 Kings 8:12; 15:16, etc.). Even towards children they felt no emotion of compassionate regard....” [K&D, *Isaiah*]

TOTAL DESTRUCTION — “According to Herodotus, Cyrus, the leader of the Medo-Persian army, left the city still standing, with its double ring of walls. Darius Hystaspis, who had to conquer Babylon a second time in 518 B.C., had the walls entirely destroyed, with the exception of fifty cubits.... At the time of Strabo (born 60 B.C.) Babylon was a perfect desert.... All that it foretells has been literally fulfilled. The curse that Babylon would never come to be settled in and inhabited again (a poetical expression, like Jer 17:25; 33:16), proved itself an effectual one, when Alexander once thought of making Babylon the metropolis of his empire. He was carried off by an early death. Ten thousand workmen were at that time employed for two months in simply clearing away the rubbish of the foundations of the temple of Belus (the Nimrod-tower).” [K&D, *Isaiah*] “*Shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah*: That is, shall be completely and entirely overthrown; shall cease to be inhabited, and shall be perfectly desolate. It does not mean that it shall be overthrown in the same manner as Sodom was, but that it should be as completely and entirely ruined. The successive steps in the overthrow of Babylon, by which this prophecy was so signally fulfilled, were the following: (1) The taking of the city by Cyrus. This was accomplished by his clearing out the ‘Pallacopas,’ a canal that was made for the purpose of emptying the superfluous waters of the Euphrates into the lakes and marshes formed by it in the south — west borders of the province toward Arabia. Into this canal he directed the waters of the Euphrates, and

was thus enabled to enter the city in the channel of the river under the walls. He took the city by surprise, and when the inhabitants, confident of security, had given themselves up to the riot of a grand public festival; and the king and the nobles were reveling at a public entertainment.... (2) Cyrus was not the destroyer of the city, but he rather sought to preserve its magnificence, and to perpetuate its pre-eminence among the nations. He left it to his successor in all its strength and magnificence. But, after his death, it rebelled against Darius, and bade defiance to the power of the whole Persian empire.... The city was taken at that time by Darius ... [who] leveled the walls, and took away the gates, neither of which things had Cyrus done before.... (3) After its conquest by Darius ... Xerxes destroyed the temples of the city, and, among the rest, the celebrated temple or tower of Belus.... (4) The city was captured a third time, by Alexander the Great.... It was afterward taken by Antigonus, by Demetrius, by Antiochus the Great, and by the Parthians; and each successive conquest contributed to its reduction. (5) Cyrus transferred the capital from Babylon to Susa or Shusan (Neh 1:1; Ezra 2:8; 4:16; 9:11,15), which became the capital of the kingdom of Persia, and, of course, contributed much to diminish the importance of Babylon itself. (6) Seleucus Nicator founded Seleucia in the neighborhood of Babylon, on the Tigris, chiefly with a design to draw off the inhabitants of Babylon to a rival city, and to prevent its importance. A great part of its population migrated to the new city of Seleucia. Babylon thus gradually declined until it lost all its importance, and the very place where it stood was, for a long time, unknown. About the beginning of the first century, a small part of it only was inhabited, and the greater portion was cultivated. In the second century, nothing but the walls remained. It became gradually a great desert; and, in the fourth century, its walls, repaired for that purpose, formed an enclosure for wild beasts, and Babylon was converted into a hunting place for the pastime of the Persian monarchs.... *It shall never be inhabited:* This has been completely fulfilled. It is now, and has been for centuries, a scene of wide desolation, and is a heap of ruins, and there is every indication that it will continue so to be.... *Neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there:* The Arabians dwelt chiefly in tents; and were a wandering people, or engaged in traffic which was conducted in caravans traveling from place to place. The idea here is, that Babylon, so far from being occupied as a permanent residence for any people, would be unfit even for a resting place. It would be so utterly desolate, so forsaken, and so unhealthy, that the caravan would not even stop there for a night. What a charge this from its former splendor! How different from the time when it was the place of magnificent palaces, when strangers flocked to it, and when people from all nations were collected there!” [Barnes, *Notes on OT*]

INHABITED BY BEASTS — “*But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there:* this word denotes properly those animals that dwell in dry and desolate places.... *And their houses shall be full of doleful creatures:* ... the Hebrew word is found nowhere else ... [possibly] the yell or howl of wild animals is intended, and not animals themselves.... *And owls shall dwell there:* Hebrew, ‘Daughters of the owl or ostrich.’ The owl is a well-known bird that dwells only in obscure and dark retreats, giving a doleful screech, and seeking its food only at night. It is not certain, however, that the owl is intended here.... The Hebrew does not particularly denote the kind of bird intended, but means those that are distinguished for their sound — ‘the daughters of sound or clamor’.... *And satyrs shall dance there:* A satyr in mythology was a sylvan deity or demigod, represented as a monster, half man and half goat, having horns on his head, a hairy body, with the feet and tail of a goat. The word used here properly denotes that which is hairy or rough, and is applied to goats in Gen 25:25; Ps 68:21; Lev 13:10,25,26,30,32. It is often rendered ‘hair’.... They are here represented as ‘dancing;’ and in Isa 34:14, as ‘crying to each other.’ It is evident that the prophet intends animals of a rough and shaggy appearance; such as are quick and nimble in their motions;

such as dwell in deserts, in forests, or in old ruins; and such as answer to each other, or chatter. The description would certainly seem more applicable to some of the ... monkey tribe than to any other animals. It is possible, indeed, that he means merely to make use of language that was well known, as describing animals that the ancients supposed had an existence, but which really had not, as the imaginary beings called satyrs.... *And dragons*: ... a dragon properly means a kind of winged serpent much celebrated in the dark ages. Here it may not improperly be rendered jackal.” [Barnes, *Notes on OT*]

c. The Fall of the Babylonian King (14:1-11)

The LORD will have compassion on Jacob; once again he will choose Israel and will settle them in their own land. Aliens will join them and unite with the house of Jacob. Nations will take them and bring them to their own place. And the house of Israel will possess the nations as menservants and maidservants in the LORD's land. They will make captives of their captors and rule over their oppressors. On the day the LORD gives you relief from suffering and turmoil and cruel bondage, you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon: How the oppressor has come to an end! How his fury has ended! The LORD has broken the rod of the wicked, the scepter of the rulers, which in anger struck down peoples with unceasing blows, and in fury subdued nations with relentless aggression. All the lands are at rest and at peace; they break into singing. Even the pine trees and the cedars of Lebanon exult over you and say, “Now that you have been laid low, no woodsman comes to cut us down.” The grave below is all astir to meet you

For the LORD will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land; and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob. And the people shall take them, and bring them to their place; and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the LORD for servants and handmaids; and they shall take them captives, whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors. And it shall come to pass in the day that the LORD shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, and from thy fear, and from the hard bondage wherein thou wast made to serve, That thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased! The LORD hath broken the staff of the wicked, and the sceptre of the rulers. He who smote the people in wrath with a continual stroke, he that ruled the nations in anger, is persecuted, and none hindereth. The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet: they break forth into singing. Yea, the fir trees rejoice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying,

Because Jehovah loveth Jacob, And hath fixed again on Israel, And given them rest on their own land, And joined hath been the sojourner to them, And they have been admitted to the house of Jacob. And peoples have taken them, And have brought them in unto their place, And the house of Israel have inherited them, On the land of Jehovah, For men-servants and for maid-servants, And they have been captors of their captors, And have ruled over their exactors. And it hath come to pass, In the day of Jehovah's giving rest to thee, From thy grief, and from thy trouble, And from the sharp bondage, That hath been served upon thee, That thou hast taken up this simile Concerning the king of Babylon, and said, How hath the exactor ceased, Ceased hath the golden one. Broken hath Jehovah the staff of the wicked, The sceptre of rulers. He who is smiting peoples in wrath, A smiting without intermission, He who is ruling in anger nations, Pursuing without restraint! At rest — quiet hath been all the earth, They have broken forth [into] singing. Even firs have rejoiced over thee, Cedars of Lebanon — [saying]: Since thou hast lain

at your coming; it rouses the spirits of the departed to greet you — all those who were leaders in the world; it makes them rise from their thrones — all those who were kings over the nations. They will all respond, they will say to you, “You also have become weak, as we are; you have become like us.” All your pomp has been brought down to the grave, along with the noise of your harps; maggots are spread out beneath you and worms cover you. (NIV)

Since thou art laid down, no feller is come up against us. Hell 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. All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us? Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee. (KJV)

down, The hewer cometh not up against us. Sheol beneath hath been troubled at thee, To meet thy coming in, It is waking up for thee Rephaim, All chiefs ones of earth, It hath raised up from their thrones All kings of nations. All of them answer and say unto thee, Even thou hast become weak like us! Unto us thou hast become like! Brought down to Sheol hath been thine excellency, The noise of thy psaltery, Under thee spread out hath been the worm, Yea, covering thee is the worm. (YLT)

COMFORT TO THE FUTURE CAPTIVES — It is to be remembered that this prophecy was uttered at least 174 years before they were carried into captivity, and the design of the prophet is to declare the certainty of their release after they should be subjected to this bondage. Without doubt he intended this prophecy should be borne with them to Babylon (if nothing else, in their memories) and that it should comfort and sustain them when there.

FUTURE ELEVATED STATUS — “He chooses Israel once more, and therefore makes a new covenant with it. Then follows their return to Canaan, their own land, Jehovah’s land. Proselytes from among the heathen, who have acknowledged the God of the exiles, go along with them, as Ruth did with Naomi. Heathen accompany the exiles to their own place. And now their relative positions are reversed. Those who accompany Israel are now taken possession of by the latter.” [K&D, *Isaiah*]

SONG OF DELIVERANCE AGAINST THE KING OF BABYLON — “*At this point, one of the greatest poems in the whole prophetic corpus commences, running through 14:21. Its form is really that of the funeral dirge, with the characteristic limping rhythm of a Hebrew lament, so plaintive and yet ominous to the sensitive ear. The form is appropriate, for it speaks of death (14:9-11, 15). It is not sung at a funeral, however, for the subject of the song is a tyrant who will be denied proper burial, and the song lacks the pomp a great king would expect as his right at death (14:18-20). There is a considerable element of irony, so that the whole song becomes a taunt in the guise of a lament.*” [Grogan, *Isaiah*] “*Against the king of Babylon: over the king of Babylon, or in regard to him. It is not certain that any particular king of Babylon is here intended. If there was, it was probably Belshazzar, in whose reign the city was. It may, however, be designed to denote the Babylonian empire — the kingdom that had oppressed the Jews; and thus the king may be referred to as the head of the nation, and as the representative of the whole people.*” [Barnes, *Notes on OT*]

THE OPPRESSED AT REST (NATURE AND PEOPLE) — “The kingdom of Babylonia, or Chaldea, extended nearly over the whole pagan world. Now that Babylon was fallen, and that those oppressions would cease, the world is represented as in peace and quietness. *They break forth into*

singing: that is, the inhabitants of all the nations that were subject to Babylon now rejoice that they are released from its galling and oppressive yoke.... *Yea, the fir trees rejoice at thee*: They join with the inhabitants of the nations in rejoicing at thy downfall — for they now, like those inhabitants, are suffered to remain undisturbed.... The very forest is represented as rejoicing. It would be safe from the king of Babylon. He could no longer cut it down to build his palaces, or to construct his implements of war.... *The cedars of Lebanon*: The cedars of Lebanon were much celebrated for building; and it is not impossible that the king of Babylon had obtained timber from that mountain with which to construct his palaces at Babylon. They are now represented as rejoicing that he is fallen, since they would be safe and undisturbed.” [Barnes, *Notes on OT*]
 “Cypresses and cedars rejoice because of the treatment which they received from the Chaldean, who made use of the almost imperishable wood of both of them for ornamental buildings, for his siege apparatus, and for his fleets, and even for ordinary ships — as Alexander, for example, built himself a fleet of cypress-wood, and the Syrian vessels had masts of cedar.” [K&D, *Isaiah*]

SHEOL — there are four different Heb words translated at various times *grave* (KJV):

- שַׁחַת (shachath) is translated *pit, corruption, grave*
- בֹּר (bôr) is translated as *a hill, a grave, a heap*. About two / thirds of the times this word is used it refers to a hole in the ground (e.g. *a cistern, well or dungeon*).
- קֶבֶר (qevher or qeber) is translated as *a grave, a sepulcher*; a form of this word typically translated *bury, burial*.
- שְׁאוֹל (sh'ôl) is the word we would like to center on. Three passages use this word to speak of a great depth, sometimes opposite of heaven (Ps 139:8; Job 11:8; Amos 9:2; cp Deut 32:22; Isa 57:9; note since the Hebrews had no deep mines or oil wells to compare for depth, this does not rule out the possibility that these references speak of the grave only). Sheol is used in the OT 65x, is translated by the KJV 32x *grave*; 30x *hell*; 3x *pit*. The ASV and RSV transliterate the word “*sheol*”. The NIV uses *grave* with a footnote “*sheol*”. ***It is the only word used in the OT that is translated hell.***

Sheol was a place for both the good (re: Jacob, grave, Gen 37:34,35) and the wicked (re: Korah’s rebellion, pit, Num 16:30,33; re: the wicked, hell, Ps 9:17). In fact all men are said to go to sheol indiscriminately (grave, Ps 89:48). Little is said as to the state of those in sheol, whether it is a place of bliss or torment although we glean from the Lord’s statement that He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that the OT saints did go to heaven. The implication in that statement is that they were alive with Him (Ex 3:6) and is so argued by Jesus when confronted by the Sadducees (Mt 22:31,32). Sheol is said to be a place where the Lord is (*hell*, Ps 139:7,8). “Whatever be the derivation of this word, there can be no doubt of the scriptural application of it to ***the state and abode of the dead ... the invisible world, to which the souls of men depart in death.***” Prior to continuing it is important to point out **the error of annihilation**. In arguing against the doctrine of hell some immediately point to the fact *sheol* is often translated *grave*, therefore at death the ungodly cease to exist while the godly inherit eternal life. Baxter however considers *grave* an unfortunate translation: “(1) In all 65 occurrences, sheol is not once used in the plural. That is because ... sheol does not mean merely the grave. There are not two or three or more

sheols, but the one only. Instead of meaning the grave, the very word *sheol* is used to distinguish it from the grave. (2) Nowhere in all those 65 references is there any suggestion that the *body* goes to sheol. The body goes to the grave (*qeber*), but the soul to sheol. (3) Nor is sheol ever spoken of as being in the ground, or on the surface of the earth, as the grave (*qeber*) is. (4) Nor in all those 65 texts do we find that *man* ever puts anyone into sheol, as he puts bodies into graves. (5) Sheol is never spoken of as digged by man, or owned by man, or even touched by man; whereas men *do* dig and own and touch graves. (6) When the Jews of the Old Testament times meant only the grave they used a different word, *qeber*, which occurs 64 times in the Old Testament. It occurs in the plural 29 times. Dead bodies are said to be laid there, 37 times. It is said to be in the earth or ground, 32 times; also to be owned by a man, 44 times; and to have been digged or touched by men, 11 times. ***So let us grasp this once for all: qeber is the grave; sheol is the other side of it.*** [Baxter, *The Other Side of Death*]

HELL ITSELF STIRRED TO “GREET” THE FALLEN KING — “The scene is now changed. The prophet had represented the people of all the subject nations as rejoicing that the king of Babylon had fallen, and had introduced even the trees of the forest as breaking forth into joy at this event. He now transfers the scene to the mournful regions of the dead; follows the spirit of the departed king of Babylon - the man who once gloried in the magnificence of his kingdom and his court, and who was more distinguished for pride and arrogance than all other monarchs — down to the land of darkness, and describes his reception there.... *Is moved for thee*: is roused to meet thee; is surprised that a monarch once so proud and magnificent is descending to it. The image here is taken from the custom of the ancients in burying, especially of burying princes and kings. This was usually done in caves or sepulchres excavated from a rock.... ***To understand the passage before us, we are to form the idea of an immense and gloomy cavern, all around which are niches or cells made to receive the bodies of the dead. In this vast vault monarchs repose in grandeur suitable to their former rank, each on his couch, ‘in glory,’ with their arms beside them. These mighty shades — these departed monarchs — are represented as rising from their couches to meet the descending king of Babylon, and receive him with insults on his fall. The Hebrew word for ‘moved’ denotes more than our translation conveys. It means that they were ‘agitated’ — they ‘trembled’ — they advanced toward the descending monarch with trepidation. The idea of the shades of the mighty dead thus being troubled, and rising to meet the king of Babylon, is one that is exceedingly sublime.*** [Barnes, Notes on OT]

HELL’S INHABITANTS “MOCK” THE KING OF BABYLON — “To rise from one’s seat is a token of respect in many cultures. It is probable, therefore, that it indicates not only surprise but also mock homage on the part of those whose submission had been all too real, though unwilling, during their life time. They had heard the sound of the Babylonian harpers making music for the king as they were brought trembling into his court. All the pomp and circumstance have disappeared (4:11). His palace would have been replete with soft couches and lush carpets to give him all the comfort he could desire, but the maggots and decomposition had taken over.” [Grogan, *Isaiah*]

THE KING’S WORM-INFESTED COUCH — “*Thy pomp is cast down to the region of the dead, the noise of thy harps: maggots are spread under thee, and they that cover thee are worms.*’ From the book of Daniel we learn the character of the Babylonian music; it abounded in instruments, some of which were foreign. Maggots and worms (a bitter sarcasm) now take the place of the costly artistic Babylonian rugs, which once formed the pillow and counterpane of the distinguished corpse.” [K&D, *Isaiah*] Two different Hebrew words here is used for *worm* which is why the NIV translates the first as *maggot*. “*The worm (maggot, NIV)*: this word, in Hebrew

denotes *a worm that is found in putrid substances* (Ex 16:25; Job 7:5; 21:26).... *And the worm:* the same word which occurs in Isa 1:18, and rendered there as ‘crimson’. This word is usually applied to the insect from which the crimson dye was obtained; but it is also applied to the worm which preys upon the dead (Ex 16:20; Isa 66:24).... *What could be more humiliating than this language? How striking the contrast between his present situation and that in which he reposed in Babylon! And yet this language is as applicable to all others as to that proud and haughty king. It is equally true of the great and mighty everywhere; of the rich, the frivolous, the beautiful, and the proud who lie on beds of down, that they will soon lie where worms shall be their couch and their covering. How ought this reflection to humble our pride! How should it lead us to be prepared for that hour when the grave shall be our bed; and when far away from the sound of the viol and the harp; from the sweet voice of friendship and the noise of revelry, we shall mingle with our native dust!”* [Barnes, Notes on OT]

d. The End of the Babylonian King (14:12-23)

How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, “I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.” But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit. Those who see you stare at you, they ponder your fate: “Is this the man who shook the earth and made kingdoms tremble, the man who made the world a desert, who overthrew its cities and would not let his captives go home?” All the kings of the nations lie in state, each in his own tomb. But you are cast out of your tomb like a rejected branch; you are covered with the slain, with those pierced by the sword, those who descend to

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; That made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners? All the kings of the nations, even all of them, lie in glory, every one in his own house. But thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch, and as the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword, that go down to the stones of

How hast thou fallen from the heavens, O shining one, son of the dawn! Thou hast been cut down to earth, O weakener of nations. And thou saidst in thy heart: the heavens I go up, Above stars of God I raise my throne, And I sit in the mount of meeting in the sides of the north. I go up above the heights of a thick cloud, I am like to the Most High. Only — unto Sheol thou art brought down, Unto the sides of the pit. Thy beholders look to thee, to thee they attend, Is this the man causing the earth to tremble, Shaking kingdoms? He hath made the world as a wilderness, And his cities he hath broken down, Of his bound ones he opened not the house. All kings of nations — all of them, Have lain down in honour, each in his house, And — thou hast been cast out of thy grave, As an abominable branch, raiment of the slain, Thrust through ones of the sword, Going down unto the sons of the pit, As a carcase trodden down. Thou art not united with them in burial, For

the stones of the pit. Like a corpse trampled underfoot, you will not join them in burial, for you have destroyed your land and killed your people. The offspring of the wicked will never be mentioned again. Prepare a place to slaughter his sons for the sins of their forefathers; they are not to rise to inherit the land and cover the earth with their cities. "I will rise up against them," declares the LORD Almighty. "I will cut off from Babylon her name and survivors, her offspring and descendants," declares the LORD. "I will turn her into a place for owls and into swampland; I will sweep her with the broom of destruction," declares the LORD Almighty. (NIV)

the pit; as a carcass trodden under feet. Thou shalt not be joined with them in burial, because thou hast destroyed thy land, and slain thy people: the seed of evildoers shall never be renowned. Prepare slaughter for his children for the iniquity of their fathers; that they do not rise, nor possess the land, nor fill the face of the world with cities. For I will rise up against them, saith the LORD of hosts, and cut off from Babylon the name, and remnant, and son, and nephew, saith the LORD. I will also make it a possession for the bittern, and pools of water: and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith the LORD of hosts. (KJV)

thy land thou hast destroyed, Thy people thou hast slain, Not named to the age is the seed of evil doers. Prepare ye for his sons slaughter; Because of the iniquity of their fathers, They rise not, nor have possessed the land, Nor filled the face of the world [with] cities. And I have risen up against them, (The affirmation of Jehovah of Hosts,) And have cut off, in reference to Babylon, Name and remnant, and continuator and successor, The affirmation of Jehovah. And have made it for a possession of a bittern, And ponds of waters, And daubed it with the mire of destruction, The affirmation of Jehovah of Hosts! (YLT)

O LUCIFER — “*Lucifer*: margin, ‘Day-star’, from [the Hebrew word] ‘to shine’. The word in Hebrew occurs as a noun nowhere else.... The Chaldee, ‘How art thou fallen from high, who wert splendid among the sons of men.’ There can be no doubt that the object in the eye of the prophet was the bright morning star; and his design was to compare this magnificent oriental monarch with that. The comparison of a monarch with the sun, or the other heavenly bodies, is common in the Scriptures. *Son of the morning*: This is a Hebraism and signifies that that bright star is, as it were, the production, or the offspring of morning; or that it belongs to the morning. The word ‘son’ often thus denotes possession, or that one thing belongs to another. The same star in one place represents the Son of God himself, Rev 21:16: ‘I am — the bright and morning star.’” [Barnes, *Notes on OT*] “Helel (‘morning star’) has possible links with Akkadian *elletu* (‘Ishtar’) and Arabic *hīlal* (‘new moon’).... **It is clear enough that in all these Semitic languages the root suggests brightness.** In the Ras Shamra polytheism, the morning star attempts to climb beyond all other heavenly bodies to the mountain of the gods in the far north. This would challenge the supremacy of *el elyon*, the Monarch of the gods. He is cast down. It seems likely that elements of the myth, probably well-known throughout Canaan, provide features of the analogy that runs through 14:12-15. Such an analogy from mythology would be particularly appropriate when applied to the polytheistic Babylonians, whose mythology had many links with that of Ugarit.” [Grogan, *Isaiah*]

IS THIS A REFERENCE TO THE FALL OF THE DEVIL? — The morning star: “From *hālal*, to shine, resolved from *hillel*.... It derives its name in other ancient languages also from its striking brilliancy, and is here called *ben-shachar* (sun of the dawn), just as in the classical mythology it is called son of Eos, from the fact that it rises before the sun, and swims in the morning light as if

that were the source of its birth. *Lucifer, as a name given to the devil, was derived from this passage, which the fathers interpreted, without any warrant whatever, as relating to the apostasy and punishment of the angelic leaders.* The appellation is a perfectly appropriate one for the king of Babel, on account of the early date of the Babylonian culture, which reached back as far as the grey twilight of primeval times, and also because of its predominant astrological character.... *A retrospective glance is now cast at the self-deification of the king of Babylon, in which he was the antitype of the devil and the type of antichrist (Dan 11:36; 2 Thess 2:4), and which had met with its reward.*” [K&D, *Isaiah*] In its strictest historical context, the text continues its mocking of the Babylonian king at the destruction of Babylon. Frequently in scripture however the Lord has dual intentions and many historical truths illustrate spiritual truths as well; for example, I have no doubt the fall of Satan is typified here although I strictly think the passage speaks of Babylon. I also take that interpretation of the Lord’s virgin birth as discussed in Isaiah 7. “This passage itself seems to be echoed by the Lord Jesus in Lk 10:18, where language applied here to the king of Babylon is used of Satan. Nothing could be more appropriate, for the pride of the king of Babylon was truly satanic. When Satan works his malign will through rulers of this world, he reproduces his own wicked qualities in them, so that they become virtual shadows of which he is the substance.” [Grogan, *Isaiah*]

PRIDE: THE BABYLONIAN KING’S DOWNFALL — “The dominant feature of 14:13,14 is undoubtedly the repetition of the word ‘I.’ Only God himself has a right to speak in this fashion (13:11-12; 14:24-25; 41:9-10, 17-19 et al.). The analogy from Canaanite mythology probably extends to the reference to the sacred mountain. Like the proud figure in the myth, the king of Babylon sought for absolute sovereignty. *It is a strange paradox that nothing makes a being less like God than the urge to be his equal, for he who was God stepped down from the throne of his glory to display to the wondering eyes of men the humility of God* (Phil 2:5-8).” [Grogan, *Isaiah*] “*I will ascend into heaven:* Nothing could more strikingly show the arrogance of the monarch of Babylon than this impious design. The meaning is that he intended to set himself up as supreme, he designed that all should pay homage to him, he did not intend to acknowledge the authority of God. It is not to be understood literally; but it means that he intended not to acknowledge any superior either in heaven or earth, but designed that himself and his laws should be regarded as supreme.... *I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation:* ... The leading idea of his heart, which ought to guide our interpretation, was, that he designed ‘to ascend in authority over all inferior beings, and to be like the Most High.’ We are to remember that Babylon was a city of idolatry; and it is most probable that by ‘the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north,’ there is reference to a belief prevalent in Babylon that the gods had their residence on some mountain of the north. This was a common opinion among the ancients.... *I will be like the Most High:* there is a remarkable resemblance between this language and that used in 2 Thes 2:4, in regard to antichrist: ‘*He, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.*’ And this similarity is the more remarkable, because antichrist is represented, in Rev 17:4,5, as seated in BABYLON — the spiritual seat of arrogance, oppression, and pride. Probably Paul had the passage in Isaiah in his eye when he penned the description of antichrist.... *Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell:* Hebrew, ‘To sheol’ (cp Isa 14:9).” [Barnes, *Notes on OT*]

FROM THE HEIGHTS TO THE DEPTHS — “*They that see thee:* that is, after thou art dead. The scene here changes, and the prophet introduces those who would contemplate the body of the king of Babylon after he should be slain — the passers-by arrested with astonishment, that one so proud and haughty was at last slain, and cast out among the common dead. *Shall narrowly look upon thee:* to be certain that they were not deceived. This denotes great astonishment, as if they

could scarcely credit the testimony of their senses. It also expresses insult and contempt. They ask whether it is possible that one who so recently shook the kingdoms of the earth should now lie cast out as unworthy of a burial.” [Barnes, *Notes on OT*] “We know from the Egyptian pyramids and other royal tombs how much stress was put on proper burial — with all the proper rites and ceremonies — in the Fertile Crescent in OT times. How horrifying to a great king of Babylon and to many of his contemporaries would be the prospect of his lying out in the open, unburied, his royal body undistinguished and perhaps indistinguishable from those of his soldiers, to be thrown into a common burial pit! What is the cause of such a fate? The great king — like Napoleon, Hitler, and many another — has led many of his people into death on the battlefield to gratify his lust for power. God therefore makes the punishment fit the crime.” [Grogan, *Isaiah*] ***“The scene which passes before the mind of the prophet is the field of battle. To clear this they made a hole and throw stones on the top, without taking the trouble to shovel in the earth; but the king of Babylon is left lying there, like a carcase that is trampled under foot, and deserves nothing better than to be trampled under foot. They do not even think him worth throwing into a hole along with the rest of the corpses.”*** [K&D, *Isaiah*]

THE KING’S POSTERITY CUT OFF — “*Prepare slaughter for his children:* that is, cut them off not only from inheriting the honor of their father, but from life. This command seems to be directed to the Medes and Persians, and denotes that they would thus cut off his children.... *That they do not rise:* that they do not rise to occupy the places of their fathers; that they be degraded and reduced from their elevation and honored.... *And cut off from Babylon the name:* that is, all the males of the royal family, so that the name of the monarch shall become extinct. *And remnant:* All that is left of them; so that the family shall cease to exist. *The son and nephew:* Everyone of the family who could claim to be an heir of the throne. The dynasty shall cease; and the proud and haughty family shall become wholly extinct.” [Barnes, *Notes on OT*] “It is not only all over for ever with him, but it is so with his dynasty also. The prophet, the messenger of the penal justice of God, and the mouthpiece of that Omnipotence which regulates the course of history, commands this. ‘*Prepare a slaughter-house for his sons, because of the iniquity of their fathers! They shall not rise and conquer lands, and fill the face of the earth with cities.*’” This exhortation is addressed to the Medes, if the prophet had any particular persons in his mind at all. After the nocturnal storming of Babylon by the Medes, the new Babylonian kingdom and royal house which had been established by Nabopolassar vanished entirely from history.” [K&D, *Isaiah*]

“The analogy the passage closes with, though based on a most ordinary domestic situation, has an eloquence all its own. The reader can almost hear the woman of the house breathing a sigh of relief as she sweeps the rubbish out her door, knowing that her house is at last clean and fit for human habitation. Rubbish fit only for the broom of judgment — this was God’s verdict on mighty Babylon!”

from THE EXPOSITOR’S BIBLE COMMENTARY on CD Rom; “*Isaiah*” by Geoffrey W. Grogan; BD., M.Th.,
University of London — Principal, Bible Training Institute, Glasgow, Scotland

“See, the day of the LORD is coming — a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger — to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it.... I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless.”

— Isaiah 13:9, 11 NIV