



SL#1 ISAIAH

Week 9: Isaiah 13&14 BABYLON

Trusted. Obedient. Prophetic.

Winter 2023 w/Wednesday Night Crew

1/25 – Ch.1

2/1 – Ch. 2 Mill.Reign

2/8

2/15 – Gone PR

2/22 – Home Tues. Gone?

3/1

3/8 – PRM Holy Spirit(11&12)

3/15 -PO Ahaz

3/22

3/29 – PR Hezekiah

4/5 Baptism ☺

4/12 – PR ROBIN Nation

4/19 – Manasseh PO

4/26 – Messianic PO

5/3 – BEGIN PHIL. PR

5/10 –

5/17

5/24

5/31

June-August PENTECOST

RECAP: NONE

Hosea, Micah & Isaiah

Isaiah – 13&14 BABYLON

What is Babylon?

Who are the people of?

Why so threaded through Scripture?

Isaiah’s concern with...stern denouncement.

ISAIAH 13

SL#3 Isaiah 13:1-6 HCSB

An Oracle against Babylon

13 An oracle against Babylon that Isaiah son of Amoz saw:

<sup>2</sup> Lift up a banner on a barren mountain.

Call out to them.

Wave your hand, and they will go through the gates of the nobles.

<sup>3</sup> I have commanded My chosen ones;

I have also called My warriors,

who exult in My triumph,

to execute My wrath.

<sup>4</sup> Listen, a tumult on the mountains,

like that of a mighty people!

Listen, an uproar among the kingdoms,

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like nations being gathered together!  
The Lord of Hosts is mobilizing an army for war.

<sup>5</sup> They are coming from a far land,  
from the distant horizon—  
the Lord and the weapons of His wrath—  
to destroy the whole country.<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Wail! For the day of the Lord is near.  
It will come like destruction from the Almighty.

### **SL#4 Isaiah 13:7-11**

<sup>7</sup> Therefore everyone's hands will become weak,  
and every man's heart will melt.

<sup>8</sup> They will be horrified;  
pain and agony will seize them;  
they will be in anguish like a woman in labor.  
They will look at each other,  
their faces flushed with fear.

<sup>9</sup> Look, the day of the Lord is coming—  
cruel, with rage and burning anger—  
to make the earth a desolation  
and to destroy the sinners on it.

<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the stars of the sky and its constellations<sup>[b]</sup>  
will not give their light.

The sun will be dark when it rises,  
and the moon will not shine.

<sup>11</sup> I will bring disaster on the world,  
and their own iniquity, on the wicked.

**I will put an end to the pride of the arrogant  
and humiliate the insolence of tyrants.**

### **SL#5 Isaiah 13:12-18**

<sup>12</sup> I will make man scarcer than gold,  
and mankind more rare than the gold of Ophir.

<sup>13</sup> Therefore I will make the heavens tremble,  
and the earth will shake from its foundations  
at the wrath of the Lord of Hosts,  
on the day of His burning anger.

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<sup>14</sup> Like wandering gazelles  
and like sheep without a shepherd,  
each one will turn to his own people,  
each one will flee to his own land.  
<sup>15</sup> Whoever is found will be stabbed,  
and whoever is caught will die by the sword.  
<sup>16</sup> Their children will be smashed to death before their eyes;  
their houses will be looted, and their wives raped.  
<sup>17</sup> Look! I am stirring up the Medes against them,  
who cannot be bought off with silver  
and who have no desire for gold.  
<sup>18</sup> Their bows will cut young men to pieces.  
They will have no compassion on little ones;  
they will not look with pity on children.

### **SL#6 Isaiah 13:19-22**

<sup>19</sup> And Babylon, the jewel of the kingdoms,  
the glory of the pride of the Chaldeans,  
will be like Sodom and Gomorrah  
when God overthrew them.  
<sup>20</sup> It will never be inhabited  
or lived in from generation to generation;  
a nomad will not pitch his tent there,  
and shepherds will not let their flocks rest there.  
<sup>21</sup> But desert creatures will lie down there,  
and owls will fill the houses.  
Ostriches will dwell there,  
and wild goats will leap about.  
<sup>22</sup> Hyenas will howl in the fortresses,  
and jackals, in the luxurious palaces.  
Babylon's time is almost up;  
her days are almost over.

- Who is this nation that DESERVES (has earned!) this consequence?
- What do I see of God in these words?
- What would it be like to actually HEAR Isaiah say this to the crowd with me in it?

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**NOTES:**

I. (NOT Daniel's Babylon with Nebuchadnezzar)

**SL#7**

Dockery, D. S., ed. (1992). [Holman Bible Handbook](#) (pp. 282–283). Holman Bible Publishers.

**BABYLONIAN RULERS**

<b>RULER</b>	<b>DATES OF RULE</b>	<b>SCRIPTURE REFERENCE</b>
Merodach-Baladan II (Marduk-apal-iddin)	721–689 B.C.	2 Kgs 20:12; Isa 39:1
Nabopolassar	625–605 B.C.	
Nebuchadnezzar II (Nebuchadrezzar II)	605–562 B.C.	2 Kgs 24–25; Dan 1–4
Evil-Merodach (Amel-Marduk)	562–560 B.C.	2 Kgs 25:27–30; Jer 52:31–34
Nergal-Sharezer (Nergal-shar-usur, or Neriglissar)	560–556 B.C.	Jer 39:3, 13
Labashi-Marduk	556 B.C.	
Nabonidus (Nabu-na'id)	556–539 B.C.	
Belshazzar (Bel-shar-usur)	Co-regent with Nabonidus 556–539 B.C.	Dan 5; 7:1

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**SL#8**

**MORE LIKE THIS:**

Dockery, D. S., ed. (1992). [Holman Bible Handbook](#) (pp. 282–283). Holman Bible Publishers.

**ASSYRIAN RULERS**

<b>RULER</b>	<b>DATES OF RULE</b>	<b>SCRIPTURE REFERENCE</b>
Ashur-uballit I	1354–1318 B.C.	
Adad-nirari I	1318–1264 B.C.	
Shalmaneser I (Shulman-asharid)	1264–1234 B.C.	
Tukulti-Ninurta I	1234–1197 B.C.	
Ashur-dan I	1179–1133 B.C.	
Tiglath-pileser I (Tukulti-apil-Ešarra)	1115–1076 B.C.	
Ashur-rabi II	1012–972 B.C.	
Ashur-resh-ishi II	972–967 B.C.	
Tiglath-pileser II	967–935 B.C.	
Ashur-dan II	935–912 B.C.	
Adad-nirari II	912–889 B.C.	
Tukulti-Ninurta II	889–884 B.C.	
Ashurnasirpal II (Ashur-nasir-apli II)	884–858 B.C.	
Shalmaneser III (Shalman-Ashar-id II)	858–824 B.C.	
Shamsi-Adad V	824–810 B.C.	

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Adad-nirari III	810-782 B.C.	
Shalmaneser IV	782-773 B.C.	
Ashur-dan III	773-754 B.C.	
Ashur-nirari V	754-745 B.C.	
Tiglath-pileser III (Tukulti-apil-Ešarra III, or Tiglath-pilneser, or Pul(u))	745-727 B.C.	2 Kgs 15:19, 29; 16:7-10
Shalmaneser V (Ululai)	727-722 B.C.	2 Kgs 17:1-6
Sargon II	721-705 B.C.	
Sennacherib (Sin-abho-eriba)	704-681 B.C.	2 Kgs 18-19
Esarhaddon	681-669 B.C.	
Ashurbanipal	669-633 B.C.	
Ashur-etil-ilani	633-622 B.C.	
Sin-shur-ishkun	621-612 B.C.	
Ashur-uballit	612-608 B.C.	

**ANCIENT!** (not eternal....whether they think so or not.)

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II. **SL#9** BACKGROUND

**A.LBD**

Kelly, W. L. (2016). [Babylon, Culture of](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, L. Wentz, E. Ritzema, & W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Lexham Press.

**BABYLON** (בָּבֶל, *bbl*; Βαβυλων, *Babylōn*; Akkadian: *Bab-iliu*; “the gate of god[s]”).

- The cultural and political center of Mesopotamia during much of the second and first millennia BC.
- Located in modern-day Iraq along one branch of the Euphrates River, about 59 miles southwest of Baghdad and 6 miles northeast of Hillah.
- **The two principal features of Babylonia’s geography are the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. Rising in mountainous eastern Turkey, they initially flow in opposite directions but converge near Baghdad and join farther south to flow into the Persian Gulf.**
- People began inhabiting the plains of Mesopotamia around 5000 BC.
- Ancient Near Eastern texts describe the original location of Babylon as a sacred site dedicated to Marduk. Sargon’s son, Sharkalisharri, provides the earliest literary reference to Babylon in 2250 BC using the Sumerian name *Ka-dingirra*. During the Ur III period, Babylon was small and limited in its influence, maintaining only a regional governor (Wiseman, *Nebuchadrezzar and Babylon*, 43).
- After the **fall of Ur** in 2004 BC, Mesopotamia became a patchwork of smaller city-states characterized by rivals and disputes (Oates, *Babylon*, 60–61).

**SL#10** **Genesis 15:6-8** HCSB

<sup>6</sup>*Abram believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness.*

<sup>7</sup>*He also said to him, “I am Yahweh who **brought you from Ur** of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess.”*

[Genesis 11:27-32 – Terah and Abraham leave Ur]

<sup>27</sup>*These are the family records of Terah. Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran, and Haran fathered Lot. <sup>28</sup>Haran died in his native land, in Ur of the Chaldeans, during his father Terah’s lifetime. <sup>29</sup>Abram and Nahor took wives: Abram’s wife was named Sarai, and Nahor’s wife was named Milcah. She was the daughter of Haran, the father of both Milcah and Iscah. <sup>30</sup>Sarai was unable to conceive; she did not have a child.*

<sup>31</sup>*Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot (Haran’s son), and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram’s wife, and they set out together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled there. <sup>32</sup>Terah lived 205 years and died in Haran.*

The Old Babylonian Period (2003–1595 BC)

- **King Hammurabi** (1792–1750 BC) the sixth king of the Amorite Dynasty, enlarged the city and developed it into a prosperous center for religion and trade (Wiseman, “Babylon,” 475).
- He united much of the region surrounding Babylon and **viewed his reign as the epitome of justice, commissioning a detailed legal code.**

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**SL#11** *Replica of the Stele of Hammurabi (dating from 1765 B.C.) on which is inscribed the **Code of Hammurabi** [ham. u. ra. be] —a Babylonian law code written during the reign of Hammurabi.*  
Dockery, D. S., ed. (1992). [\*Holman Bible Handbook\*](#) (p. 183). Holman Bible Publishers.



- Roughly 200 years after Hammurabi’s reign, the Hittite kingdom expanded south and razed Babylon as it progressed down the Euphrates River. This attack left the city vulnerable, and Kassite tribes from the East overtook the empire and ended the Dynasty (Sasson, “King Hammurabi of Babylon,” 913).

Middle Babylonian period or Early Neo-Babylonian period (From 1595–626 BC)

During the Kassite Dynasty (1595–1155 BC),

- Babylon became the religious and ceremonial capital of the nation. Arnold writes, “Perhaps the single greatest accomplishment of the Kassite Dynasty was the formation of a national monarchy with clearly defined borders similar to the geographical reach of Hammurabi’s brief empire” (Arnold, *Who Were the Babylonians?*, 66).
- Babylonian influence and culture spread throughout the ancient world during the Kassite reign.



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- Its science was revered all over the world, and the Amarna Letters (1385–1355 BC) discovered in Egypt show that the Babylonian language was the *lingua franca* of the period (Arnold, *Who Were the Babylonians?*, 68).
- Sommerfeld attributes the Babylonian works *Epic of Gilgamesh* and *Enuma Elish* to the period of the Kassites (Sommerfeld, “The Kassites of Ancient Mesopotamia,” 927–29). **The Enuma Elish records a creation narrative that elevates Marduk to the supreme position in the pantheon.**

After the fall of the Kassite Dynasty, Babylon lost much of its splendor. The unstable governments of local dignitaries and Assyrian overlords characterized the end of the 2nd millennium (Wiseman, “Babylon,” 475).

### **Assyrian king Tukulti-Ninurta I (1244–1208 BC) officially brought Babylon under Assyrian control and moved the statue of Marduk from Babylon to Ashur**

(Saggs, *The Greatness that was Babylon*, 85). Shalmaneser III (858–824 BC), grandson of Tukulti-Ninurta, claims: “I marched against Akkad [Babylonia] to avenge Mardukshumiddin ... I entered Kutha, Babylon, and Borsippa, offered sacrifices to the gods of the sacred cities of Akkad. I went [further] downstream to Chaldea and received tribute from all kings of Chaldea” (ANET, 277).

- When the powerful Tiglath-Pileser III (744–727 BC), known as “Pul” in the Old Testament (2 Kgs 15:19; 1 Chr 5:26), ascended to the throne, Assyria became feared as an international power. Tiglath-Pileser took the name “King of Sumer and Akkad,” declaring all of Babylon his vassals (Oates, *Babylon*, 114). **ISAIAH’S TIME**

### **Biblical Relevance**

- 287 references to Babylon in the Old Testament and 82 references to its Chaldean inhabitants.

#### **SL#12 Pentateuch**

##### **Genesis 10:8-10**

*Cush fathered Nimrod, who was the first powerful man on earth. <sup>9</sup> He was a powerful hunter in the sight of the Lord. That is why it is said, “Like Nimrod, a powerful hunter in the sight of the Lord.” <sup>10</sup> His kingdom started with Babylon, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.*

##### **Genesis 11:9**

*Therefore its name is called Babylon,<sup>[a]</sup> for there the Lord confused the language of the whole earth, and from there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth.*

- a. [Genesis 11:9](#) In Hb, the name Babylon sounds like the word “confuse.”

Disregarding the Akkadian etymology “the gate of god,” the author of Genesis highlights the Hebrew wordplay between *babel* (“the city”) and *balal* (“to mix or confuse”). Therefore, instead of understanding Babylon to be a divine city like those in Mesopotamia, the Israelites likely viewed it as the epitome of human pride and confusion in the relationship between God and humans (Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 486). Kelly, W. L. (2016). [Babylon, Culture of](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, L. Wentz, E. Ritzema, & W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Lexham Press.

- Babylon’s fall in 539 BC ended the conflict between Babylon and Israel. (To Cyrus of Persia – Isaiah 13:7)

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According to the prophets, Yahweh used Babylon to judge His people for their unfaithfulness. Habakkuk prophesies: "For behold I [Yahweh] am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation who march through the breadth of the earth to seize dwelling not their own. They are dreaded and fearsome; their justice and dignity go forth from themselves" (Hab 1:6–7 ESV). However, Yahweh's use of Babylon did not correct their national wickedness. Isaiah 13–14 captures the theological portrayal of pomp and arrogance that parallels other biblical references to Babylon. Isaiah's prophecy indicts Babylon for her wickedness and pride: "And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the splendor and pomp of the Chaldeans, will be like Sodom and Gomorrah when God overthrew them" (Isa 13:19, ESV). Isaiah continues in chapter 14 with a taunt against the king of Babylon, declaring his eternal demise in the depths of Sheol (Isa 14:3–9). The power of Babylon could not stand before Yahweh. Even as Daniel portrays the ferocity and wealth of Nebuchadnezzar, the power of the Most High God is undeniable (Dan 4:1–3).

#### **SL#13** *Babylon in the New Testament*

**Matthew 1:6** and Jesse fathered King David. **From David to the Babylonian Exile** Then David fathered Solomon by Uriah's wife,

**Matthew 1:11-12** From the Exile to the Messiah and Josiah fathered Jechoniah and his brothers at the time of the exile to **Babylon**. Then after the exile to **Babylon** Jechoniah fathered Shealtiel, Shealtiel fathered Zerubbabel,

#### **Matthew 1:17**

So all the generations from Abraham to David were 14 generations; and from David until the exile to **Babylon**, 14 generations; and from the exile to **Babylon** until the Messiah, 14 generations.

#### **Acts 7:43**

No, you took up the tent of Moloch and the star of your god Rephan, the images that you made to worship. So I will deport you beyond **Babylon**!

#### **1 Peter 5:13**

The church in **Babylon**, also chosen, sends you greetings, as does Mark, my son.

#### **Revelation 14:8**

A second angel followed, saying: "It has fallen, **Babylon** the Great has fallen, who made all nations drink the wine of her sexual immorality, which brings wrath."

#### **Revelation 16:19**

The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. **Babylon** the Great was remembered in God's presence; He gave her the cup filled with the wine of His fierce anger.

#### **Revelation 17:5**

On her forehead a cryptic name was written: **BABYLON** THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE VILE THINGS OF THE EARTH.

#### **Revelation 18:1-2** The Fall of Babylon the Great

After this I saw another angel with great authority coming down from heaven, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor. He cried in a mighty voice: It has fallen, **Babylon** the Great has fallen! She has become a dwelling for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, and a haunt for every unclean and despicable beast.

#### **Revelation 18:9** The World Mourns Babylon's Fall

The kings of the earth who have committed sexual immorality and lived luxuriously with her will weep and mourn over her when they see the smoke of her burning.

#### **Revelation 18:10**

They will stand far off in fear of her torment, saying: Woe, woe, the great city, **Babylon**, the mighty city! For in a single hour your judgment has come.

#### **Revelation 18:21** The Finality of Babylon's Fall

Then a mighty angel picked up a stone like a large millstone and threw it into the sea, saying: In this way, **Babylon the great city will be thrown down violently and never be found again.**

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The New Testament refers to Babylon 12 times. Friesen comments on these occurrences: “Matthew and Acts refer to Babylonian exile as a way of understanding Jesus in relation to Israel’s history, while 1 Peter and Revelation use Babylon as a symbol for Rome” (Friesen, “Babylon, NT,” 379). Matthew 1:17 highlights the importance of Israel’s time in Babylon by noting the generational symmetry between Abraham, David, Babylon, and Jesus; in this interpretation, Israel’s time in Babylon—cut off from the promised land—serves as a turning point in biblical salvation-history. Kelly, W. L. (2016). [Babylon, Culture of](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, L. Wentz, E. Ritzema, & W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Lexham Press.

### B. Horton:

Horton, S. M. (2000). [Isaiah: A Logion Press Commentary](#) (pp. 135–163). Logion Press.

- Babylon in Assyrian times **was the greatest center of trade and industry** in the Tigris-Euphrates valley.

Even at the time of Joshua’s conquest of Jericho, “a goodly Babylonish garment” was highly prized:

#### SL#14 Joshua 7:21

*When I saw among the spoils a beautiful cloak from Babylon,<sup>[a]</sup> 200 silver shekels,<sup>[a]</sup> and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels,<sup>[a]</sup> I coveted them and took them.<sup>(b)</sup> You can see for yourself. They are concealed in the ground inside my tent, with the money under the cloak.”)*

Cr:

Genesis 3:6

<sup>6</sup>Then the woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

Samuel 12:2-4

<sup>2</sup>The rich man had a large number of sheep and cattle, <sup>3</sup>but the poor man had nothing except one small ewe lamb that he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up, living with him and his children. It shared his meager food and drank from his cup; it slept in his arms, and it was like a daughter to him. <sup>4</sup>Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man could not bring himself to take one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the poor man’s lamb and prepared it for his guest.<sup>[c]</sup>

1 John 2:16

<sup>16</sup>For everything that belongs to<sup>[d]</sup> the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one’s lifestyle—is not from the Father, but is from the world.

- Babylon **claimed** religious and cultural leadership of the world in Isaiah’s day.
- The state letters of Assyria show that the Assyrians included the gods of Babylon among their own: Bel(Marduk) and Nabu (Nebo)

(Bel and Nabu are mentioned without any reference to any other god, as if they were the chief or most revered gods of that particular Assyrian king.)<sup>3</sup>

- Babylon dominated Assyria’s religion. WHY?  
(Look at the chart. Assyria was [longevity of leadership] way more powerful.)

Assyria, for all its ruthless military might, did not treat Babylon as a state of minor importance. Babylon never did consent to be incorporated into the Assyrian Empire. Tiglath-Pileser III “left their liberties and territory alike unimpaired.”

Horton, S. M. (2000). [Isaiah: A Logion Press Commentary](#) (pp. 135–163). Logion Press.

- It was Babylon’s “internal disunity” that politically weakened her to become a city of Assyria. Horton, S. M. (2000). [Isaiah: A Logion Press Commentary](#) (pp. 135–163). Logion Press.
- Isaiah knew:
  - Assyrian “control” was fragile.
  - Assyria desired Babylon’s prestige and would compromise to get it:

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Until Sennacherib finally destroyed the city, Assyrian kings had prided themselves on being protectors of Babylon, and they were extremely patient with the people of the city. Some Assyrian kings even sent part of the spoil from their conquests to Babylon instead of sending it all to Nineveh.

Horton, S. M. (2000). [Isaiah: A Logion Press Commentary](#) (pp. 135–163). Logion Press.

- No king of Assyria dared to proclaim himself king of Babylon just because he conquered the city.

Usually Assyrian kings added the name of a conquered country to a list of those they ruled. Tiglath-Pileser III made Babylon the first great objective in his dream of a world empire. But not until two years before he died do we find the Nimrud Tablet declaring him “king of Babylon.” Horton, S. M. (2000). [Isaiah: A Logion Press Commentary](#) (pp. 135–163). Logion Press.

- A legitimate king of Babylon must be recognized by Marduk(Bel).

Assyrian recognition of the Babylonian god Bel (identified with Marduk) as **the supreme god made**

- the Assyrian kings fear to disobey the demands of the Babylonian priests of Marduk:  
A legitimate king of Babylon must be recognized by Marduk.

**This meant the king must be in Babylon on New Year’s Day each year and perform the illustrious but humbling ceremony of taking the hands of Bel-Marduk. [Akitu Festival]**

\*\*\*Most Assyrian kings did not wish to do this, so they contented themselves with a lesser title. Shalmaneser V, for example, proclaimed himself “the mighty king, king of the universe, king of Assyria, king of the four regions of the world ... king of Sumer and Akkad,” but he was only “viceroy,” or vice president, of Babylon. Sargon did the same.<sup>11</sup>

Horton, S. M. (2000). [Isaiah: A Logion Press Commentary](#) (pp. 135–163). Logion Press.

Marduk’s influence extended far beyond Babylon’s borders, even when Babylon was not the imperial center. For instance, the Assyrian king Esarhaddon apparently favored Marduk and Nabû over Aššur, the eponymous god of Esarhaddon’s empire. Many documents from the Assyrian king’s reign identify Marduk as Bel (e.g., “Vassal-Treaties of Esarhaddon,” lines 431–32, *ANET*, 534–41; “Oracles Concerning Esarhaddon,” *ANET*, 605; “Divine Revelations,” *ANET*, 623–32). Crouser, W. (2016). [Bel](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, L. Wentz, E. Ritzema, & W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Lexham Press.

*The Akitu Festival – Babylonian New Year Festival* honored Bel/Marduk by:

- The cleansing of Bel’s temple
- Priestly offerings of animal sacrifices, prayers, and a recitation of the *Enūma Eliš*
- The king “took Bel by the hand” at the climax of the festival.

[This event, which portrayed the enthronement of the deity, involved a grand procession of the statue of Bel through the streets of Babylon (Black, “New Year Ceremonies”). ]

- After the procession, the statue was transferred from a horse-pulled chariot to a boat, and the statue eventually arrived at the *akītu* house outside the city’s walls, where an extravagant feast was prepared for the statues of several important Babylonian deities.

First millennium Babylonians seem to have considered the *akītu* festival extremely significant. Many records provide evidence for this conclusion, listing when the Babylonians celebrated the festival and when they were unable to do so, often due to war or religious neglect (see *ANET*, 306–307; Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 1, 7, 14–17).

Marduk retained the title of Bel even after Cyrus conquered Babylon, as evidenced in the Cyrus Cylinder (see *ANET*, 315–16). In this inscription, Cyrus considers his own reign to be under the favor of Bel and Nabû (22) and entreats various deities to ask Bel and Nabû to grant him a long life because of the good he has done and the peace he has brought upon the land (33–36). Crouser, W. (2016). [Bel](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, L. Wentz, E. Ritzema, & W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Lexham Press.

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The association among the temple, the installation of the god in the temple, and the god's control of the cosmos from the temple is nowhere more dramatically presented than in the Akitu festival, which celebrates **the renewal of rule and order through the ceremonial reinstatement of the deity in the temple.** [YEARLY RECOMMITMENT CEREMONY]

The Babylonian Akitu does exemplify a cosmogonic New Year's festival: through its rites, the Esagila temple, and hence the world, are symbolically razed, purified, and re-created; kingship, and hence cosmic order, are abolished and renewed. Thus the Akitu festival also effects a return to the time of creation, which culminated in the enthronement of Marduk and the construction by the gods of Marduk's temple in Babylon, the Esagila.

Walton, J. H. (2011). [Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology](#) (p. 119). Eisenbrauns.

- NO ONE OR NO THING CAN DEFY THE POWER OF BABYLON  
Babylon, from the time of the tower of Babel, was representative of any world power which rose up in proud disobedience to God. Its fall looked ahead to the final fall of the Babylon-like world system described in chapters 17 and 18 of the Book of Revelation.  
Horton, S. M. (2000). [Isaiah: A Logion Press Commentary](#) (pp. 135–163). Logion Press.
- Babylon (or *Bab-ilu*, meaning “gate of god”).

Elwell, W. A., & Comfort, P. W. (2001). In [Tyndale Bible dictionary](#) (pp. 137–139). Tyndale House Publishers.

### SL#15 Tower of Babel:

#### Genesis 11:1-9

*At one time the whole earth had the same language and vocabulary. <sup>2</sup> As people migrated from the east, they found a valley in the land of Shinar and settled there. <sup>3</sup> They said to each other, “Come, let us make oven-fired bricks.” They used brick for stone and asphalt for mortar. <sup>4</sup> And they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the sky. Let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise, we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth.”*

*<sup>5</sup> Then the Lord came down to look over the city and the tower that the men were building. <sup>6</sup> The Lord said, “If they have begun to do this as one people all having the same language, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. <sup>7</sup> Come, let Us go down there and confuse their language so that they will not understand one another’s speech.” <sup>8</sup> So from there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth, and they stopped building the city. <sup>9</sup> Therefore its name is called Babylon, for there the Lord confused the language of the whole earth, and from there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth.*

The first ziggurat at Babylon was built by Shar-kali-sharri, king of Akkad in the latter part of the 23rd century BC. Archaeologists understand that this ziggurat was destroyed and rebuilt several times across the centuries. It apparently lay in ruins from some time around 2000 BC to around 1830 BC, at which time a forebear of Hammurabi (1728–1636 BC) founded or rebuilt the city named Bab-ilu or *Babel*.

Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). [Babel](#). In *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* (Vol. 1, pp. 242–243). Baker Book House.

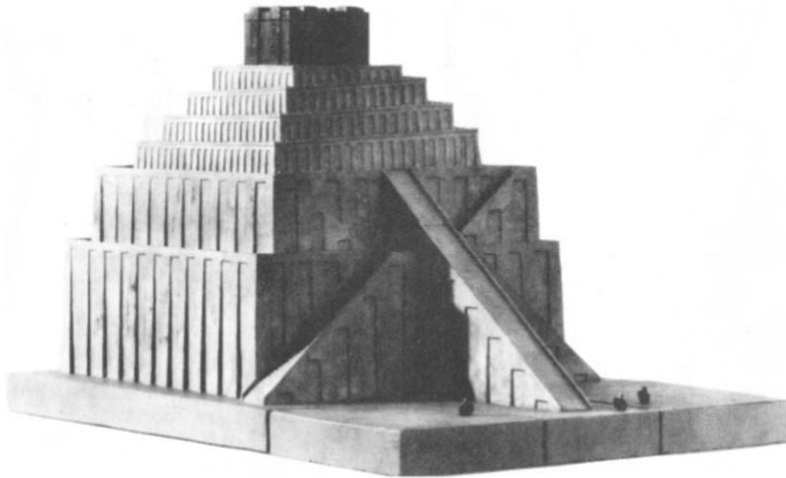
## ISAIAH

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During his excavations in Babylon from 1899–1914, Robert Koldewey discovered a ziggurat called Etemenanki that is commonly associated with the Tower of Babel. Koldewey’s discovery included towers and walls constructed of glazed blue bricks, comporting with the Bible’s description of the Tower of Babel being made of “burned” (i.e., kiln-fired) bricks. This Babylonian tower stood 300 feet high and had seven stories. After the excavation team exited the area in 1917, local people destroyed Etemenanki, using its bricks for construction. Bertman notes that the historians Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus refer to this ziggurat.

Song, J. B. (2016). [Migdal](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, L. Wentz, E. Ritzema, & W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Lexham Press.

### SL#16



### Ziggurat

- WHY would man wish to build this?
- WHY would God destroy this? And, then, scatter mankind?

### SL#17

#### Genesis 1:26-28

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth.”

<sup>27</sup> So God created man in His own image;

He created him in the image of God;

He created them male and female.

<sup>28</sup> God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it.”

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BELL: Bell, L. N. (1959). [A Layman and His Faith](#). *Christianity Today*, 4(1), 19–20.

There is a dramatic contrast between Babel and Pentecost.

- Babel brings confusion of tongues and scattering of efforts.  
Pentecost brings a unity of expression in the Lord and an empowering to serve the Living God.
- Babel was God's judgment on a rebellious people.  
Pentecost was a mighty blessing on a praying people.
- Babel scattered men to the oblivion of futility.  
Pentecost scattered men to the ends of the earth with a message and with power.
- **Babel divided. Pentecost united.**
- From Babel came no blessing.  
From Pentecost there came men filled with the Spirit of the living God and empowered to win others to a like precious faith.

### SL#18

#### What beckons us to Babel?

It is cool. Fashionable. Popular. Edgy.

It is Intellectual. Collegiate. Elitist.

How do I respond to the Elite Intellectual?

The Elite Spiritualist?

The Elite Musician?

The Elite Athlete?

THE ELITE....

Why learn all this history...

Doomed to repeat itself.

#### Do not underestimate evil:

I can dabble.

I can say nothing. (be Switzerland)

I can avoid...it is not my problem.

It has nothing to do with my faith, right? (delusional)

I am a Christian. It has nothing to do with me.

### SL#19

**We avoid the confrontation of the risen and living Christ because we want the beauty of His life without the implications of His death.** Bell, L. N. (1959). [A Layman and His Faith](#).

*Christianity Today*, 4(1), 19–20.

## ***A LAYMAN and his Faith***

### **BABEL OR PENTECOST?**

**The conflict in the soul of man between Babel and Pentecost is an unending one.**

- On the one hand there is the innate desire to launch out on the plane of self-determination, to be the captain of one's own soul.
- On the other there is the call to receive that which is supernatural in origin and supernatural in its effect, through the transforming work and power of the Holy Spirit.

**Humanism is tremendously appealing.**

- What a lift to the ego to feel that we are capable of rising above our immediate limitations and of accomplishing great things for ourselves and for the world in which we live!
- How humiliating to concede that within us there dwells no good thing; that this heart of ours is desperately wicked; that we stand guilty and condemned before a holy and just God; that our eternal destiny depends not one whit on anything which we can accomplish of ourselves.

**The conflict of Eden has never ceased.**

- To say that Eden never existed is but to deny that which we experience every day.
- Confronted with a "This is the way, walk ye in it", we are tempted to follow "the way which seemeth right to man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."
- Aware of a need and a dilemma we are told to dip in the Jordan of a simple faith in the atoning work of Christ, but we turn to the more attractive rivers of man-made philosophies.
- Zealous in a religiosity into which we were born, and for which we have worked for many years, **we avoid the confrontation of the risen and living Christ because we want the beauty of His life without the implications of His death.**

The philosophy of Babel is as current today as in the day when men banded together to save themselves through a tower of their own making.

Not only are the non-Christian religions evidence of this unending conflict but *any* religion which predicates man's salvation **on that which he can do for himself** is but a reflection of those dramatic and tragic days on the plain of Shinar.

**Although** Babel is synonymous with confusion man still turns to the Babel of man-made ideas and away from divine revelation.

**Although** history reveals the end of those who defy God and refuse to believe His Word, the descendants of the tower builders are to be found on every hand: "Let *us* do this", "Let *us* do that" is heard across the world. But God is not mocked. He still comes down to confuse, confound and scatter the unbelieving.



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#### There is a dramatic contrast between Babel and Pentecost.

- Babel brings confusion of tongues and scattering of efforts. Pentecost brings a unity of expression in the Lord and an empowering to serve the Living God.
- Babel was God's judgment on a rebellious people. Pentecost was a mighty blessing on a praying people.
- Babel scattered men to the oblivion of futility. Pentecost scattered men to the ends of the earth with a message and with power.
- **Babel divided. Pentecost united.**
- From Babel came no blessing. From Pentecost there came men filled with the Spirit of the living God and empowered to win others to a like precious faith.

The relevance of these philosophies to our own times is for all who will to see.

- Christ tells us, "For without me ye can do nothing",
- while Paul cries out in triumph, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me."

Our Lord's illustration of the vine and the branches was no trite analogy. Only as the branches abide in the vine can they bear fruit. Detached from the vine they wither and die.

- Humanism is predicated on the self-sufficiency of man.
- Christianity is predicated on the utter hopelessness of man.
- To confront man with the love of God in Christ can inflate his ego.
- To confront him with his sinfulness and *then* with the love of God, which offers pardon and redemption through the atonement of His Son, places man in his right perspective: to his sinful self and to a holy and loving God.

Only by facing the awfulness of sin and the tremendous price paid to redeem us from that sin can we rightly evaluate the cost and the implications of the Cross.

Babel minimizes sin, questions judgment, denies the eternal separation of the unrepentant sinner from God, while at the same time it by-passes the blood of Calvary and expects Christ's "example of divine love" to spark within the heart of the unsaved the will and the power to become new creatures.

- Babel looks on conversion as a process in which man has a part.
- Pentecost looks on conversion as a supernatural act.

Pentecost was a visible act of the sovereign grace of God whereby there was poured out on those who had humbled their minds and hearts the Third Person of the Trinity.

Wherever the Church, or individual Christians, attempt to do the Lord's work in the arm of flesh, their efforts are doomed. Dependence on the presence and power of the Holy Spirit is a grace to be cultivated and a practice to be pursued. The Pentecostal experience of the early Church should be the individual experience of the Christian today. But the "old man" with his concepts is ever with us and before we know it we are erecting a 20th Century tower of Babel as an evidence of our own foolishness, a structure already destined to destruction.

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- Babel looks at the things which are seen;
- Pentecost fixes its eyes on the things which are not seen.
- Babel has respect to the allurements and the values of the world;
- Pentecost looks to the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.
- Babel tries to prove God.
- Pentecost simply trusts Him.
- Babel lifts its head in rebellion against revealed truth and makes other plans and devises other ways.
- Pentecost bows its head in humility and accepts as fact those things which only the heart of faith can believe.
- Babel is rationalism.
- Pentecost is faith.
- Babel is, “Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice”?
- Pentecost is, “Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief”.
- Babel rejects revelation.
- Pentecost rejoices in it.

The conflict of which we speak is so real, so prevalent and so persistent that every Christian should cry out in prayer for forgiveness and right perspective.

We need to ask God to deliver us from the thought that we, like the men of Babel, can stand unashamed in His presence, or in any way contribute to our redemption.

We need to experience the gracious work of Pentecost,—a divine visitation whereby the Spirit of the living God comes to dwell in our hearts.

L. NELSON BELL<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bell, L. N. (1959). [A Layman and His Faith](#). *Christianity Today*, 4(1), 19–20.

## ISAIAH

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14

#### **Israel's Return**

**14** For the Lord will have compassion on Jacob and will choose Israel again. He will settle them on their own land. The foreigner will join them and be united with the house of Jacob. <sup>2</sup> The nations will escort Israel and bring it to its homeland. Then the house of Israel will possess them as male and female slaves in the Lord's land. They will make captives of their captors and will rule over their oppressors.

#### **Downfall of the King of Babylon**

<sup>3</sup> When the Lord gives you rest from your pain, torment, and the hard labor you were forced to do, <sup>4</sup> you will sing this song of contempt about the king of Babylon and say:

How the oppressor has quieted down,  
and how the raging<sup>[a]</sup> has become quiet!

<sup>5</sup> The Lord has broken the staff of the wicked, the scepter of the rulers.

<sup>6</sup> It struck the peoples in anger with unceasing blows.

It subdued the nations in rage with relentless persecution.

<sup>7</sup> All the earth is calm and at rest; people shout with a ringing cry.

<sup>8</sup> Even the cypresses and the cedars of Lebanon rejoice over you:

"Since you have been laid low, no woodcutter has come against us."

<sup>9</sup> Sheol below is eager to greet your coming.

He stirs up the spirits of the departed for you—  
all the rulers<sup>[b]</sup> of the earth.

He makes all the kings of the nations rise from their thrones.

<sup>10</sup> They all respond to you, saying:

"You too have become as weak as we are; you have become like us!

<sup>11</sup> Your splendor has been brought down to Sheol, along with the music of your harps.

Maggots are spread out under you, and worms cover you."

<sup>12</sup> Shining morning star,<sup>[c]</sup> how you have fallen from the heavens!

You destroyer of nations, you have been cut down to the ground.

<sup>13</sup> You said to yourself:

"I will ascend to the heavens; I will set up my throne above the stars of God.

I will sit on the mount of the gods' assembly, in the remotest parts of the North.<sup>[d]</sup>

<sup>14</sup> I will ascend above the highest clouds; I will make myself like the Most High."

<sup>15</sup> But you will be brought down to Sheol into the deepest regions of the Pit.

<sup>16</sup> Those who see you will stare at you; they will look closely at you:

"Is this the man who caused the earth to tremble, who shook the kingdoms,

<sup>17</sup> who turned the world into a wilderness, who destroyed its cities and would not release the prisoners to return home?"

<sup>18</sup> All the kings of the nations lie in splendor, each in his own tomb.

<sup>19</sup> But you are thrown out without a grave, like a worthless branch, covered by those slain with the sword and dumped into a rocky pit like a trampled corpse.

<sup>20</sup> You will not join them in burial, because you destroyed your land  
and slaughtered your own people. The offspring of evildoers will never be remembered.

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<sup>21</sup> Prepare a place of slaughter for his sons, because of the iniquity of their fathers. They will never rise up to possess a land or fill the surface of the earth with cities.

<sup>22</sup> "I will rise up against them"—this is the declaration of the Lord of Hosts—"and I will cut off from Babylon her reputation, remnant, offspring, and posterity"—this is the Lord's declaration. <sup>23</sup> "I will make her a swampland and a region for screech owls,<sup>[a]</sup> and I will sweep her away with a broom of destruction."

This is the declaration of the Lord of Hosts.

#### **Assyria Will Be Destroyed**

<sup>24</sup> The Lord of Hosts has sworn:

As I have purposed, so it will be;  
as I have planned it, so it will happen.

<sup>25</sup> I will break Assyria in My land;

I will tread him down on My mountain.

Then his yoke will be taken from them,  
and his burden will be removed from their shoulders.

<sup>26</sup> This is the plan prepared

for the whole earth,  
and this is the hand stretched out  
against all the nations.

<sup>27</sup> The Lord of Hosts Himself has planned it;

**therefore**, who can stand in its way?

It is His hand that is outstretched,  
so who can turn it back?

#### **An Oracle against Philistia**

<sup>28</sup> In the year that King Ahaz died, this oracle came:

<sup>29</sup> Don't rejoice, all of you in Philistia,  
because the rod of the one who struck you is broken.  
For a viper will come from the root<sup>[b]</sup> of a snake,  
and from its egg comes a flying serpent.

<sup>30</sup> Then the firstborn of the poor will be well fed,  
and the impoverished will lie down in safety,  
but I will kill your root with hunger,  
and your remnant will be slain.<sup>[c]</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Wail, you gates! Cry out, city!

Tremble with fear, all Philistia!

For a cloud of dust is coming from the north,  
and there is no one missing from the invader's ranks.

<sup>32</sup> What answer will be given to the messengers from  
that nation?

The Lord has founded Zion,  
and His afflicted people find refuge in her.

- What do I see of God in these words?
- What would it be like to actually HEAR Isaiah say this to the crowd with me in it?

**NOtes:**

**13**

**An Oracle against Babylon**

**13** An oracle<sup>(A)</sup> against Babylon<sup>(B)</sup> that Isaiah son of Amoz saw:

<sup>2</sup> Lift up a banner on a barren mountain.<sup>(C)</sup>

Call out to them.

Wave your hand, and they will go  
through the gates of the nobles.

<sup>3</sup> I have commanded My chosen ones;  
I have also called My warriors,  
who exult in My triumph,  
to execute My wrath.<sup>(D)</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Listen, a tumult on the mountains,  
like that of a mighty people!  
Listen, an uproar among the kingdoms,  
like nations being gathered together!  
The Lord of Hosts is mobilizing an army for war.

<sup>5</sup> They are coming from a far land,  
from the distant horizon—  
the Lord and the weapons of His wrath—  
to destroy the whole country.<sup>(E)</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Wail! For the day of the Lord is near.<sup>(F)</sup>  
It will come like destruction from the Almighty.<sup>(G)</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Therefore everyone's hands will become weak,  
and every man's heart will melt.

<sup>8</sup> They will be horrified;  
pain and agony will seize them;  
they will be in anguish like a woman in labor.<sup>(H)</sup>  
They will look at each other,  
their faces flushed with fear.

<sup>9</sup> Look, the day<sup>(I)</sup> of the Lord is coming—  
cruel, with rage and burning anger—  
to make the earth a desolation

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and to destroy the sinners on it.<sup>(v)</sup>

**10** Indeed, the stars of the sky and its constellations<sup>(b)</sup>  
will not give their light.

The sun will be dark when it rises,  
and the moon will not shine.<sup>(v)</sup>

**11** I will bring disaster on the world,  
and their own iniquity,<sup>(s)</sup> on the wicked.  
I will put an end to the pride of the arrogant<sup>(v)</sup>  
and humiliate the insolence of tyrants.

**12** I will make man scarcer than gold,  
and mankind more rare than the gold of Ophir.<sup>(m)</sup>

**13** Therefore I will make the heavens tremble,  
and the earth will shake from its foundations<sup>(v)</sup>  
at the wrath of the Lord of Hosts,  
on the day of His burning anger.

**14** Like wandering gazelles  
and like sheep without a shepherd,<sup>(v)</sup>  
each one will turn to his own people,  
each one will flee to his own land.

**15** Whoever is found will be stabbed,  
and whoever is caught will die by the sword.

**16** Their children will be smashed to death before their eyes;<sup>(b)</sup>  
their houses will be looted,  
and their wives raped.

**17** Look! I am stirring up the Medes against them,<sup>(v)</sup>  
who cannot be bought off with<sup>(v)</sup> silver  
and who have no desire for gold.

**18** Their bows will cut young men to pieces.  
They will have no compassion on little ones;  
they will not look with pity on children.

**19** And Babylon, the jewel of the kingdoms,  
the glory of the pride of the Chaldeans,  
will be like Sodom and Gomorrah  
when God overthrew them.<sup>(s)</sup>

**20** It will never be inhabited  
or lived in from generation to generation;<sup>(s)</sup>  
a nomad will not pitch his tent there,  
and shepherds will not let their flocks rest there.

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<sup>21</sup> But desert creatures will lie down there,  
and owls will fill the houses.  
Ostriches will dwell there,  
and wild goats will leap about.Ⓜ

<sup>22</sup> Hyenas will howl in the fortresses,  
and jackals, in the luxurious palaces.  
Babylon's time is almost up;  
her days are almost over.

### Footnotes

- a. [Isaiah 13:5](#) Or *earth*
- b. [Isaiah 13:10](#) Or *Orions*
- c. [Isaiah 13:17](#) Lit *who have no regard for*

### Cross references

- A. [13:1](#) : [Is 14:28](#); [15:1](#); [17:1](#); [19:1](#); [21:1](#), [11](#), [13](#); [22:1](#); [23:1](#); [30:6](#)
- B. [13:1](#) : [Is 13:19](#); [14:4](#); [47:1-15](#); [Jr 24:1](#); [50:1-51:64](#); [Mt 1:11](#); [Rv 14:8](#)
- C. [13:2](#) : [Is 5:26](#); [Jr 50:2](#)
- D. [13:3](#) : [Ps 78:21](#), [50](#); [Ezk 5:15](#); [20:8](#)
- E. [13:6](#) : [Is 2:12](#); [10:3](#); [13:9](#); [34:2](#), [8](#); [61:2](#); [Ezk 30:3](#); [Am 5:18](#); [Zph 1:7](#)
- F. [13:6](#) : [Is 10:25](#); [14:23](#); [Jl 1:15](#)
- G. [13:8](#) : [Is 26:17](#); [Jr 4:31](#); [Jn 16:21](#)
- H. [13:9](#) : [Mt 25:13](#)
- I. [13:9](#) : [Dt 32:43](#)
- J. [13:10](#) : [Is 34:4](#); [Mt 24:29](#); [Mk 13:24-25](#); [Lk 21:26](#); [Rv 8:12](#)
- K. [13:11](#) : [Jr 23:2](#); [36:31](#); [44:29](#)
- L. [13:11](#) : [Is 2:11](#); [23:9](#); [Dn 5:22-23](#)
- M. [13:12](#) : [1Kg 9:28](#); [Jb 28:16](#); [Ps 45:9](#)
- N. [13:13](#) : [Ps 18:7](#); [Is 2:19](#); [24:1](#), [19-20](#); [Hg 2:6](#)
- O. [13:14](#) : [1Kg 22:17](#); [Mt 9:36](#); [Mk 6:34](#); [1Pt 2:25](#)
- P. [13:16](#) : [Ps 137:8-9](#); [Is 13:18](#); [14:21](#); [Hs 10:14](#); [Nah 3:10](#)
- Q. [13:17](#) : [Jr 51:11](#); [Dn 5:28](#)
- R. [13:19](#) : [Gn 19:24](#); [Jr 14:18](#); [50:40](#); [Am 4:11](#)
- S. [13:20](#) : [Is 14:23](#); [34:10-15](#); [Jr 51:37-43](#)
- T. [13:21](#) : [Is 34:11-15](#); [Zph 2:14](#); [Rv 18:2](#)

## 14

### Israel's Return

**14** For the Lord will have compassion<sup>(a)</sup> on Jacob and will choose Israel again.<sup>(b)</sup> He will settle them on their own land.<sup>(c)</sup> The foreigner will join them and be united with the house of Jacob.<sup>(d)</sup> **2** The nations will escort Israel and bring it to its homeland. Then the house of Israel will possess them as male and female slaves in the Lord's land.<sup>(e)</sup> They will make captives of their captors and will rule over their oppressors.

### Downfall of the King of Babylon

**3** When the Lord gives you rest from your pain,<sup>(f)</sup> torment, and the hard labor<sup>(g)</sup> you were forced to do, **4** you will sing this song of contempt about the king of Babylon<sup>(h)</sup> and say:

How the oppressor has quieted down,  
and how the raging<sup>(i)</sup> has become quiet!

**5** The Lord has broken the staff of the wicked,  
the scepter of the rulers.

**6** It struck the peoples in anger  
with unceasing blows.

It subdued the nations in rage  
with relentless persecution.

**7** All the earth is calm and at rest;  
people shout with a ringing cry.

**8** Even the cypresses and the cedars of Lebanon  
rejoice over you:<sup>(j)</sup>

"Since you have been laid low,  
no woodcutter has come against us."

**9** Sheol below is eager to greet your coming.  
He stirs up the spirits of the departed for you—  
all the rulers<sup>(k)</sup> of the earth.



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He makes all the kings of the nations  
rise from their thrones.

**10** They all respond to you, saying:

“You too have become as weak as we are;  
you have become like us!

**11** Your splendor has been brought down to Sheol,  
along with the music of your harps.

Maggots are spread out under you,  
and worms cover you.”

**12** Shining morning star,<sup>(L)</sup>

how you have fallen from the heavens!<sup>(L)</sup>

You destroyer of nations,

you have been cut down to the ground.

**13** You said to yourself:

“I will ascend to the heavens;<sup>(L)</sup>

I will set up my throne

above the stars of God.<sup>(L)</sup>

I will sit on the mount of the gods’ assembly,

in the remotest parts of the North.<sup>(L)(L)</sup>

**14** I will ascend above the highest clouds;

I will make myself like the Most High.”

**15** But you will be brought down to Sheol

into the deepest regions of the Pit.<sup>(L)</sup>

**16** Those who see you will stare at you;

they will look closely at you:

“Is this the man who caused the earth to tremble,  
who shook the kingdoms,

**17** who turned the world into a wilderness,<sup>(L)</sup>

who destroyed its cities

and would not release the prisoners to return home?”

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<sup>18</sup> All the kings of the nations

lie in splendor, each in his own tomb.

<sup>19</sup> But you are thrown out without a grave,

like a worthless branch,

covered by those slain with the sword

and dumped into a rocky pit like a trampled corpse.

<sup>20</sup> You will not join them in burial,

because you destroyed your land

and slaughtered your own people.

The offspring of evildoers

will never be remembered. <sup>Ⓞ</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Prepare a place of slaughter for his sons,

because of the iniquity <sup>Ⓞ</sup> of their fathers.

They will never rise up to possess a land

or fill the surface of the earth with cities.

<sup>22</sup> "I will rise up against them"—this is the declaration of the Lord of Hosts—"and I will cut off from Babylon her reputation, remnant, offspring, and posterity"—this is the Lord's declaration. <sup>23</sup> "I will make her a swamp and a region for screech owls, <sup>Ⓞ</sup> and I will sweep her away with a broom of destruction."

This is the declaration of the Lord of Hosts.

### **Assyria Will Be Destroyed**

<sup>24</sup> The Lord of Hosts has sworn:

As I have purposed, so it will be;

as I have planned it, so it will happen. <sup>Ⓞ</sup>

<sup>25</sup> I will break Assyria <sup>Ⓞ</sup> in My land;

I will tread him down on My mountain.

Then his yoke will be taken from them,

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and his burden will be removed from their shoulders.

<sup>26</sup> This is the plan<sup>(U)</sup> prepared  
for the whole earth,  
and this is the hand stretched out  
against all the nations.

<sup>27</sup> The Lord of Hosts Himself has planned it;  
therefore, who can stand in its way?  
It is His hand that is outstretched,  
so who can turn it back?

### **An Oracle against Philistia**

<sup>28</sup> In the year that King Ahaz died,<sup>(U)</sup> this oracle came:<sup>(UU)</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Don't rejoice, all of you in Philistia,  
because the rod of the one who struck you<sup>(U)</sup> is broken.  
For a viper will come from the root<sup>(U)</sup> of a snake,  
and from its egg comes a flying serpent.<sup>(U)</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Then the firstborn<sup>(U)</sup> of the poor will be well fed,  
and the impoverished will lie down in safety,  
but I will kill your root with hunger,  
and your remnant will be slain.<sup>(G)</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Wail, you gates!<sup>(AA)</sup> Cry out, city!  
Tremble with fear,<sup>(AB)</sup> all Philistia!  
For a cloud of dust is coming from the north,<sup>(AC)</sup>  
and there is no one missing from the invader's ranks.

<sup>32</sup> What answer will be given to the messengers from that nation?  
The Lord has founded Zion,<sup>(AD)</sup>  
and His afflicted people find refuge in her.

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*Footnotes*

- a. [Isaiah 14:4](#) DSS; Hb uncertain
- b. [Isaiah 14:9](#) Lit *rams*
- c. [Isaiah 14:12](#) Or *Day Star, son of the dawn*
- d. [Isaiah 14:13](#) Or *of Zaphon*
- e. [Isaiah 14:23](#) Or *hedgehogs*
- f. [Isaiah 14:29](#) Or *stock*
- g. [Isaiah 14:30](#) DSS, Syr, Tg; MT reads *and he will kill*

*Cross references*

- A. [14:1](#) : [1Kg 3:26](#)
- B. [14:1](#) : [Dt 7:7](#); [Ps 102:13](#); [Zch 1:17](#)
- C. [14:1](#) : [Dt 12:10](#); [2Sm 7:1](#)
- D. [14:1](#) : [Dt 14:21, 29](#); [Zch 8:22, 23](#); [Eph 2:12-14](#)
- E. [14:2](#) : [Is 9:7](#); [45:14-25](#); [49:22-26](#); [60:9](#); [61:5](#); [66:19-24](#)
- F. [14:3](#) : [Gn 3:16](#); [Is 14:3](#); [Jr 44:19](#)
- G. [14:3](#) : [Ex 1:14](#)
- H. [14:4](#) : [Mc 2:4](#); [Hab 2:6](#)
- I. [14:8](#) : [Ps 104:16](#); [Is 55:12](#); [Ezk 31:16](#)
- J. [14:12](#) : [2Pt 1:19](#); [Rv 2:28](#); [22:16](#)
- K. [14:12](#) : [Is 34:4](#); [Lk 10:18](#); [Rv 8:10](#); [9:1](#)
- L. [14:13](#) : [Jr 51:53](#); [Ezk 28:2](#); [Am 9:2](#)
- M. [14:13](#) : [Dn 5:22-23](#); [8:10](#); [2Th 2:4](#)
- N. [14:13](#) : [Ps 48:2](#)
- O. [14:15](#) : [Ps 28:1](#); [Is 38:18](#); [Ezk 28:8](#); [Mt 11:23](#); [Lk 10:15](#)
- P. [14:17](#) : [Jl 1:19-20](#); [2:3, 22](#); [3:19](#)
- Q. [14:20](#) : [Jb 18:16, 19](#); [Ps 21:10](#); [37:28](#); [Is 1:4](#); [31:2](#)
- R. [14:21](#) : [Is 13:11](#)
- S. [14:24](#) : [Pr 16:4](#); [Is 46:11](#); [Jr 23:20](#); [30:24](#); [51:29](#); [Zch 1:6](#); [Eph 1:11](#); [Rv 17:17](#)

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- T. [14:25](#) : [Is 8:7](#); [10:5-15](#), [27](#)
- U. [14:26](#) : [Is 5:19](#)
- V. [14:28](#) : [2Kg 16:20](#); [2Ch 28:27](#); [Is 6:1](#)
- W. [14:28](#) : [Is 13:1](#)
- X. [14:29](#) : [1Sm 17:50](#); [18:25-30](#); [19:8](#); [23:1-5](#); [2Sm 5:17-25](#); [8:1](#)
- Y. [14:29](#) : [Ex 4:2-3](#); [7:10-12](#); [Is 30:6](#)
- Z. [14:30](#) : [Ex 4:22](#)
- AA. [14:31](#) : [Is 3:26](#); [24:12](#); [45:2](#)
- BB. [14:31](#) : [Jos 2:9](#), [24](#)
- CC. [14:31](#) : [Is 41:25](#); [Jr 1:13-14](#); [4:6](#); [6:1](#); [47:2](#); [50:3](#), [9](#), [41](#)
- DD. [14:32](#) : [Ps 87:1](#), [5](#); [102:16](#); [Is 28:16](#); [44:28](#); [54:11](#)

**ASSYRIAN RULERS**

RULER	DATES OF RULE	SCRIPTURE REFERENCE
Ashur-uballit I	1354–1318 B.C.	
Adad-nirari I	1318–1264 B.C.	
Shalmaneser I (Shulman-asharid)	1264–1234 B.C.	
Tukulti-Ninurta I	1234–1197 B.C.	
Ashur-dan I	1179–1133 B.C.	
Tiglath-pileser I (Tukulti-apil-Ešarra)	1115–1076 B.C.	
Ashur-rabi II	1012–972 B.C.	
Ashur-resh-ishi II	972–967 B.C.	

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Tiglath-pileser II	967-935 B.C.	
Ashur-dan II	935-912 B.C.	
Adad-nirari II	912-889 B.C.	
Tukulti-Ninurta II	889-884 B.C.	
Ashurnasirpal II (Ashurnasir-apli II)	884-858 B.C.	
Shalmaneser III (Shalman-Ashar-id II)	858-824 B.C.	
Shamsi-Adad V	824-810 B.C.	
Adad-nirari III	810-782 B.C.	
Shalmaneser IV	782-773 B.C.	
Ashur-dan III	773-754 B.C.	
Ashur-nirari V	754-745 B.C.	
Tiglath-pileser III (Tukulti-apil-Ešarra III, or Tiglath-pilneser, or Pul(u))	745-727 B.C.	2 Kgs 15:19, 29; 16:7-10
Shalmaneser V (Ululai)	727-722 B.C.	2 Kgs 17:1-6
Sargon II	721-705 B.C.	
Sennacherib (Sin-abho-eriba)	704-681 B.C.	2 Kgs 18-19
Esarhaddon	681-669 B.C.	
Ashurbanipal	669-633 B.C.	
Ashur-etil-ilani	633-622 B.C.	

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Sin-shur-ishkun

621–612 B.C.

Ashur-uballit

612–608 B.C.

### 27:1–9 Jotham's Success and Favor

Jotham (750–732 B.C.) was righteous like his father, but he did not act presumptuously by entering the temple proper in his reign. His conquest of the Ammonites was attributed to the favor God showed toward him (2 Chr 27:1–9; 2 Kgs 15:32–38).

### BABYLONIAN RULERS

RULER	DATES OF RULE	SCRIPTURE REFERENCE
Merodach-Baladan II (Marduk-apal-iddin)	721–689 B.C.	2 Kgs 20:12; Isa 39:1
Nabopolassar	625–605 B.C.	
Nebuchadnezzar II (Nebuchadrezzar II)	605–562 B.C.	2 Kgs 24–25; Dan 1–4
Evil-Merodach (Amel- Marduk)	562–560 B.C.	2 Kgs 25:27–30; Jer 52:31– 34
Nergal-Sharezer (Nergal- shar-usur, or Neriglissar)	560–556 B.C.	Jer 39:3, 13
Labashi-Marduk	556 B.C.	
Nabonidus (Nabu-na'id)	556–539 B.C.	
Belshazzar (Bel-shar-usur)	Co-regent with Nabonidus 556–539 B.C.	Dan 5; 7:1

### 28:1–27 The Wicked Reign of Ahaz

Chronicles, based on the report of 2 Kings 16:1–20, emphasized the wickedness of King Ahaz's reign (735–715 B.C.). Ahaz was remembered for his practice of human sacrifice and Baal worship

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(2 Chr 28:1–4). The writer interpreted Judah’s war with Israel and Aram (Syro-Ephraimite war) in 732 B.C. as God’s judgment upon Ahaz (28:5–8; compare Isa 7). The Chronicler commended the victorious Northern Kingdom for obeying the prophet Oded and releasing the captured Judahites (28:5–15).

The LORD punished Judah further by pressuring it with the raiding armies of the mercenary Edomites and Philistines. Ahaz appealed to the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III (745–727 B.C.), who promptly obliged by marching west, destroying Damascus and conquering Samaria (732 B.C.). Ahaz failed at buying his independence with temple and royal treasuries. He became a vassal of the Assyrian king and bowed to the gods of Assyria. Second Kings 16:10–14 reports that Ahaz reproduced in the Jerusalem temple Tiglath’s pagan altar which he had seen at Damascus. Ahaz eventually closed the temple and erected numerous idols in the land. Whereas the Chronicler tried to introduce something positive about each king of Judah, for vicious Ahaz there was nothing good to report.

#### **29:1–36 Hezekiah’s Restoration**

Hezekiah’s reign (715–686 B.C.) is given inordinate attention because of the prominence he gave to temple music and worship. Much of the Chronicler’s account (chaps. 29–31) is not paralleled in Kings.

The neglect of the temple under Ahaz (28:24) prompted Hezekiah to order the Levites to consecrate themselves and begin repair of the sanctuary. After sixteen days the Levites completed the task and opened the temple once again (29:1–17). After the Levites had cleansed the articles of worship, the king led the congregation in worship through offerings. The musical guilds functioned again as David had intended and performed the psalms of David and Asaph (29:18–30). After the people had atoned for their sins, they offered burnt and thank offerings so numerous that the Levites were requested to assist the overburdened priests. The sight and sounds of the temple brought great joy to the congregation (29:31–36).<sup>2</sup>

#### *Lesson Seven*

## ISAIAH 11:1–12:6

### Salvation

While the Assyrian army was devastating Israel and terrorizing Judah, Isaiah spoke the prophecies of 11:1–12:6. As you read these chapters, imagine yourself hearing them while savage troops are marching toward your border.

**For Thought and Discussion:** The lofty forest of Assyria will be leveled (see 10:18–19, 33–34), but the stump of Jesse will sprout (see 11:1). What is the Lord saying? Compare 2:11.

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<sup>2</sup> Dockery, D. S., ed. (1992). [Holman Bible Handbook](#) (pp. 282–283). Holman Bible Publishers.



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### The Branch (11:1–16)

**Stump of Jesse** (11:1). The Lord promised to lay Judah to waste until the holy seed—the faithful remnant—was just a stump in the barren earth (see 6:13). Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah belonged to the royal dynasty of David, the son of Jesse (see 1 Samuel 16:10–13). The family survived the Assyrian invasion of 701 BC by a miracle (see Isaiah 37). It endured the Babylonian exile by another series of marvels. However, after the exile began in 586 BC, there was no Davidic king because Judah was never again an independent state. The line of David lay like a dormant seed, a lifeless stump. But Isaiah promised that the stump would someday sprout a king for Judah.

1. The Son of David differs from Judah’s kings firstly in that “the Spirit of the LORD” rests on Him (11:2). The Spirit equips Him for His mission. What is the Son’s mission (see 11:3–4)?

**Counsel** (11:2). Related to wisdom and understanding, but the accent in “counsel” is on the ability to plan and strategize, especially in warfare (see 9:6). **Might** is the ability to carry out those plans.

**Knowledge** (11:2). In this context, intimacy with God and knowledge of spiritual truths.

**Fear of the LORD** (11:2–3). A respect and awe of God that grows from intimate knowledge of His justice, holiness, goodness, and worthiness of honor. (See Proverbs 1:7; 9:10; Isaiah 8:13.) Beholding the Lord ought to terrify even His faithful servants (see Isaiah 6:1–5; Revelation 1:12–18).

**For Further Study:** Compare 7:14; 9:1–7, and 11:1–16. Observe how the promised Son is revealed from many angles.

**For Thought and Discussion:** Why does Christ not judge by what He sees and hears (see 11:3; 42:18–19)? How can someone make right decisions by ignoring what he sees and hears? (See Leviticus 19:15; John 7:24; James 2:1–10.)

**For Thought and Discussion:** Why does Jesus *delight* in the fear of God (see 11:3)? What are the implications here for us?

2. Why does Christ need the Spirit’s three-fold gift (see 11:2–3) in order to fulfill His mission (see 11:3–4)?

wisdom and understanding

counsel and might

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knowledge and the fear of the Lord

**For Thought and Discussion:** To what extent has Christ already brought into being what 11:1–16 says about Him and His kingdom? To what extent are these promises yet to be fulfilled?

**Optional Application:** Ask the Lord to give you the Spirit's gifts named in 11:2–3. Ask Him to teach you where you fall short in these areas and how you need these gifts to serve Him. Ask Him to teach you deeply what wisdom, counsel, and so on are.

**Optional Application:**

a. Ask God to teach you to delight in the fear of the Lord. Meditate on reasons to fear Him with delight. Psalms 34 and 130; Isaiah 6, and Revelation 1 may help your meditations.

b. How should the fear of the Lord affect your actions?

**Righteousness** (11:4–5). The quality of being right is an essential character of God. His nature is the standard of right character and morality, and His will is the standard of right events and decisions. He displays His righteousness in the world by giving His righteous Law; being faithful to His covenants, promises, and plans; setting right what is wrong in the world by saving the righteous and punishing the wicked, and making sinners right again by providing sacrifices that atone for sin. The ultimate act of God's righteousness is offering His Son as the true atonement sacrifice and the true righteous ruler.

A human is righteous when he conforms to God's standards of what is right. This includes what is right for all people as well as what is fitting for that person's particular role. For instance, a righteous king implements justice according to God's laws.

God's righteous standard includes humility before God, dependence upon His might to deliver people from affliction, and dependence upon His atoning sacrifice to maintain His people's right relationship to Him. Isaiah 6:5–6 shows that this dependence was important even in Isaiah's time, when Christ's work was only foreshadowed.

3. We are the body of Christ. Jesus has given us His mission and the Spirit to equip us (see John 20:21–23). How is Isaiah 11:1–5 relevant to us? How should it move us to think, pray, and act?
4. What will result when Christ governs justly, punishes the wicked, and models right attitudes toward God (see 11:6–9)?

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**For Thought and Discussion:** Why does peace naturally flourish when people know the Lord intimately (see 11:9)?

**Optional Application:** In the Lord's Prayer we pray, "your kingdom come" (Matthew 6:10). Expand on this request from the promises in Isaiah 11:1–12:6.

**For Thought and Discussion:** What does it mean for the earth to be full of the knowledge of the Lord (see 11:9)?

**For Further Study:** Compare Isaiah 11:6–9 to Romans 8:18–25. How should this future hope affect our attitudes and actions today?

5. What else will happen when Christ reigns (see 11:10–16)?
6. In its fullest extent, 11:3–16 has not yet taken place. Still, why is it important for us to know these things? What difference should they make to our lives?

### Study Skill—Prophetic Forms: The Promise Oracle

Isaiah 2:1–5; 4:2–6; 9:1–7; and 11:1–16 follow a form called the *promise* or *salvation* oracle. The form includes reference to the future ("In that day ...," 4:2; 11:10), radical change (the nations seeking God, the end of war), and blessing. The blessings are the ones promised in the covenant (see Deuteronomy 28:1–14)—life, health, prosperity, agricultural abundance, respect, and safety. Salvation oracles and woe oracles occur side by side in Isaiah.

These passages do not answer all of our questions about heaven, the millennium, and so on. Therefore, we need to study them for what they do tell us, and look for answers to our other questions in other passages. When the Lord chooses not to satisfy our curiosity, we need to be content to wait.

Also, in promise oracles the Lord frequently uses symbolism to make His point. For instance, beating swords into plowshares (see 2:4) vividly depicts the end of war, and the "Branch" (4:2) symbolizes either Christ or the holy people that grow from Him. On the other hand, the Lord also speaks literally in promise oracles. Therefore, when we try to unravel promise oracles, we should use the Lord's guidance, other passages of Scripture, and common sense to determine when the Lord is speaking literally and when symbolically, and what the symbols mean. Even if we cannot be certain about our understanding of the details, the overall point of the prophecy is clear enough to motivate us to act in faith today.

### Song of salvation (12:1–6)

When the wonders of 11:1–16 have come to pass, what will there be left to do but sing songs of praise? The people of Isaiah's time were at enmity with God, beset by fears, starving for spiritual and physical nourishment. But observe the changes "in that day."

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7. Read through 12:1–6 meditatively, dwelling on phrases that strike you. What is true of a person God has saved (see 12:1–3)?
8. What does it mean that God is your “strength” and your “defense” (12:2)?  
**Salvation** (12:2–3). Negatively, this means deliverance from danger, sickness, loss, slavery, and all other evils. Positively, it means the restoration and preservation of safety, health, wholeness, and all other blessings.
9. What does it mean to “draw water from the wells of salvation” (12:3)? (*Optional: See Psalm 36:9; Jeremiah 2:13; John 4:10, 13–14.*)
10. What is the natural response to what God has done for us (see 12:4–6)?

#### **Optional Application:**

Meditate on:

- a. how God is your strength, your defense, your salvation.
- b. how He has ended His anger and comforted you.
- c. His wells of salvation.

**For Thought and Discussion:** How does Isaiah’s name (“The LORD is salvation”) relate to 11:1–12:6?

**For Thought and Discussion:** What impressions about God does Isaiah 1:1–12:6 give you?

## Your response

11. Because chapter 13 begins a new section, this is a good time to review. How would you summarize God’s message in 7:1–12:6? (You might review your summaries from lesson 5, question 11 and lesson 6, question 9.)
12. Summarize what you have learned about Christ from 7:14; 9:1–7, and 11:1–16.
13. What aspect of 11:1–12:6 would you like to concentrate on this week?

**For Further Study:** Outline 11:1–12:6 or 7:1–12:6.

14. How would you like this insight to affect your life? What implications does it have?

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15. What steps can you take to begin letting this insight affect you?
  
16. List any questions you have about 11:1–12:6.

## For the group

**Warm-up.** Ask group members what ideas or pictures come to mind when they think of salvation.

**Read aloud.**

**Summarize.**

**The Branch.** This lesson is a bit shorter and more meditative than previous ones, so you can catch your breath and practice approaching the Scriptures in different ways. You could cover 11:1–16 by looking at phrases in turn and discussing what they mean. Then step back and discuss what impressions of Christ and of God’s kingdom the whole of 11:1–12:6 gives you.

Remind the group that because you live after Jesus’ first coming and before His second, 11:1–12:6 is partially fulfilled and true of the kingdom you inhabit, but it is partly yet to be fulfilled when Jesus returns. Help the group to see the already-but-not-yet aspects of 11:1–12:6. What differences do these promises make to your present lives?

**Songs of salvation.** This section focuses on God’s character and our response in a meditative, personal way. These songs lend themselves to quiet reflection on one phrase at a time. Urge group members to choose a phrase to meditate on during the coming week. You could allow time to share any fresh insights and applications on these phrases at the beginning of your next meeting.

If meditating on a phrase of Scripture is new to some people, refer to the description on page 7. Let group members voice any questions.

**Summarize.** Because chapter 13 begins a new section of the book, try to summarize Isaiah’s message in chapters 1–12. What ideas and topics have recurred? How do the promises fit together with the woes?

**Wrap-up.** Isaiah 13:1–23:18 is a collection of woes against the pagan nations around Judah. If you would like to do a thorough study of those prophecies, plan a week or two to cover part or all of the Optional Lesson that begins on page 203. If you have had enough of judgment, or if your time is limited, have the group read page 91 and then move on to lesson 8. (Encourage everyone to read 13:1–23:18 if possible.)

**Worship.** Pray your own songs of praise along the lines of 12:1–6. Focus on the characters of God and Christ as revealed in 1:1–12:6.

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*(continued from page 68)*

## Old Testament Prophets, part three

Isaiah's job was to call the nation back to faith. While this included convicting the people of rebelling against the covenant, it also included encouragement to hope in God. Both judgment and promise were essential.

One difficulty we have in understanding Isaiah is that when the Lord gave him visions of the future, He did not tell the prophet how far in the future various events would be. Isaiah wrote as though prophecies of the day of the Lord would all be fulfilled nearly simultaneously. From our perspective, however, we can see long stretches of time between the destruction of Assyria, the first coming of Christ, and His return. So, when we read Isaiah's prophecies we need to ask ourselves what has already occurred and what is still yet to occur.

## ISAIAH 13:1–23:18

### Oracles Against the Nations

In an era when people believed that each nation had its own gods who could not meddle in other gods' countries, Isaiah proclaimed the Lord to be King over all nations. Moreover, said Isaiah, He is King not just in the abstract but in the specific events of each nation and life. This is the message of 13:1–23:18, a collection of oracles against pagan nations that Isaiah uttered at various times during his ministry.

These chapters can overwhelm us with references to events we don't know and with constant tones of wrath. So, because this may be your first time through the book of Isaiah, we've made a thorough study of 13:1–23:18 optional. In the Optional Lesson on pages 203–210, you will find background on each of the oracles in these chapters to help you understand what Isaiah is talking about. You will also find some questions on each oracle. We hope you will want to work carefully through all the oracles at some time, for each one has valuable lessons about God's character and what He desires of His people. You might enjoy studying at least one or two of the oracles along with lesson 8.

**Prophecy** (13:1). A "divine declaration." *KJV* reads "burden." A biblical prophecy is often, but not necessarily, a judgment.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The Navigators. (2013). [LifeChange: Isaiah](#) (K. Lee-Thorp, Ed.; pp. 69–91). NavPress.

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## Messianic Prophecies of the Old Testament

PROPHECY	O.T. REFERENCES	N.T. FULFILLMENT
Seed of the woman	Gen. 3:15	Gal. 4:4; Heb. 2:14
Through Noah's sons	Gen. 9:27	Luke 6:36
Seed of Abraham	Gen. 12:3	Matt. 1:1; Gal. 3:8, 16
Seed of Isaac	Gen. 17:19	Rom. 9:7; Heb. 11:18
Blessing to nations	Gen. 18:18	Gal. 3:8
Seed of Isaac	Gen. 21:12	Rom. 9:7; Heb. 11:18
Blessing to Gentiles	Gen. 22:18	Gal. 3:8, 16; Heb. 6:14
Blessing to Gentiles	Gen. 26:4	Gal. 3:8, 16; Heb. 6:14
Blessing through Abraham	Gen. 28:14	Gal. 3:8, 16; Heb. 6:14
Of the tribe of Judah	Gen. 49:10	Rev. 5:5
No bone broken	Ex. 12:46	John 19:36
Blessing to firstborn son	Ex. 13:2	Luke 2:23
No bone broken	Num. 9:12	John 19:36
Serpent in wilderness	Num. 21:8–9	John 3:14–15
A star out of Jacob	Num. 24:17–19	Matt. 2:2; Luke 1:33, 78; Rev. 22:16

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As a prophet	Deut. 18:15, 18–19	John 6:14; 7:40; Acts 3:22–23
Cursed on the tree	Deut. 21:23	Gal. 3:13
The throne of David established forever	2 Sam. 7:12–13, 16, 25–26 1 Chron. 17:11–14, 23–27 2 Chron. 21:7	Matt. 19:28; 21:4; 25:31; Mark 12:37; Luke 1:32; John 7:4; Acts 2:30; 13:23 Rom. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:8 Heb. 1:5, 8; 8:1; 12:2; Rev. 22:1
A promised Redeemer	Job 19:25–27	John 5:28–29; Gal. 4:4; Eph. 1:7, 11, 14
Declared to be the Son of God	Ps. 2:1–12	Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11; Acts 4:25–26; 13:33; Heb. 1:5; 5:5; Rev. 2:26–27; 19:15–16
His resurrection	Ps. 16:8–10	Acts 2:27; 13:35; 26:23
Hands and feet pierced	Ps. 22:1–31	Matt. 27:31, 35–36
Mocked and insulted	Ps. 22:7–8	Matt. 27:39–43, 45–49
Soldiers cast lots for coat	Ps. 22:18	Mark 15:20, 24–25, 34; Luke 19:24; 23:35; John 19:15–18, 23–24, 34; Acts 2:23–24
Accused by false witnesses	Ps. 27:12	Matt. 26:60–61
He commits his spirit	Ps. 31:5	Luke 23:46
No bone broken	Ps. 34:20	John 19:36
Accused by false witnesses	Ps. 35:11	Matt. 26:59–61; Mark 14:57–58
Hated without reason	Ps. 35:19	John 15:24–25
Friends stand afar off	Ps. 38:11	Matt. 27:55; Mark 15:40; Luke 23:49
“I come to do Thy will”	Ps. 40:6–8	Heb. 10:5–9



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Betrayed by a friend	Ps. 41:9	Matt. 26:14–16, 47, 50; Mark 14:17–21; Luke 22:19–23; John 13:18–19
Known for righteousness	Ps. 45:2, 6–7	Heb. 1:8–9
His resurrection	Ps. 49:15	Mark 16:6
Betrayed by a friend	Ps. 55:12–14	John 13:18
His ascension	Ps. 68:18	Eph. 4:8
Hated without reason	Ps. 69:4	John 15:25
Stung by reproaches	Ps. 69:9	John 2:17; Rom. 15:3
Given gall and vinegar	Ps. 69:21	Matt. 27:34, 48; Mark 15:23; Luke 23:36; John 19:29
Exalted by God	Ps. 72:1–19	Matt. 2:2; Phil. 2:9–11; Heb. 1–8
He speaks in parables	Ps. 78:2	Matt. 13:34–25:34
Seed of David exalted	Ps. 89:3–4, 19, 27–29, 35–37	Luke 1:32; Acts 2:30; 13:23; Rom. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:8
Son of Man comes in glory	Ps. 102:16	Luke 21:24, 27; Rev. 12:5–10
“Thou remainest”	Ps. 102:24–27	Heb. 1:10–12
Prays for his enemies	Ps. 109:4	Luke 23:34
Another to succeed Judas	Ps. 109:7–8	Acts 1:16–20
A priest like Melchizedek	Ps. 110:1–7	Matt. 22:41–45; 26:64; Mark 12:35–37; 16:19; Acts 7:56; Eph. 1:20; Col. 1:20; Heb. 1:13; 2:8; 5:6; 6:20; 7:21; 8:1; 10:11–13; 12:2
The chief corner stone	Ps. 118:22–23	Matt. 21:42; Mark 12:10, 11; Luke 20:17; John 1:11; Acts 4:11; Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:4

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The King comes in the name of the Lord	Ps. 118:26	Matt. 21:9; 23:39; Mark 11:9; Luke 13:35; 19:38; John 12:13
David's seed to reign	Ps. 132:11 cf. 2 Sam. 7:12-13, 16, 25-26, 29	Matt. 1:1
Declared to be the Son of God	Prov. 30:4	Matt. 3:17; Mark 14:61-62; Luke 1:35; John 3:13; 9:35-38; 11:21; Rom. 1:2-4; 10:6-9; 2 Pet. 1:17
Repentance for the nations	Isa. 2:2-4	Luke 24:47
Hearts are hardened	Isa. 6:9-10	Matt. 13:14, 15; John 12:39, 40; Acts 28:25-27
Born of a virgin	Isa. 7:14	Matt. 1:22, 23
A rock of offense	Isa. 8:14, 15	Rom. 9:33; 1 Pet. 2:8
Light out of darkness	Isa. 9:1, 2	Matt. 4:14-16; Luke 2:32
God with us	Isa. 9:6, 7	Matt. 1:21, 23; Luke 1:32, 33; John 8:58; 10:30; 14:19; 2 Cor. 5:19; Col. 2:9
Full of wisdom and power	Isa. 11:1-10	Matt. 3:16; John 3:34; Rom. 15:12; Heb. 1:9
Reigning in mercy	Isa. 16:4-5	Luke 1:31-33
Peg in a sure place	Isa. 22:21-25	Rev. 3:7
Death swallowed up in victory	Isa. 25:6-12	1 Cor. 15:54
A stone in Zion	Isa. 28:16	Rom. 9:33; 1 Pet. 2:6
The deaf hear, the blind see	Isa. 29:18-19	Matt. 5:3; 11:5; John 9:39
King of kings, Lord of lords	Isa. 32:1-4	Rev. 19:16; 20:6
Son of the Highest	Isa. 33:22	Luke 1:32; 1 Tim. 1:17; 6:15

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Healing for the needy	Isa. 35:4–10	Matt. 9:30; 11:5; 12:22; 20:34; 21:14; Mark 7:30; John 5:9
Make ready the way of the Lord	Isa. 40:3–5	Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4–5; John 1:23
The Shepherd dies for his sheep	Isa. 40:10–11	John 10:11; Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 2:24–25
The meek Servant	Isa. 42:1–16	Matt. 12:17–21; Luke 2:32
A light to the Gentiles	Isa. 49:6–12	Acts 13:47; 2 Cor. 6:2
Scourged and spat upon	Isa. 50:6	Matt. 26:67; 27:26, 30; Mark 14:65; 15:15, 19; Luke 22:63–65; John 19:1
Rejected by his people	Isa. 52:13–53:12	Matt. 8:17; 27:1–2, 12–14, 38
Suffered vicariously	Isa. 53:4–5	Mark 15:3–4, 27–28; Luke 23:1– 25, 32–34
Silent when accused	Isa. 53:7	John 1:29; 11:49–52
Crucified with transgressors	Isa. 53:12	John 12:37–38; Acts 8:28–35
Buried with the rich	Isa. 53:9	Acts 10:43; 13:38–39; 1 Cor. 15:3; Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 2:21– 25; 1 John 1:7, 9
Calling of those not a people	Isa. 55:4, 5	John 18:37; Rom. 9:25–26; Rev. 1:5
Deliver out of Zion	Isa. 59:16–20	Rom. 11:26–2
Nations walk in the light	Isa. 60:1–3	Luke 2:32
Anointed to preach liberty	Isa. 60:1–2	Luke 4:17–19; Acts 10:38
Called by a new name	Isa. 62:11	Luke 2:32; Rev. 3:12
The King cometh	Isa. 62:11	Matt. 21:5

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A vesture dipped in blood	Isa. 63:1–3	Rev. 19:13
Afflicted with the afflicted.	Isa. 63:8–9	Matt. 25:34–40
The elect shall inherit	Isa. 65:9	Rom. 11:5, 7; Heb. 7:14; Rev. 5:5
New heavens and a new earth	Isa. 65:17–25	2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1
The Lord our righteousness	Jer. 23:5, 6	John 2:19–21; Rom. 1:3–4; Eph. 2:20–21; 1 Pet. 2:5
Born a King	Jer. 30:9	John 18:37; Rev. 1:5
Massacre of infants	Jer. 31:15	Matt. 2:17–18
Conceived by the Holy Spirit	Jer. 31:22	Matt. 1:20; Luke 1:35
A New Covenant	Jer. 31:31–34	Matt. 26:27–29; Mark 14:22–24; Luke 22:15–20; 1 Cor. 11:25; Heb. 8:8–12; 10:15–17; 12:24; 13:20
A spiritual house	Jer. 33:15–17	John 2:19–21; Eph. 2:20–21; 1 Pet. 2:5
A tree planted by God	Ezek. 17:22–24	Matt. 13:31–32
The humble exalted	Ezek. 21:26–27	Luke 1:52
The good Shepherd	Ezek. 34:23–24	John 10:11
Stone cut without hands	Dan. 2:34–35	Acts 4:10–12
His kingdom triumphant	Dan. 2:44–45	Luke 1:33; 1 Cor. 15:24; Rev. 11:15
An everlasting dominion	Dan. 7:13–14	Matt. 24:30; 25:31; 26:64; Mark 14:61, 62; Acts 1:9–11; Rev. 1:7
Kingdom for the saints	Dan. 7:27	Luke 1:33; 1 Cor. 15:24; Rev. 11:15

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Time of His birth	Dan. 9:24–27	Matt. 24:15–21; Luke 3:1
Israel restored	Hos. 3:5	John 18:37; Rom. 11:25–27
Flight into Egypt	Hos. 11:1	Matt. 2:15
Promise of the Spirit	Joel 2:28–32	Acts 2:17–21; Rom. 15:13
The sun darkened	Amos 8:9	Matt. 24:29; Acts 2:20; Rev. 6:12
Restoration of tabernacle	Amos 9:11–12	Acts 15:16–18
Israel regathered	Mic. 2:12–13	John 10:14, 26
The Kingdom established	Mic. 4:1–8	Luke 1:33
Born in Bethlehem	Mic. 5:1–5	Matt. 2:1; Luke 2:4, 10–11
Earth filled with knowledge of the glory of the Lord	Hab. 2:14	Rom. 11:26; Rev. 21:23–26
The Lamb on the throne	Zech. 2:10–13	Rev. 5:13; 6:9; 21:24; 22:1–5
A holy priesthood	Zech. 3:8	John 2:19–21; Eph. 2:20–21; 1 Pet. 2:5
A heavenly High Priest	Zech. 6:12–13	Heb. 4:4; 8:1–2
Triumphal entry	Zech. 9:9–10	Matt. 21:4–5; Mark 11:9–10; Luke 20:38; John 12:13–15
Sold for pieces of silver	Zech. 11:12–13	Matt. 26:14–15
Money buys potter's field	Zech. 11:12–13	Matt. 27:9
Piercing of his body	Zech. 12:10	John 19:34, 37
Shepherd smitten—sheep scattered	Zech. 13:1, 6–7	Matt. 26:31; John 16:32
Preceded by Forerunner	Mal. 3:1	Matt. 11:10; Mark 1:2; Luke 7:27

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Our sins purged	Mal. 3:3	Heb. 1:3
The light of the world	Mal. 4:2–3	Luke 1:78; John 1:9; 12:46; 2 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 2:28; 19:11– 16; 22:16
The coming of Elijah	Mal. 4:5–6	Matt. 11:14; 17:10–12

The people in the Dead Sea scrolls were evidently able to combine a dual hope of two Messiahs, one priestly and the second a royal figure. The alternation between a kingly Messiah and a priestly figure is characteristic of the two centuries of early Judaism prior to the coming of Jesus. **Messiahship in Jesus' Ministry** A question posed in John 4:29 (cp. 40–43) is: "Could this be the Messiah?" (HCSB). It is evident that the issue of the Messiah's identity and role was one much debated among the Jews in the first century. In the Synoptic Gospels the way Jesus acted and spoke led naturally to the dialogue at Caesarea Philippi. Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" a question to which Peter gave the reply, "You are the Messiah" (Mark 8:29 HCSB). Mark made clear that Jesus took an attitude of distinct reserve and caution to this title since it carried overtones of political power, especially in one strand of Jewish hope represented by the *Psalms of Solomon*. Jesus, therefore, accepted Peter's confession with great reluctance since with it went the disciple's objection that the Messiah could not suffer (Mark 9:32). For Peter, Messiah was a title of a glorious personage both nationalistic and victorious in battle. Jesus, on the other hand, saw His destiny in terms of a suffering Son of man and Servant of God (Mark 8:31–38; 9:31; 10:33–34). Hence He did not permit the demons to greet Him as Messiah (Luke 4:41) and downplayed all claims to privilege and overt majesty linked with the Jewish title.

The course of Jesus' ministry is one in which He sought to wean the disciples away from the traditional notion of a warrior Messiah. Instead, Jesus tried to instill in their minds the prospect that the road to His future glory was bound to run by way of the cross, with its experience of rejection, suffering, and humiliation. At the trial before His Jewish judges (Matt. 26:63–66), He once more reinterpreted the title Messiah (KJV, Christ) and gave it a content in terms of the Son of Man figure, based on Dan. 7:13–14. This confession secured His condemnation, and He went to the cross as a crucified Messiah because the Jewish leaders failed to perceive the nature of messiahship as Jesus understood it. Pilate sentenced Him as a messianic pretender who claimed (according to the false charges brought against Him) to be a rival to Caesar (Mark 15:9; Luke 23:2; John 19:14–15). It was only after the resurrection that the disciples were in a position to see how Jesus was truly a king Messiah and how Jesus then opened their minds to what true messiahship meant (Luke 24:45–46). The national title "Messiah" then took on a broader connotation, involving a kingly role that was to embrace all peoples (Luke 24:46–47).

**Messiah as a Title in the Early Church** From the resurrection onward the first preachers announced that Jesus was the Messiah by divine appointment (Acts 2:36; Rom. 1:3–4). Part of the reason for this forthright declaration is to be traced to apologetic reasons. In the mission to Israel, the church had to show how Jesus fulfilled the OT prophecies and came into the world as the "Son of David," a title closely linked with the Messiah as a royal person. Matthew's Gospel is

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especially concerned to establish the identity (Matt. 1:1), but it is equally a theme common to Luke (Luke 1:32, 69; 2:4, 11; Acts 2:29–36; 13:22–23). Paul also saw in Jesus the fulfillment of the messianic hopes of the old covenant (1 Cor. 5:7–8). Peter, too, sought to show how the sufferings of the Messiah were foretold (1 Pet. 1:11, 20; 2:21; 3:18; 4:1, 13; 5:1). Luke stressed the link between Jesus as the One anointed by the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:16–22) in a way that looks back to Isa. 61:1, and he recorded Peter’s statement (Acts 10:38 HCSB) that “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power” as a fulfillment of OT prophecy. The letter to the Hebrews is rich in this theme (Heb. 1:9; 2:2–4; 9:14–15).

The final stage of development in regard to the title “Messiah” came in the way that Paul used the word more as a personal name than as an official designation (Rom. 9:5, “Christ”). The reason for this shift lies in the intensely personal nature of Paul’s faith which centered in Jesus Christ as the divine Lord (Phil. 1:21; Col. 3:4). Also Paul taught his converts, who were mainly converted to Christ from paganism, that Jesus was the universal Lord whose mission was wider than any Jewish hope could embrace. In Pauline thought, “Christ” is a richer term than “Messiah” could ever be, and one pointer in this direction is the fact that the early followers of the Messiah called themselves not converted Jews but “Christians,” Christ’s people (Acts 11:26; 1 Pet. 4:16) as a sign of their universal faith in a sovereign Lord. See *Christ, Christology; Jesus Christ*.

Ralph P. Martin<sup>4</sup>

### *Marduk*

The title **Bel** became associated most prominently with Marduk through most of ancient history. The identification of Marduk as Bel is present in a variety of literary genres and locations. The creation epic *Enūma Eliš* was important in solidifying this connection. As in the Code of Hammurapi, the *Enūma eliš* depicts Marduk as superior to Enlil, with Enlil granting him the name “Lord of the lands” (en.kur.kur [bēl mātātī]; tablet 7.136; for other identifications of Marduk as Bel in the *Enūma Eliš*, see tablet 2.155; 4.33; 6.153; 7.20, 26, 57, 61, 65, 95).

The Akkadian text *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* (Akkadian, “I will praise the lord of wisdom”) also identifies Marduk as Bel (Annus and Lenzi, *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*; *ANET*, 596–600). Sometimes called the “Babylonian Job,” this text features a man named Šubši-mešre-Šakkan, who praises Bel (Marduk) despite great suffering, including loss of his position, health, family, and prosperity. The identification of Bel with Marduk is obvious in the opening lines, which repeat themselves almost exactly except for the movement from Bel (tablet 1.1–2) to Marduk (tablet 1.3–4).

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<sup>4</sup> Martin, R. P. (2003). [Messiah](#). In C. Brand, C. Draper, A. England, S. Bond, E. R. Clendenen, & T. C. Butler (Eds.), *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (pp. 1111–1116). Holman Bible Publishers.

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Marduk's influence extended far beyond Babylon's borders, even when Babylon was not the imperial center. For instance, the Assyrian king Esarhaddon apparently favored Marduk and Nabû over Aššur, the eponymous god of Esarhaddon's empire. Many documents from the Assyrian king's reign identify Marduk as Bel (e.g., "Vassal-Treaties of Esarhaddon," lines 431–32, *ANET*, 534–41; "Oracles Concerning Esarhaddon," *ANET*, 605; "Divine Revelations," *ANET*, 623–32).

#### *The Akitu Festival*

The *akītu* festival, one of the most important events in Mesopotamian religious and political life (sometimes called the Babylonian New Year festival), honored Bel in a number of ways, including: the cleansing of Bel's temple, priestly offerings of animal sacrifices, prayers, and a recitation of the *Enūma Eliš* ("Temple Program for the New Year Festival at Babylon," *ANET*, 331–34; compare Linssen, *Cults of Uruk and Babylon*). The king "took Bel by the hand" at the climax of the festival. This event, which portrayed the enthronement of the deity, involved a grand procession of the statue of Bel through the streets of Babylon (Black, "New Year Ceremonies"). After the procession, the statue was transferred from a horse-pulled chariot to a boat, and the statue eventually arrived at the *akītu* house outside the city's walls, where an extravagant feast was prepared for the statues of several important Babylonian deities. First millennium Babylonians seem to have considered the *akītu* festival extremely significant. Many records provide evidence for this conclusion, listing when the Babylonians celebrated the festival and when they were unable to do so, often due to war or religious neglect (see *ANET*, 306–307; Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 1, 7, 14–17).

Marduk retained the title of Bel even after Cyrus conquered Babylon, as evidenced in the Cyrus Cylinder (see *ANET*, 315–16). In this inscription, Cyrus considers his own reign to be under the favor of Bel and Nabû (22) and entreats various deities to ask Bel and Nabû to grant him a long life because of the good he has done and the peace he has brought upon the land (33–36).

Crouser, W. (2016). [Bel](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, L. Wentz, E. Ritzema, & W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Lexham Press.

#### BABYLON NOTES:

### **WHAT IS OUR RESPONSE TO KNOWING THAT BABYLON EXIST IN THE HEART OF MANKING? MAKING DISCIPLES**

#### **ISAIAH 13 HCSB**

#### **An Oracle against Babylon**

**13** An oracle against Babylon that Isaiah son of Amoz saw:

<sup>2</sup> Lift up a banner on a barren mountain.

Call out to them.

Wave your hand, and they will go



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through the gates of the nobles.

<sup>3</sup> I have commanded My chosen ones;  
I have also called My warriors,  
who exult in My triumph,  
to execute My wrath.

<sup>4</sup> Listen, a tumult on the mountains,  
like that of a mighty people!  
Listen, an uproar among the kingdoms,  
like nations being gathered together!  
The Lord of Hosts is mobilizing an army for war.

<sup>5</sup> They are coming from a far land,  
from the distant horizon—  
the Lord and the weapons of His wrath—  
to destroy the whole country.<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Wail! For the day of the Lord is near.  
It will come like destruction from the Almighty.  
<sup>7</sup> Therefore everyone's hands will become weak,  
and every man's heart will melt.

<sup>8</sup> They will be horrified;  
pain and agony will seize them;  
they will be in anguish like a woman in labor.  
They will look at each other,  
their faces flushed with fear.

<sup>9</sup> Look, the day of the Lord is coming—  
cruel, with rage and burning anger—  
to make the earth a desolation  
and to destroy the sinners on it.

<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the stars of the sky and its constellations<sup>[a]</sup>  
will not give their light.  
The sun will be dark when it rises,  
and the moon will not shine.

<sup>11</sup> I will bring disaster on the world,  
and their own iniquity, on the wicked.  
I will put an end to the pride of the arrogant  
and humiliate the insolence of tyrants.

<sup>12</sup> I will make man scarcer than gold,  
and mankind more rare than the gold of Ophir.

<sup>13</sup> Therefore I will make the heavens tremble,

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and the earth will shake from its foundations  
at the wrath of the Lord of Hosts,  
on the day of His burning anger.

<sup>14</sup> Like wandering gazelles  
and like sheep without a shepherd,  
each one will turn to his own people,  
each one will flee to his own land.

<sup>15</sup> Whoever is found will be stabbed,  
and whoever is caught will die by the sword.

<sup>16</sup> Their children will be smashed to death before their eyes;  
their houses will be looted,  
and their wives raped.

<sup>17</sup> Look! I am stirring up the Medes against them,  
who cannot be bought off with<sup>14</sup> silver  
and who have no desire for gold.

<sup>18</sup> Their bows will cut young men to pieces.  
They will have no compassion on little ones;  
they will not look with pity on children.

<sup>19</sup> And Babylon, the jewel of the kingdoms,  
the glory of the pride of the Chaldeans,  
will be like Sodom and Gomorrah  
when God overthrew them.

<sup>20</sup> It will never be inhabited  
or lived in from generation to generation;  
a nomad will not pitch his tent there,  
and shepherds will not let their flocks rest there.

<sup>21</sup> But desert creatures will lie down there,  
and owls will fill the houses.  
Ostriches will dwell there,  
and wild goats will leap about.

<sup>22</sup> Hyenas will howl in the fortresses,  
and jackals, in the luxurious palaces.  
Babylon's time is almost up;  
her days are almost over.

### **Israel's Return**

<sup>14</sup> For the Lord will have compassion on Jacob and will choose Israel again. He will settle them on their own land. The foreigner will join them and be united with the house of Jacob.<sup>2</sup> The nations will escort Israel and bring it to its homeland. Then the house of

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Israel will possess them as male and female slaves in the Lord's land. They will make captives of their captors and will rule over their oppressors.

### **Downfall of the King of Babylon**

<sup>3</sup> When the Lord gives you rest from your pain, torment, and the hard labor you were forced to do, <sup>4</sup> you will sing this song of contempt about the king of Babylon and say: How the oppressor has quieted down, and how the raging<sup>Ⓜ</sup> has become quiet!

<sup>5</sup> The Lord has broken the staff of the wicked, the scepter of the rulers.

<sup>6</sup> It struck the peoples in anger with unceasing blows.

It subdued the nations in rage with relentless persecution.

<sup>7</sup> All the earth is calm and at rest; people shout with a ringing cry.

<sup>8</sup> Even the cypresses and the cedars of Lebanon rejoice over you:

"Since you have been laid low, no woodcutter has come against us."

<sup>9</sup> Sheol below is eager to greet your coming. He stirs up the spirits of the departed for you— all the rulers<sup>Ⓜ</sup> of the earth.

He makes all the kings of the nations rise from their thrones.

<sup>10</sup> They all respond to you, saying:

"You too have become as weak as we are; you have become like us!

<sup>11</sup> Your splendor has been brought down to Sheol, along with the music of your harps.

Maggots are spread out under you, and worms cover you."

<sup>12</sup> Shining morning star,<sup>Ⓜ</sup> how you have fallen from the heavens!

You destroyer of nations, you have been cut down to the ground.

<sup>13</sup> You said to yourself:

"I will ascend to the heavens; I will set up my throne

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above the stars of God.

I will sit on the mount of the gods' assembly,  
in the remotest parts of the North.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>14</sup> I will ascend above the highest clouds;  
I will make myself like the Most High."

<sup>15</sup> But you will be brought down to Sheol  
into the deepest regions of the Pit.

<sup>16</sup> Those who see you will stare at you;  
they will look closely at you:  
"Is this the man who caused the earth to tremble,  
who shook the kingdoms,

<sup>17</sup> who turned the world into a wilderness,  
who destroyed its cities  
and would not release the prisoners to return home?"

<sup>18</sup> All the kings of the nations  
lie in splendor, each in his own tomb.

<sup>19</sup> But you are thrown out without a grave,  
like a worthless branch,  
covered by those slain with the sword  
and dumped into a rocky pit like a trampled corpse.

<sup>20</sup> You will not join them in burial,  
because you destroyed your land  
and slaughtered your own people.  
The offspring of evildoers  
will never be remembered.

<sup>21</sup> Prepare a place of slaughter for his sons,  
because of the iniquity of their fathers.  
They will never rise up to possess a land  
or fill the surface of the earth with cities.

<sup>22</sup> "I will rise up against them"—this is the declaration of the Lord of Hosts—"and I will  
cut off from Babylon her reputation, remnant, offspring, and posterity"—this is  
the Lord's declaration. <sup>23</sup> "I will make her a swamp and a region for screech  
owls,<sup>14</sup> and I will sweep her away with a broom of destruction."

This is the declaration of the Lord of Hosts.

### **Assyria Will Be Destroyed**

<sup>24</sup> The Lord of Hosts has sworn:  
As I have purposed, so it will be;  
as I have planned it, so it will happen.

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<sup>25</sup> I will break Assyria in My land;  
I will tread him down on My mountain.  
Then his yoke will be taken from them,  
and his burden will be removed from their shoulders.

<sup>26</sup> This is the plan prepared  
for the whole earth,  
and this is the hand stretched out  
against all the nations.

<sup>27</sup> The Lord of Hosts Himself has planned it;  
therefore, who can stand in its way?  
It is His hand that is outstretched,  
so who can turn it back?

### **An Oracle against Philistia**

<sup>28</sup> In the year that King Ahaz died, this oracle came:

<sup>29</sup> Don't rejoice, all of you in Philistia,  
because the rod of the one who struck you is broken.  
For a viper will come from the root<sup>Ⓜ</sup> of a snake,  
and from its egg comes a flying serpent.

<sup>30</sup> Then the firstborn of the poor will be well fed,  
and the impoverished will lie down in safety,  
but I will kill your root with hunger,  
and your remnant will be slain.<sup>Ⓜ</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Wail, you gates! Cry out, city!  
Tremble with fear, all Philistia!  
For a cloud of dust is coming from the north,  
and there is no one missing from the invader's ranks.

<sup>32</sup> What answer will be given to the messengers from that nation?  
The Lord has founded Zion,  
and His afflicted people find refuge in her.

## **III. GOD DEALS WITH THE NATIONS AROUND JUDAH 13:1–23:18**

After the wonderful hymn of praise Isaiah goes back to the theme of judgment, recognizing that evil still exists in the world. These chapters deal with foreign nations but not in chronological order and not as separate from God's dealings with Judah and Jerusalem. Foreign nations are involved in God's judgment and deliverance of His people, so messages to God's people are interspersed in the following chapters. Throughout all of them we see the glory of the almighty sovereign God and the reality of His promises. He is the one true God over all the earth.

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### A. Babylon's Destruction 13:1–14:23

This prophecy concerns the famous, splendid city of Babylon in Isaiah's own day, and not the later Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar. Babylon in Assyrian times was the greatest center of trade and industry in the Tigris-Euphrates valley (see map, Appendix B). Even at the time of Joshua's conquest of Jericho, "a goodly Babylonish garment" was highly prized (Josh. 7:21, KJV).

Even more important, Babylon claimed religious and cultural leadership of the world in Isaiah's day. The state letters of Assyria show that the Assyrians included the gods of Babylon among their own. Bel and Nabu (Nebo) are often mentioned by the Assyrians in lists of gods whose protection they seek or whose honor they declare. A number of times Bel and Nabu are mentioned without any reference to any other god, as if they were the chief or most revered gods of that particular Assyrian king.<sup>3</sup> Babylon dominated Assyria's religion.

Nor was commercial, religious, and cultural leadership Babylon's only claims to greatness. From ancient times it was powerful and well-organized. Assyria, for all its ruthless military might, did not treat Babylon as a state of minor importance. Babylon never did consent to be incorporated into the Assyrian Empire. Tiglath-Pileser III "left their liberties and territory alike unimpaired." Even when Babylon's internal disunity brought her to submit to the Assyrian yoke, Babylon still retained political importance. Even in a later age, Babylon was remembered by Herodotus in his history as "one of the most renowned and strongest cities of Assyria."

Another factor Isaiah knew of, confirming the importance of Babylon, is that Assyrian control was always rather tenuous. The possession of Babylon meant a great deal to Assyria's prestige. Until Sennacherib finally destroyed the city, Assyrian kings had prided themselves on being protectors of Babylon, and they were extremely patient with the people of the city. Some Assyrian kings even sent part of the spoil from their conquests to Babylon instead of sending it all to Nineveh.

No king of Assyria dared to proclaim himself king of Babylon merely on the grounds of having conquered the city. Usually Assyrian kings added the name of a conquered country to a list of those they ruled. Tiglath-Pileser III made Babylon the first great objective in his dream of a world empire. But not until two years before he died do we find the Nimrud Tablet declaring him "king of Babylon."

Assyrian recognition of the Babylonian god Bel (identified with Marduk) as the supreme god made the Assyrian kings fear to disobey the demands of the Babylonian priests of Marduk: A legitimate king of Babylon must be recognized by Marduk. This meant the king must be in Babylon on New Year's Day each year and perform the illustrious but humbling ceremony of taking the hands of Bel-Marduk. Most Assyrian kings did not wish to do this, so they contented themselves with a lesser title. Shalmaneser V, for example, proclaimed himself "the mighty king, king of the universe, king of Assyria, king of the four regions of the world ... king of Sumer and Akkad," but he was only "viceroy," or vice president, of Babylon. Sargon did the same.<sup>11</sup>

Babylon was the center of world attention in Isaiah's day, and God gave him a heavy message for it. The prophet saw the judgment of Babylon as coming in his own lifetime. However, the destruction of Babylon here is a type, pledge, or precursor of final judgment. Certainly Sennacherib's destruction of Babylon in 689 B.C. must have seemed the height of Assyria's

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atrocities, and to Isaiah it must have seemed the climax of God's judgment on the world through the Assyrians.

The prophecy concerning it was probably placed first in this series because of its importance. ~~Babylon, from the time of the tower of Babel, was representative of any world power which rose up in proud disobedience to God. Its fall looked ahead to the final fall of the Babylon-like world system described in chapters 17 and 18 of the Book of Revelation.~~

#### 1. JUDGMENT SOON TO COME 13:1–22

##### a. *God's Wrath On Babylon 13:1–5*

##### **<sup>1</sup>An oracle concerning Babylon that Isaiah son of Amoz saw:**

The word "oracle" or "burden" (Heb. *massa'*) means "something lifted up." It refers to a word, declaration, or pronouncement from God. Isaiah "saw" it; that is, he received it as a prophetic vision or message. It was a weighty message of heavy judgment.

##### **<sup>2</sup>Raise a banner on a bare hilltop, shout to them; beckon to them to enter the gates of the nobles.**

On the bare rocks of a high hill, where signals can easily be seen, God commands a banner to be raised as a signal to gather troops. He also commands a loud call and wave of a hand to encourage them to come, so they will "enter the gates of the nobles," probably the gates of Babylon. They were called "gates of the nobles" because the wealthy, powerful Babylonians considered themselves the aristocrats of the world in that day. Thus, Isaiah anticipated judgment on Babylon.

##### **<sup>3</sup>I have commanded my holy ones; I have summoned my warriors to carry out my wrath—those who rejoice in my triumph.**

"I" is in the emphatic position. God will command and summon warriors whom He has consecrated to carry out His wrath. Babylon's pride and arrogance deserve judgment. Those who come against her will be exulting in God's majesty, even though they may not know it. They are "holy ones" in the sense that God has consecrated them to fulfill His will, even though they do not know it. Their eagerness for battle compares with the attitude of Assyria in 10:7–12. Their victory will really be God's triumph because He will bring His judgment on them in due time.

##### **<sup>4</sup>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.**

Sennacherib and the Assyrians claimed victory over Babylon, and his army destroyed it. The Assyrian army was like an avalanche, becoming larger as it advanced: The Assyrians allowed men of conquered cities and nations to join forces with them in order to recoup some of their own losses by taking spoils from the next place of conquest. Thus, Isaiah hears the noise of many "nations massing" for war against Babylon. But God is really in control. Using a wordplay, Isaiah says God is *Yahweh ts<sup>e</sup>va'oth* and He is mustering a *ts<sup>e</sup>va'* for war. *Ts<sup>e</sup>va'*, meaning "host" or "army" (plural, *ts<sup>e</sup>va'oth*), sometimes refers to earthly armies and sometimes to angelic hosts. Here, God is using an earthly army to bring judgment on Babylon and destroy it.

##### **<sup>5</sup>They come from faraway lands, from the ends of the heavens—the Lord and the weapons of his wrath—to destroy the whole country.**

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As Assyria was the club in God's hand to bring judgment on Israel (10:5), now Assyria and its combined armies from many distant lands become "the weapons" to bring God's judgment on Babylon.

#### *b. A Day Of The LORD's Wrath Is Near 13:6–13*

**<sup>6</sup>Wail, for the day of the LORD is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty.**

The people of Babylon will wail, for the Day of the LORD is soon to come. Using another wordplay, Isaiah says that that day will come as a *shod* (violent destruction) from *Shaddai* (the Almighty). The wordplay emphasizes that God is able to keep His promises. Here, Isaiah is looking at "the day of the LORD" as imminent.

**<sup>7</sup>Because of this, all hands will go limp, every man's heart will melt.**

Babylon will not be able to withstand the violent destruction of the coming Day of the LORD. Instead of holding on to weapons to defend themselves, they will be so demoralized that their "hands will go limp," and their courage will vanish as their hearts melt. They will be unable to do anything or think of any way to save themselves.

**<sup>8</sup>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.**

They will be so terrified that they will be out of their senses, convulsed with pain that will seize them like the pangs of "a woman in labor." For years after the Assyrians took control of Babylon, they treated it with respect and honor—until the Assyrian king Sennacherib destroyed it. This sudden, violent destruction shocked and surprised the Babylonians. Their faces became hot, inflamed by the shame of their defeat.

**<sup>9</sup>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 destruction of Babylon by Sennacherib in 689 B.C. becomes a type of future judgment that will come in the final Day of the LORD. What Isaiah sees here is the wrath of a holy God being poured out, making "the land desolate" and destroying sinners upon it. "The land" (Heb. *ha'arets*) can also mean "the earth." It may be that beginning with this verse (rather than the next) Isaiah is speaking of the final Day of the LORD.

**<sup>10</sup>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.**

The future Day of the LORD will involve darkness over all the earth (cf. 5:30; 8:22; Amos 5:18; Matt. 24:29; Rev. 6:12–13). There is no compassion here, only judgment on a world corrupted by sin and evil.

**<sup>11</sup>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.**

The punishment here is not just for Babylon, but for the entire inhabited earth. God's righteous judgment will be upon the world's evil—the twisted activities of the wicked, the presumption of the proud, and the haughtiness of the tyrants who violently exercise their authority. They will all be humbled and brought to an end because of their evil deeds.

**<sup>12</sup>I will make man scarcer than pure gold, more rare than the gold of Ophir.**

The judgment will fall on individuals and humankind in general. The remnant will be small—it is compared to the scarcity of pure gold, especially "the gold of Ophir." Much of Solomon's gold was brought from Ophir (1 Kings 9:28; 10:11), on a three-year voyage (1 Kings 10:22). The location



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of Ophir today is unknown. It may have actually been in India, as Jerome and the Septuagint suggest.

**<sup>13</sup>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.**

Therefore, because the world deserves God's judgment, in His fierce anger and wrath He will make the heavens tremble and the earth shake out of its place. Such language was sometimes used of tremendous storms and earthquakes.

*c. Babylon Soon To Be Overthrown 13:14–22*

**<sup>14</sup>Like a hunted gazelle, like sheep without a shepherd, each will return to his own people, each will flee to his native land.**

Isaiah now returns to his own day and gives several aspects of the judgment on Babylon by Sennacherib in 689 B.C. First, those who are not Babylonians will flee to their own lands. The Assyrians settled a number of captive peoples in Babylonia to replace the 208,000 Babylonians Sennacherib claimed he moved out earlier. These probably included most of the 200,150 captives taken from Judah.

Esarhaddon, Sennacherib's son and successor, confirms in his records that when Sennacherib destroyed Babylon, captive peoples fled back to their own lands. The figure of "a hunted gazelle" demonstrates how fast they ran to escape. The "sheep without a shepherd" indicates that their Babylonian overlords were no longer present to confine them.

**<sup>15</sup>Whoever is captured will be thrust through; all who are caught will fall by the sword.**

The Babylonians did not escape. Whether they were found hiding in the city or trying to escape, all were killed. The annals of Sennacherib, which describe the destruction of Babylon in 689 B.C., say the public squares were piled high with corpses.

**<sup>16</sup>Their infants will be dashed to pieces before their eyes; their houses will be looted and their wives ravished.**

The Assyrians were merciless and cruel. It was common for them to kill babies, strip valuables from houses, and rape women. When Cyrus and his armies entered Babylon in 539 B.C., there was no fighting and no such atrocities. Cyrus considered himself a deliverer of the cities he conquered and would not have allowed those kinds of behavior. But at this time God withdrew His hand and allowed the Assyrians to show their cruelty toward the people of Babylon.

**<sup>17</sup>See, I will stir up against them the Medes, who do not care for silver and have no delight in gold.**

The Assyrians directed eight campaigns against Media shortly before Isaiah's time. When Isaiah was a young man, Tiglath-Pileser III made a more thorough conquest of what he called "the mighty Medes." Then Sargon II received tribute from them and kept them under control.

Assyrians in the time of Sennacherib labeled all Medes and Persians "Madai," that is, Medes. The Medes referred to by Isaiah may be a general term for the combined armies of Sennacherib. Certainly, since Herodotus spoke of the armies of Sennacherib as "the Arabian host"<sup>21</sup> after Sennacherib passed through Arabia in 688 B.C., it is not impossible that Isaiah would specifically recognize the Median contingent of Sennacherib's army in 689. On the other hand, they may be designated as the part of his army that did not want spoil (having no "care for silver ... no delight in gold"), only revenge. This does not fit the later time of Cyrus. The later armies of the Medes

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and Persians considered themselves deliverers of Babylon from the misrule of Nabonidus and Belshazzar.

**<sup>18</sup>Their bows will strike down the young men; they will have no mercy on infants nor will they look with compassion on children.**

The cruel treatment and merciless slaughter described in this verse was typical of the Assyrian armies. Cyrus was a different kind of conqueror. He destroyed no Mesopotamian cities. Ancient records show that in 539 B.C. the people of Babylon welcomed his army in by throwing open the city gates. They even gave Cyrus a triumphal entry complete with palm branches.

**<sup>19</sup>Babylon, the jewel of kingdoms, the glory of the Babylonians' pride, will be overthrown by God like Sodom and Gomorrah.**

Babylon, in Isaiah's day, was indeed a "jewel" among ancient kingdoms. The Chaldeans under Merodach-Baladan made it "the glory" of their pride. No one believed anything could destroy it. The world of that day expressed horror and shock at its sudden, total destruction by Sennacherib. The city was leveled, so its destruction compares with that of Sodom and Gomorrah. That the Assyrians are not mentioned here is in line with Isaiah's recognition that a holy God was using the Assyrians to bring His divine judgment. He gives the city no hope at this point.

**<sup>20</sup>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. <sup>21</sup>But desert creatures will lie there, jackals will fill her houses; there the owls will dwell, and there the wild goats will leap about. <sup>22</sup>Hyenas will howl in her strongholds, jackals in her luxurious palaces. Her time is at hand, and her days will not be prolonged.**

The verbs (v. 20) are active, not passive. The first part is literally, "It will not sit forever; it will not dwell [continue] from generation to generation." This needs to be connected with the last part of verse 22, where the repetition emphasizes that Babylon's destruction is soon to come. Before her destruction in 689 B.C., Babylon's expectation was of a long, uninterrupted existence. The capture of the city by the Assyrians did not change that expectation. Even Sennacherib treated the city with considerable respect until he finally decided that it must be destroyed.

The emphasis of verse 20 is not on a future state, but on Babylon's current hopes, and on the soon, sudden, and total destruction of Babylon that they did not expect. This was exactly the case in 689 B.C. but not in any other time in Babylon's history. Thus, the meaning is not that the city would never be inhabited. The city was too important to be left in the condition described in these verses, where Arabians and shepherds avoided it and where wild animals made it their home. So after a time, Esarhaddon rebuilt it, Nebuchadnezzar enlarged it, Cyrus and Alexander the Great honored it, and it remained a great city for many centuries—only gradually being deserted after Baghdad took the leadership in that part of the world. Today, though Saddam Hussein has tried to restore parts of ancient Babylon, its ruins still remind us that God will destroy evil.

## 2. ISRAEL RESTORED BUT BABYLON JUDGED 14:1–23

### a. *Compassion On Judah 14:1–2*

**<sup>1</sup>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. <sup>2</sup>Nations will take them and bring them to their own place. And the house of Israel will possess**

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**the nations as menservants and maidservants in the LORD's land. They will make captives of their captors and rule over their oppressors.**

Before continuing with the judgment on Babylon, Isaiah reminds Israel (also called Jacob) that God's purpose has not changed. He is still faithful. His compassion is an intense love full of mercy and affection. Settling the Israelites "in their own land" could also mean providing them with security, peace, and rest. Conditions will be the reverse of what they were in Isaiah's day. Instead of nations taking them captive, nations will restore Israel to its own land. Instead of nations taking possession of Israel, Israel will possess the nations, and the people of the nations will serve Israel. Their captors will be the captives, and Israel will rule over the despots who once oppressed them. God will still use Israel in His divine plan.

*b. A Taunt Against The King Of Babylon 14:3–8*

**<sup>3</sup>On the day the LORD gives you relief from suffering and turmoil and cruel bondage,**

There will be a day of relief from the hardship, turmoil, and hard labor that was endured by those taken captive by the Assyrians. Although Nebuchadnezzar later settled Jews in Babylonia, he did not put them through such pain and hard labor. The kingdom of God initiated by Jesus brought relief (Matt. 11:28–30), but the Millennium will bring complete relief.

**<sup>4</sup>you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon: How the oppressor has come to an end! How his fury has ended!**

When that day comes, the people will be able to "take up this taunt," a mocking song against the king of Babylon. Though patterned after the royal funeral orations of the day, its content is sharply satirical, revealing the truth about the king. The king is not named because he does not deserve to be remembered.

However, this particular king of Babylon is identified in verses 17–20 as one who did not let his captives return to their homes and did not himself receive a proper tomb-burial like other kings.

These facts fit Tiglath-Pileser III, the only Assyrian king in Isaiah's day who took the title "King of Babylon" and ascended its throne. He established the Neo-Assyrian Empire and instituted the policy of taking people captive to other lands. Before his time, a conqueror would tell the inhabitants of a city how much tax or tribute they had to pay and would then let them go back to rebuild their homes. But Tiglath-Pileser III took people into exile in hope of controlling them better.

His death perfectly fulfilled the prophecies in verses 18–20. He took the title "King of Babylon" in 729 B.C., two years before he died. The details of this passage fit him, but do not fit what we know about later Babylonian kings.

**<sup>5</sup>The LORD has broken the rod of the wicked, the scepter of the rulers,**

The LORD is truly the One who shatters "the rod [power] of the wicked [guilty people]" and "the scepter [governing authority] of the rulers." He uses them to bring His judgment, but they in turn are judged (cf. 10:12).

**<sup>6</sup>which in anger struck down peoples with unceasing blows, and in fury subdued nations with relentless aggression.**

Tiglath-Pileser III and his cohorts were extreme in their brutalities against nations. Every year the Assyrian armies went out on military campaigns and relentlessly "struck down peoples." No

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one was able to restrain their cruel aggression. In his records, Tiglath-Pileser said he smashed like pottery all who did not obey him and scattered them to the winds like a hurricane.

**<sup>7</sup>All the lands are at rest and at peace; they break into singing.**

The world rejoices at the death of this oppressor, for now they can enjoy rest and quiet (cf. Nah. 1:15; Zech. 1:11). “Singing” includes shouts of joy.

**<sup>8</sup>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.”**

Now Isaiah mockingly addresses the departed king via trees of the forest, for even the natural world rejoices. No Assyrian woodsman comes to cut down “the pine trees and the cedars of Lebanon” (cf. 2:13; 10:34; 33:9; 37:24).

#### *c. Sheol’s Reception Of Babylon’s King 14:9–11*

**<sup>9</sup>The grave below is all astir to meet you 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.**

In Sheol (not the grave, but hell) the departed spirits are stirred up to meet the king of Babylon. They had retained their personal identity, being recognizable to each other. They included leaders and kings killed by Tiglath-Pileser III and his armies. The leaders are called in the Hebrew *’attudim*, “he goats,” comparing them to male goats leading a flock. But now they are reduced to weakness. They are pictured as sitting in darkness on shadowy thrones. They have not changed, but their thrones are meaningless.

**<sup>10</sup>They will all respond, they will say to you, “You also have become weak, as we are; you have become like us.”**

Tiglath-Pileser III was the most powerful king of his time. He had impressed other kings by his majesty and by his claims of deity. They are amazed that in death he has become as weak and as ineffectual as they.

**<sup>11</sup>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.**

Tiglath-Pileser III called himself “the great king, the mighty king, the king of the universe.” In spite of all his pomp, he has been brought down to Sheol, having become no different than any other sinner. His body has been left without any of the glory he arrayed himself with in life. He is now on a bed of maggots and blanketed with worms. As part of his judgment he has not had a proper burial.

#### *d. The King Of Babylon’s Pride And Fall 14:12–17*

**<sup>12</sup>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!**

The pomp brought down to Sheol is described as a fall “from heaven.” The king is called the “morning star, son of the dawn.” Like the morning star that fades in the light of dawn, he has lost all his brilliance now that he is in hell. He who once defeated the nations is now broken in pieces on the ground.

The KJV translates “morning star” as “Lucifer,” a term borrowed from the Roman Catholic Latin Vulgate version of the Bible, meaning “light-bearer.” Because of the arrogant claims of the king of Babylon, the name Lucifer was applied to the devil by Jerome (translator of the Latin Vulgate)—recognizing that Satan really did fall from heaven (cf. Luke 10:18). Luther and Calvin,

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however, said that applying the name to Satan here was a great error. Certainly Satan did not become as weak as the people in hell (Isa. 14:9). Nevertheless, Satan was certainly behind the king's pride and arrogance. As a fading morning star, he is in contrast to Christ, the true "bright Morning Star" (Rev. 22:16).

**<sup>13</sup>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.**

The king's ascent "to heaven" was only by his arrogance and self-exaltation. Notice the repetition of "I will." In his heart, that is, in his ambitious thoughts, he determined he would ascend to heaven, exalt his throne above the stars of God, and sit in the assembly on top of "the sacred mountain" (Heb. *tsaphon*). Mount Tsaphon ("north") was thought by the pagans to be the seat of the chief gods. The godly people of Jerusalem recognized only one true God and one place on earth where He was manifesting himself—Mount Zion (see Deut. 12:5; Ps. 48:1–2, etc.). Thus, Isaiah's audience would recognize that the king of Babylon was claiming to be greater than any god, even greater than the one true God.

This same arrogance was later displayed by Sennacherib when he sent his chief officer to try to get Jerusalem to surrender and warn them not to listen to their king, Hezekiah, or trust the LORD (36:18–20). Sennacherib was really claiming to be greater than any god, even greater than the God of Israel—whom he classed with the gods of the other nations.

**<sup>14</sup>I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High."**

In his pride, the king of Babylon also said he would ascend above the highest clouds, above where the gods were thought to live. By this act he would put himself on a par with the "Most High" (Heb. *'elyon*, a title that really belonged only to the one true God; cf. Gen. 11:1–4; 14:18–20, 22; Dan. 4:17, 24–25; 2 Thess. 2:4). What a profound sin this was! It was like the sin of Adam and Eve, the sin of the tower of Babel, and will be the sin of the Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:4).

**<sup>15</sup>But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit.**

Continuing the thought of verses 9–12, the self-exalted king of Babylon who was reaching for the highest point in heaven will be brought down to the lowest part of Sheol—in fact, "to the [inmost] depths of the pit." ("Pit" is used here as a synonym for Sheol.)

**<sup>16</sup>Those who see you stare at you, they ponder your fate: "Is this the man who shook the earth and made kingdoms tremble,**

Now Isaiah directs our attention to the fact that the body of Tiglath-Pileser III would lie unburied, something considered humiliating by ancient people. This also confirms the fact that Sheol is not in the grave, for the king's body was not in a grave. People will look at his corpse and say with surprise and disgust, "Is this the man who shook the earth and made kingdoms tremble?"

"The man" (Heb. *ha'ish*) means an individual male human being, and is further indication that the primary meaning of this passage applies to Tiglath-Pileser III, not to Satan.

**<sup>17</sup>the man who made the world a desert, who overthrew its cities and would not let his captives go home?"**

In establishing the Neo-Assyrian Empire, Tiglath-Pileser III stripped everything valuable from the territories he conquered, leaving them each as a wilderness, or desert. He also instituted the policy of taking people into exile instead of letting them go back and rebuild their homes.

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#### *e. The King Of Babylon Lacks A Proper Burial 14:18–20*

**<sup>18</sup>All the kings of the nations lie in state, each in his own tomb. <sup>19</sup>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 the stones of the pit. Like a corpse trampled underfoot,**

In Bible times, tombs were considered important in honoring the dead. In contrast to all other kings of the time, Tiglath-Pileser III would not be royally buried in a magnificent tomb, or mausoleum. He would be cast out “like a rejected branch,” like the blood-soaked clothing of people slain by the sword, “like a corpse trampled underfoot.” Ironically, “branch” (Heb. *netser*) is the same word used of the Messiah in 11:1. What a contrast between the shame of the tyrant, the rotten branch who called himself “king of the universe,” and the glory of the righteous Branch from the line of David, Jesus, the true King of kings and Lord of lords!

**<sup>20</sup>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.**

The king of Babylon will not have a proper burial because he destroyed his land and slaughtered his people. This charge is leveled against all the kings of Assyria in Isaiah 37:18. The last part of the verse, “the offspring of the wicked will never be mentioned again,” can be taken as an imperative: “Don’t ever mention the name of this descendant of evil doers, this king of Babylon.” Perhaps that is another reason why Isaiah did not mention the name of Tiglath-Pileser III in this passage.

#### *f. Babylon To Become A Swampland 14:21–23*

**<sup>21</sup>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.**

The command is also to “prepare a place to slaughter his sons” for the guilt of their fathers. They dare not rise “to inherit the land” and fill the face of the inhabited earth with cities—which would serve as symbols of their power and authority.

**<sup>22</sup>“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.**

God’s judgment is not merely against the king of Babylon but against Babylon itself. God will cut off its name—that is, its power and authority—and will not leave it a remnant as He promised for Israel.

**<sup>23</sup>“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.**

The destruction of Babylon will be such that only lowly animals will inhabit it. God’s agent for making it “into swampland” and sweeping the city with the stiff “broom of destruction” was Sennacherib. He razed it in 689 B.C. and dug trenches from the river to flood the city and turn it into a swamp. Older writers usually connected its being flooded with Herodotus’s account of the supposed diversion of the Euphrates River by Cyrus. The records of Cyrus are silent about this, however, and because the Babylonians welcomed his army, it would not even have been necessary.

Others have supposed that the city gradually became an uninhabitable marsh, after long ages. But Babylon has not yet become an uninhabitable marsh. The area has become more like a desert since the time of the Seleucids in the third century B.C., but it has orchards and gardens nearby

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even now. Since the eleventh century A.D., the town of Hilla has been on the southern edge of its site. We know of only one time when Babylon became an uninhabitable marsh—the few years after 689 B.C. when Sennacherib leveled the city and flooded its site.

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Why does Isaiah start this section on foreign prophecies with Babylon?
2. What characterized Babylon in Isaiah's day?
3. What will enable peoples captive in Babylon to flee back to their own lands?
4. What statements show that Babylon's destruction was soon to come? How was this fulfilled?
5. What evidence from chapter 14 and from archaeology shows that the king of Babylon was Tiglath-Pileser?
6. How did this king exalt himself?
7. What shows this king was only a man?
8. How was the destruction of Babylon fulfilled?

### B. Judgment On Many Nations 14:24–17:14

#### 1. ASSYRIA TO BE CRUSHED IN GOD'S LAND 14:24–27

**<sup>24</sup>The LORD Almighty has sworn, "Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will stand. <sup>25</sup>I will crush the Assyrian in my land; on my mountains I will trample him down. His yoke will be taken from my people, and his burden removed from their shoulders."**

At the time Isaiah prophesied, it seemed that nothing could stop Assyria. But God had a firm purpose to break Assyrian domination, and this is expressed in strong terminology, like that of an oath.

God committed himself to break and destroy the Assyrian in His own land, the land of Judah. The following year (688 B.C.) the prophecy was fulfilled. Isaiah saw this in 10:12. God's purpose was to punish the Assyrians in due time. The destruction of the 185,000 of Sennacherib's army effectively did that (37:36–37). Sennacherib never made another military campaign during the remaining years of his reign.

**<sup>26</sup>This is the plan determined for the whole world; this is the hand stretched out over all nations. <sup>27</sup>For the LORD Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?**

Now God's purpose is extended to the whole earth. His hand is "stretched out" to bring judgment on the nations. No human being or earthly power can keep Him from fulfilling His purposes. He is the Lord of history.

#### 2. PHILISTIA WILL NOT ESCAPE JUDGMENT 14:28–32

**<sup>28</sup>This oracle came in the year King Ahaz died:**

Isaiah now goes back to 715 B.C., the year King Ahaz died. (As in 6:1, the dating is in the year the king died, not the year of the accession of the new king, because the new king was already on the throne as joint ruler with his father.) Ahaz had made the treaty with Assyria in disobedience to God (see chap. 7). Now that he was gone, there was a temptation to break that treaty.

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**<sup>29</sup>Do not rejoice, all you Philistines, that the rod that struck you is broken; from the root of that snake will spring up a viper, its fruit will be a darting, venomous serpent.**

Some take “the rod that struck” Philistia to be the house of David. David had subdued the Philistines. Judah had long kept them in check. But with the treaty of Ahaz, Judah became subservient to Assyria. Thus, its power over Philistia was broken. On the other hand, Isaiah may have had the power of Assyria in mind. It seemed to the people that Assyrian power was broken because after Shalmaneser V died in 722 B.C., King Sargon II was busy dealing with revolts in the other end of his empire and was not able to drive Merodach-Baladan out of Babylon at this time. Consequently, it seemed a good time to revolt against Assyria, but it was a mistake to do so. The “root” and “fruit” mean the whole tree (cf. a similar merism at 9:14–15). Out of it will come other vicious Assyrian kings like snakes, each one more venomous than the one before.

**<sup>30</sup>The poorest of the poor will find pasture, and the needy will lie down in safety. But your root I will destroy by famine; it will slay your survivors.**

“The poorest of the poor” is literally “the firstborn of the poor.” It speaks of Israel as God’s “firstborn” (Exod. 4:22). “The needy” seems to refer to the people of Jerusalem, but God’s judgment will bring famine and death to the Philistines.

**<sup>31</sup>Wail, O gate! Howl, O city! Melt away, all you Philistines! A cloud of smoke comes from the north, and there is not a straggler in its ranks.**

The “gate” represents the “city,” and both words are collective here. So instead of rejoicing, all the cities and people of Philistia should be howling and crying, for they will be melted away, totally demoralized and unable to resist the enemy. The “cloud of smoke ... from the north” is Assyria coming as a powerful army, leaving the smoke of burning cities behind it. It cannot be stopped, and Judah would be foolish to join with the Philistines in trying to do so.

**<sup>32</sup>What answer shall be given to the envoys of that nation? “The LORD has established Zion, and in her his afflicted people will find refuge.”**

Philistine messengers apparently want Hezekiah to join them in rebelling against Assyria. But Jerusalem must declare her trust in God who “established” (Heb. *yissad*, “founded”) her. Her “afflicted people”—even the poorest and most humble—will find safe refuge in her. Sargon did not attack Jerusalem, and Sennacherib failed to take it. (See chaps. 36 and 37 for God’s dealings with Sennacherib.)

It is also probable that when Ahaz died in 715 B.C., Hezekiah was free to cleanse the temple and celebrate the great Passover described in 2 Chronicles 29:3 to 30:27. He would not have been able to do that while his father was alive. Nor would he have been able to destroy high places and altars in Ephraim and Manasseh before Hoshea was defeated and Samaria taken into exile in 722 B.C. Thus, Hezekiah counted 715 as the true first year of his reign even though he had reigned as king with his father for six years.

### 3. MOAB 15:1–16:14

Chapters 15 and 16 deal with Moab (descendants of Lot, Gen. 19:36–37) on the east side of the Dead Sea. Moab was subdued by David. Later, the northern kingdom of Israel controlled it from time to time. The form of these chapters is that of a lamentation.

#### a. *Moab’s Destruction* 15:1–9

**<sup>1</sup>An oracle concerning Moab: Ar in Moab is ruined, destroyed in a night! Kir in Moab is ruined, destroyed in a night!**



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After the death of Jeroboam II of Israel (753 B.C.), Moab took over some of the cities that were formerly Israelite. Amos prophesied against Moab (Amos 2:1–3). Now Isaiah sees that unexpected, sudden destruction will be widespread, from Ar by the Arnon River in the north (Num. 21:15) to Kir (later known as Kerak) in the south. This probably took place during the reign of the Assyrian king Shalmaneser. The cities of Moab are not mentioned in any clear geographical pattern. This may mean that Shalmaneser fought on several fronts at the same time, or that he sent smaller units to the various cities.

**<sup>2</sup>Dibon goes up to its temple, to its high places to weep; Moab wails over Nebo and Medeba. Every head is shaved and every beard cut off.**

Dibon, the capital city under King Mesha, was about three miles north of the Arnon River. Its inhabitants will go to its temple devoted to its god, Chemosh, and to its open-air high places on the hill outside the city to weep, or howl. Moab's wailing over the cities Nebo (east of the Jordan River) and Medeba (southeast of the north end of the Dead Sea) shows they are destroyed. Shaved heads and beards were a sign of deep mourning, along with shame because of defeat.

**<sup>3</sup>In the streets they wear sackcloth; on the roofs and in the public squares they all wail, prostrate with weeping.**

Wearing coarse sackcloth made of black goat's hair was another sign of sorrow, mourning, and disgrace. The housetops and public squares were filled with people crying.

**<sup>4</sup>Heshbon and Elealeh cry out, their voices are heard all the way to Jahaz. Therefore the armed men of Moab cry out, and their hearts are faint.**

Heshbon, east of the Jordan and about fourteen miles southwest of Amman, had been assigned to the Levites (Josh. 21:39). However, it was captured by King Mesha of Moab and was still in Moabite hands in Isaiah's day. Elealeh was about two miles north-northeast of Heshbon. Jahaz was about ten miles southeast of Heshbon.

Moab's soldiers shout in alarm, for they have lost their courage. The whole country was in poor shape.

**<sup>5</sup>My heart cries out over Moab; her fugitives flee as far as Zoar, as far as Eglath Shelishiyah. They go up the way to Luhith, weeping as they go; on the road to Horonaim they lament their destruction.**

"My heart" is parallel to "I will bring" (v. 9). God is grieving over Moab. God's heart is always broken over the sins of people and over the judgment that must come. He seems to have a special place in His heart for Moab, possibly because of Abraham's intercession for Sodom in Genesis 18 where Abraham's concern was really for Lot, whose daughter became the ancestress of the Moabites. God buried Moses somewhere in Moab (Deut. 34:6). Ruth, the ancestress of David, came from Moab. When Saul pursued David, David took his parents to Moab for protection. God's love still reached out to Moab, even though judgment must come on it.

The people of Moab are fleeing south to Zoar, the little city that escaped the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:21–22). Their flight is rapid, like that of a three-year-old heifer that has never been yoked. Luhith, on the way to Zoar, was a hill, town, or fortress that might offer temporary refuge. Horonaim was another town on the way to Zoar.

**<sup>6</sup>The waters of Nimrim are dried up and the grass is withered; the vegetation is gone and nothing green is left.**

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The springs of Nimrim, probably the Wadi Numeirah (see Num. 32:3; Josh. 13:27), are toward the southeast end of the major portion of the Dead Sea. They have become arid, desertlike.

**<sup>7</sup>So the wealth they have acquired and stored up they carry away over the Ravine of the Poplars.**

The wealth accumulated during prosperous times will have to be moved for preservation beyond the dry Ravine of the Poplars to the south, probably the Wadi Zerek on Moab's southern border.

**<sup>8</sup>Their outcry echoes along the border of Moab; their wailing reaches as far as Eglaim, their lamentation as far as Beer Elim.**

The cry for help has penetrated the borders of Moab. Eglaim was probably in southern Moab. Beer Elim ("well of heroes") was on the northern border. The whole country was lamenting because of the destruction.

**<sup>9</sup>Dimon's waters are full of blood, but I will bring still more upon Dimon—a lion upon the fugitives of Moab and upon those who remain in the land.**

The waters of Dimon constitute a stream east of the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Latin Vulgate read "Dibon" (see 15:2). Jerome said "Dimon" and "Dibon" were used interchangeably. "Dimon" may have been used here for a wordplay with the Hebrew word for blood (*dam*). Streams running with blood were not enough judgment—for God will send still more. Those who escape the Assyrian army will be attacked by lions. There are some who interpret the lion to be the Assyrian army continuing to attack relentlessly.

#### *b. Moab Contrasted To Zion 16:1–5*

**<sup>1</sup>Send lambs as tribute to the ruler of the land, from Sela, across the desert, to the mount of the Daughter of Zion.**

Returning to the situation of the people of Moab at the fords of the Arnon River, they are to send lambs "as tribute" (cf. 2 Kings 3:4, where King Mesha of Moab sent 100,000 lambs as tribute to Ahab, king of Israel). Fleeing Moabites would go south of the Dead Sea to Sela, an Edomite fortress on the top of a mountain near Petra (where Edomite remains still exist). Even in that fortress they did not feel safe. From Sela they would send the tribute to Jerusalem, seeking help.

**<sup>2</sup>Like fluttering birds pushed from the nest, so are the women of Moab at the fords of the Arnon.**

At the fords of the Arnon River the fugitive women of Moab were like birds whose nest has been scattered, leaving them to wander aimlessly. Their pitiful condition shows how much the Moabites need help.

**<sup>3</sup>Give us counsel, render a decision. Make your shadow like night—at high noon. Hide the fugitives, do not betray the refugees.**

The Moabite messengers speak. They want Hezekiah and Jerusalem to "give ... counsel" (carry out a plan), make a governmental decision, and provide a secure hiding place for the fugitives. They urge Jerusalem not to betray them by handing them over to the enemy.

**<sup>4</sup>Let the Moabite fugitives stay with you; be their shelter from the destroyer." The oppressor will come to an end, and destruction will cease; the aggressor will vanish from the land.**

The Moabites want Jerusalem to let their fugitives live with them, giving them refuge from the destroying Assyrians.

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The last part of this verse (as well as v. 5) looks ahead to the future, as Isaiah so often does, and presents a contrast. The Lord lets them know the time is coming when extortion and destruction will cease. The aggressors will perish.

**<sup>5</sup>In love a throne will be established; in faithfulness a man will sit on it—one from the house of David—one who in judging seeks justice and speeds the cause of righteousness [cf. 11:2–4].**

The throne that “will be established” in steadfast, covenant-keeping love (Heb. *chesed*) is the Messiah’s throne. He will sit on it in continual faithfulness in Jerusalem, being the true and rightful heir of David and fulfilling the covenant given to him. He will be a just judge, and diligent in promoting righteousness. The context indicates that the Messiah’s rule will extend to the Gentiles. Therefore, this promise applies to Moab.

Some believe this verse means that in Isaiah’s day, Hezekiah became a type of the Messiah and was expected to do what was right.

#### *c. Moab’s Pride Brought To Contempt 16:6–12*

**<sup>6</sup>We have heard of Moab’s pride—her overweening pride and conceit, her pride and her insolence—but her boasts are empty.**

After dealing with the future way of salvation, Isaiah responds to the Moabite request and points to pride as the cause of Moab’s destruction. Haughty Moab also rejected the faith expressed in verse 5. Its outbursts of fury were just empty talk.

**<sup>7</sup>Therefore the Moabites wail, they wail together for Moab. Lament and grieve for the men of Kir Hareseth.**

Moab wails for itself (cf. 15:5, 8). All of it wails for the “men” (lit., “raisin cakes”; Heb. *‘ashishe*) of Kir Hareseth, the chief city in the southern part of Moab (cf. 15:1). The raisin cakes which they produced were part of their heathen worship (cf. Hos. 3:1). Unhelped by that worship, they can only moan that they are unmercifully beaten and their raisin-producing vineyards are destroyed.

**<sup>8</sup>The fields of Heshbon wither, the vines of Sibmah also. The rulers of the nations have trampled down the choicest vines, which once reached Jazer and spread toward the desert. Their shoots spread out and went as far as the sea.**

Heshbon at the northern border of Moab was once an Israelite city. The destroyer has “trampled down” its fields as well as the grapevines of Sibmah (also called Shebam, near Mount Nebo in the northern part of Moab). The Assyrians and their cohorts (“the rulers of the nations”) also destroyed a vineyard which reached northward to Jazer, another former Israelite city (Josh. 21:39) about ten miles west of Amman, eastward to the desert and westward to the Dead Sea. Moab had expanded in all directions but is now destroyed.

**<sup>9</sup>So I weep, as Jazer weeps, for the vines of Sibmah. O Heshbon, O Elealeh, I drench you with tears! The shouts of joy over your ripened fruit and over your harvests have been stilled.**

The phrases “I weep” and “I drench you with tears” show again that the LORD mourns with Moab over the loss of its vineyards and summer fruits that have perished in the shout of battle. He has compassion even though they deserve the judgment (cf. Jesus’ compassion for Jerusalem, Luke 13:34).

**<sup>10</sup>Joy and gladness are taken away from the orchards; no one sings or shouts in the vineyards; no one treads out wine at the presses, for I have put an end to the shouting.**

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No one is rejoicing in the orchards or singing in the vineyards, and no one is trampling on the grapes in the presses, so no juice is flowing into the lower vat. God has put an end to their shout. Some see this as the fulfillment of “I will bring still more upon Dimon” (15:9).

**<sup>11</sup>My heart laments for Moab like a harp, my inmost being for Kir Hareseth.**

Some interpret this verse as Isaiah speaking, and understand the prophet’s reference to his heart (Heb. *me’ay*, “bowels”) making a sound like the harp (Heb. *kinnor*, “lyre”) for Moab and his inner parts for Kir Hareseth as an expression of sarcasm. However, since God is speaking in verse 10, it seems more likely that God is expressing the deep-seated hurt He feels (cf. His grief and pain in Noah’s day, Gen. 6:6; cf. also Jer. 48:36). “Kir Hareseth” in Hebrew is *qir chares*. *Chares* means a broken piece of pottery, and the name is probably an ironic wordplay on the name of Kir Hareseth (16:7).

**<sup>12</sup>When Moab appears at her high place, she only wears herself out; when she goes to her shrine to pray, it is to no avail.**

It will be obvious when the Moabites go to their high places to worship and to seek help from their chief god, Chemosh, that they will only be tiring themselves out. Their prayers in his holy place will not bring victory. Those who turn away from the LORD to other religious practices will find them totally useless. The LORD is the one true God, the only One who can provide refuge and salvation.

*d. Moab To Be Judged Within Three Years 16:13–14*

**<sup>13</sup>This is the word the LORD has already spoken concerning Moab. <sup>14</sup>But now the Lord says: “Within three years, as a servant bound by contract would count them, Moab’s splendor and all her many people will be despised, and her survivors will be very few and feeble.”**

The previous prophecy was made earlier by Isaiah (chap. 15). Now he adds that the Lord will fulfill it “within three years.” This means three full years exactly, such as would be stated in a business contract given to someone who was hired for a job. Within that time, Moab’s glory will become of little account. Its remnant will be very small and without power. Assyria fulfilled this prophecy.

Today, Jordanian Arabs occupy that territory. The descendants of Moab were scattered, intermarried (probably with Arabs), and lost their national identity. There are no more Moabites.<sup>5</sup>

## II. Oracles Against the Nations (13:1–23:18)

These messages are called “oracles.” The word *oracle* (burden) is a technical term and occurs in the headings of Isaiah’s speeches against each nation (13:1—Babylon; 17:1—Damascus; 19:1—Egypt; 23:1—Tyre; cf. also 21:1, 11, 13; 22:1; 30:6). Similar collections are found in Jeremiah 46–51 and Ezekiel 25–32. This collection of oracles forms the second major division of Isaiah and prepares the reader for the “Apocalypse of Isaiah” (chaps. 24–27).

*A. Babylon (13:1–14:23).* Isaiah views the Lord’s judgment on Babylon as an expression of his rule over the earth (13:1–16). He commands the armed forces of the nations. “The holy ones”

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<sup>5</sup> Horton, S. M. (2000). [\*Isaiah: A Logion Press Commentary\*](#) (pp. 135–163). Logion Press.

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are the warriors mustered and consecrated for battle (v. 3). The Lord sovereignly rules over the nations, who serve him without knowledge of their being the instruments of the establishment of his kingdom. The descriptions of the ensuing battle and the day of the Lord take on universal proportions. The nations of the earth are involved. The day of the Lord as a time of great destruction on earth is near. Man is totally helpless. Heaven and earth heave when God expresses his anger with sinful man. Few survive, and even those who escape will come to a painful end.

The cosmic description of the day of the Lord is applied to Babylon's fall (**13:17–22**). As an expression of his sovereignty, God will also turn against mighty Babylon. The fall of Babylon will be great. In colorful language Isaiah portrays the devastation caused by her enemies. The enemies are the Medes (v. 17), who together with the Persians conquered Babylon under the leadership of Cyrus the Persian (539 B.C.). They will have no pity. Her doom is that of a deserted city. The desolation of Babylon is graphically portrayed by its becoming the haunt of wild animals, like Sodom and Gomorrah. This prophecy was not completely fulfilled when Cyrus entered Babylon because the transfer of power was rather quiet. It seems that the prophet extends the perimeter of application to all world kingdoms and empires. Babylon is symbolic of all evil, pride, oppression, and power which exalts itself against the Lord. This power will be broken (cf. Rev. 18:2–24). Thus Yahweh deals with any kingdom which exalts itself against him and his anointed people.

In the midst of a description of the world "in flames," Isaiah encourages God's people with a message of comfort (**14:1–4a**). When Babylon comes to its end, the Lord will restore the exiled people to the land. There is a hint of the cosmic effect of Israel's restoration in that the nations, too, will join in Israel's future either as converts (v. 1b) or as servants (v. 2). The era of restoration marks the freedom of God's people. As an expression of joy, God's people take up a dirge (a traditional funerary song) mocking the end of the oppressors. It is a taunt (v. 4)—not to be taken literally, but as a hyperbolic statement of the end of the aggressor. This explains the mythological allusions, as Isaiah portrays the end of Babylon in its own religious language.

The king of Babylon typifies world power. When the aggression of the oppressor comes to an end, the whole earth is at rest (**14:4b–8**). The nations, likened to trees, rejoice that Babylon no longer cuts down nations and kingdoms like a woodsman.

The mortality of Babylon is poetically set forth in the mythological language of Babylon's own religious conceptions (**14:9–10**). Babylon considered itself ruler over life and death. Kings, leaders, and people had died in the many campaigns and battles waged by the Babylonians. They had found rest in the netherworld. But with the end of Babylon, spirits in the netherworld stir themselves up as the king of Babylon knocks and desires to enter. There is a sudden commotion, as the news of Babylon's fall is announced. Babylon the great has fallen. It, too, is subject to powers greater than itself.

Babylon's fall is great (**14:11–15**). The king is compared to the "morning star, son of the dawn" (v. 12a). As the morning star is not the sun which distinguishes day from night, the king of Babylon is not God! However, in its drive to rule the world, Babylon's pride was unlimited (Dan. 4:30) and it acted as God on earth. In its imperial ambitions it acted no differently than the ancient people who built a city to make a name for themselves (Gen. 11:1–9). Likewise, Babylon's goal was to reach into heaven and to take the place of the Most High. But it, too, will be cast down. The

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greater the aspirations, the worse the fall. Isaiah uses this dramatic interlude to build up suspense. Will the spirits of the netherworld welcome the king of Babylon?

The spirits first gaze with amazement at the beggarly and weak king, covered with maggots. They respond with unbelief, mocking the mortality of Babylon. At this, they cast him out of the netherworld (**14:16–20a**). There will never be any rest for the king of Babylon and his offspring! He does not get the burial of a hero, but is like a soldier missing in action. The spirit of Babylon is doomed to roam.

God has reserved a time of judgment for all evildoers (**14:20b–21**). They may flourish and thrive, but then they are suddenly cut off. In Old Testament language the king and his sons, representative of the spirit of Babylon, will be cut off forever. Their memory will be forgotten. Thus the Lord will do to all evildoers. In the biblical conception of Babylon, as we have seen, Babylon represents the spirit of man without God, the spirit of autonomy, the spirit of secularization, and the spirit of antichrist. For God's kingdom to be established, the Lord must deal with any manifestation of evil.

The application is clear. Babylon must fall by the will of the Lord (**14:22–23**). Its judgment is sealed, and its final state is likened to a swamp, good only for animals (v. 23).

*B. Assyria (14:24–27).* Yahweh is angry not only with Babylon, but also with Assyria (cf. 10:5–34). Regardless of the question of which nation is guilty of the greater sin, all nations are under God's condemnation. The council of the nations will be frustrated, but his council will stand. These words are Yahweh's solemn assurance to his people that he will establish his kingdom on earth!

*C. Philistia (14:28–32).* The oracle against Philistia is dated by the year in which Ahaz died. The historical background is far from certain. It may be that Philistia made an effort to lead Judah, Edom, and Moab in an insurrection against Assyria (ca. 715 B.C.) which was put down by Sargon II in 711 B.C. The Philistines hoped for the end of Assyria's dominance, but Isaiah warns them that they will be put down several times (711, 701, 586 B.C.) until they are finally no more. The metaphors of the snake, viper, and a venomous serpent (v. 29) have been variously interpreted. They possibly refer to the several Assyrian and Babylonian campaigns, each one growing in severity. The word *root* (v. 29) denotes the offspring of the serpent. The Philistines are, thus, assured that the danger is far from over. Their own offspring (lit. root) will come to an end by famine and subsequently by the sword. The enemy from the north refers to Assyria and Babylonia. Philistia, the archenemy of God's people, will also come to an end. The Lord, however, has established his kingdom on earth and only the humble, who seek him, will find refuge in it. Regardless of the political changes and the message of the emissaries of the nations, God's people must seek the Lord and his kingdom.

*D. Moab (15:1–16:14).* The oracle concerning Moab is largely in the form of a lament and is partially repeated in Jeremiah 48:29–38. The judgment on Moab is marked by severity and utter frustration.

An enemy will come from the north and free the refugees to migrate southward along the King's Highway into Edom (**15:1–9**). Isaiah movingly and sympathetically pictures the fall of Moab's cities: Kir, Dibon, Nebo, Medeba, Heshbon, Elealeh, and Jahaz. With the fall of these cities, ranging from the far north to the south, Moab has come to an end. The refugees clutch in

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their hands whatever they can carry and move southward, wailing over their misfortunes. Isaiah joins in the lament, and evokes sympathy for the Moabites. They were, after all, Israel's relatives through Lot (Gen. 19:36–37) and David was a descendant of Ruth, the Moabite (Ruth 4:17). The brooks have dried up and the waters of Dimon (Dibon?) are filled with blood (vv. 6, 9). Thus, they cross the "Ravine of the Poplars" (Wadi Zered) into Edom.

From Edom (Sela; cf. 2 Kings 14:7) the Moabites send emissaries requesting asylum (**16:1–5**). They come with lambs as "tribute," thus recognizing Judah's supremacy. The prophet explains why it is important to seek sanctuary in Judah. First, oppression will cease from the world. Second, the messianic kingdom will be established, when a king will rule on David's throne with faithfulness, justice, and righteousness.

Moab is insincere in her request for sanctuary with God's people. They desire refuge from the enemy, but not in the Lord and his Messiah. The heart of pride, conceit, and empty boasts has not changed. Therefore, judgment has overtaken them. Still, Isaiah laments the fall of Moab (**16:6–12**). He grieves over the ruined vineyards, fields, and orchards. The songs of joy at harvest time have been changed into songs of mourning. The produce once exported to other nations has ceased. Moab's gods are unable to rescue her.

The date of Moab's doom is given: "within three years" (**16:13–14**; lit. the years of a hireling). The beginning of Moab's disasters may have come in the Assyrian campaigns. Moab came to an end.

*E. Damascus and Israel (17:1–14).* The oracle against Damascus is brief in comparison to the other oracles. It seems that this oracle is intimately connected with the judgment of Israel and the judgment on the nations. The structure of the chapter is far from simple. After the declaration of the oracle against Damascus, the prophet three times employs the introductory formula *in that day* (vv. 4, 7, 9). The last section is introduced with the word *woe* (v. 12). On the other hand, if we look at the chapter from a literary perspective, we observe two major motifs in verses 1–3: destruction and the disappearance of glory. These motifs reoccur in verses 4–6, but in the reverse order, thus forming a chiasmic structure. Verses 7 and 8 contain an invitation to repent, whereas verses 9–11 explain the reason for the destruction of the northern kingdom.

Finally, the last three verses give God's judgment on the nations who have been involved in the judgment of Israel and Damascus. The historical background of the oracle against Damascus can best be understood in the context of the Syro-Ephraimite alliance (ca. 734 B.C.). Ephraim and Damascus thought that they could free themselves from the yoke of Tiglath-pileser III. As we have seen in our analysis of chapter 7, the prophet has forewarned the nations that their alliance will not undo the Davidic dynasty in Judah nor will they succeed in destabilizing Assyria. Instead, both nations would shortly come to an end, which happened to Damascus in 732 when it was taken by Tiglath-pileser III and to Samaria in 722 when it was taken by Shalmaneser V and Sargon II.

The oracle against Damascus is addressed to the Aramean nation against which the prophet has already spoken (chaps. 7, 8). He portrays the city of Damascus in ruins and utter desolation (**17:1–3**). The flourishing city traces its ancestry back to a desert oasis. It had developed from a caravansary to a major commercial center. The judgment reverses the progress of Damascus; it will again be a place where flocks are pastured (v. 2b). Since Ephraim and Aram have consolidated their strength, both nations will come to an end and their glory will be wasted.

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Israel's future is compared to a grain harvest in the Valley of Rephaim (**17:4–6**). Twice David fought there and defeated the Philistines (2 Sam. 5:17–25). The valley was important for the cultivation of grain needed for Jerusalem. The law of gleaning allowed for the poor to pick any ears of grain left after a harvest (Lev. 19:9–10; 23:22; Deut. 24:20–22). The future of Israel is likened to the scanty remains left to the poor for gleaning. Israel is also likened to the few olives left in an olive tree which has been shaken thoroughly during the harvest (v. 6).

Verses **7–8** constitute a beautiful interlude in which Isaiah describes the future conversion of the remnant. The verb for their conversion is not the usual verb (“to repent” / “to return”) but rather it is “to look.” The people must recognize that Yahweh is “their Maker” and “the Holy One of Israel” (v. 7). Therefore, they must refrain from looking to their illegitimate altars as the source of deliverance.

The fall of Israel results in exile so that the countryside will be characterized by depopulation (**17:9–11**). The reason for the judgment is given in verse 10. The people have forgotten the God of their salvation and their Rock who could provide a refuge. Instead of committing themselves fully to Yahweh they have given themselves to pagan nature cults. The character of these cults is not clear; they may be the cults of Adonis. It may very well be that at these sites there were also gardens symbolic of the powers of the deities. However, these people who do everything to appease the deities by cultivating the ceremonial gardens are assured that they will not be able to reap the benefits of their worship; rather, they will reap sickness and pain.

Isaiah uses alliterative devices to impress on his hearers that God's judgment will affect a great multitude of the nations (**17:12–14**). The nations are described in terms of the raging sea and “the roaring of great waters” (v. 12). It is as if the nations are going beyond the bounds set by God as they storm and foam, but God comes with a rebuke set in the language of a theophany. Yahweh's coming is associated with a wind and a whirlwind. The power of Yahweh is so great that the nations suddenly appear like chaff or tumbleweeds. Thus it will be with the nations: one moment they are terrifying but the next moment they are no more. Isaiah adds one final phrase to encourage the godly remnant that God will deal justly with those who have oppressed his own.

*F. Cush (18:1–7).* This chapter should be connected with chapter 17, as the Hebrew word for *woe* in verse 1 is also translated as *oh* in 17:12. It seems that chapter 18 is a more specific prophecy than the more general one to the nations in 17:12–14. As far as the time reference is concerned, it may be that the prophecy against Cush (Ethiopia) came some twenty years after the prophecy against Damascus (ca. 734 B.C.). In chapters 29–30 the prophet charges the people of Judah with independence from God and reliance on Ethiopia. In 705 B.C. Hezekiah sought an alliance with Ethiopia. This was because the Ethiopian king Shabaka controlled Upper Egypt as far as the Nile Delta. Apparently, the Ethiopians had taken Egypt (715 B.C.) and negotiated an alliance with Hezekiah. From the description of the Ethiopians it would seem that the Judeans stood in amazement of them because they were able to subdue the great power of Egypt. However, chapter 18 brings out God's judgment on this powerful people while intimating that God has a place reserved for them in his overall kingdom purposes.

The literary imagery is very artistic, creating a mental picture of this distant nation. The land of Ethiopia was known as a place from whence the locusts came; and therefore, Isaiah describes it as “the land of whirring wings” (v. 1a). The reference also depicts the Ethiopians as being able



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to cover and dominate an area very rapidly. The Ethiopians are also described as people who sent their ambassadors across the water by means of papyrus vessels (v. 2). The water probably is a reference to the Nile River, but it is unlikely that the papyrus vessels were used on as grand a scale as is suggested in verse 2a. If we keep in mind Isaiah's artistic purposes, however, we have before us a picture of a people who hasten to send their emissaries in light vessels to wherever their mission takes them. There is a certain ironic twist because the Lord has his own mission to the Ethiopians. He calls on his "swift messengers" to declare his word to the Ethiopians, who are further described as tall and "smooth-skinned"—an awe-inspiring people who have been able to expand their territory by trampling down their adversaries. Isaiah keeps us in suspense as to the nature of God's message, by turning his attention to the inhabitants of the world. They must wait for the "banner" to be raised and the trumpet to be blown. God also waits, withholding judgment, as he looks at the plotting of the nations. He hovers over them from his dwelling-place like the shimmering heat or an isolated cloud. Suddenly, the Lord seizes the moment and cuts down the nations like the branches of a grapevine (v. 5). He is compared to a vinedresser, who prunes the vines over the summer for cosmetic purposes and to increase the grape harvest. Once pollinated, the flower bears fruit, but the fruit takes three to four months to mature. God is likened to a farmer who, instead of waiting for the fruit to mature, comes in the heat of the summer to his vineyard and cuts off the shoots and the spreading branches, leaving these for the animals or for the birds of the air (vv. 5–6).

The people who have been so carefully described in verse 2 are described in the same way in verse 7. They are still tall and awe-inspiring; but this time they are coming not as messengers of war, but as worshipers of Yahweh. They are bringing gifts to Yahweh in Jerusalem. Instead of Judah bringing gifts to Ethiopia to placate the king and to join in her cause of rebellion against the Assyrians, the Ethiopians come to Mount Zion to placate the King of the Jews. In this way Isaiah moves from the historical circumstances and context in which the prophecy has been written to an eschatological description. The eschatological hope of the psalms is that the people of Ethiopia might also experience the salvation of the Lord and that they, too, may be inhabitants of the New Jerusalem.

*G. Egypt (19:1–20:6).* Yahweh comes on a cloud in judgment on Egypt, especially on her religious system (19:1–4). With the collapse of her religion, Egypt's social order falls apart. Egyptian will turn against Egyptian, city against city, and province against province. The hegemony of Pharaoh's rule will be impotent in the face of these forces and he must submit. The religious and political establishment thus abdicates to foreign rule and religious expressions.

In the second stanza (19:5–10) Isaiah portrays the end of Egypt's economy. The Nile River and its many canals form the essential system of economic support in Egypt. Because of lack of water, reeds, flax, and fish die and agriculture becomes impossible. Reeds were used for the production of papyrus, baskets, and simple artifacts. Flax was the raw product used in Egypt's extensive production of linen. Egypt exported both her papyrus and linen and was economically dependent on these products. Another basis of her economic support came from the fish industry, but that too is devastated by drought. All people will mourn over the great depression.

The third stanza (19:11–15) points out the folly of Egypt's counselors and princes. The intellectual elite are unable to avert the disaster. All are affected by God's judgment. The One

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who caused all Egypt to cry out on the night of the tenth plague (Exod. 12:29) will bring Egypt to her knees again.

In **19:16–25**, the prophet repeats the phrase *in that day* six times (vv. 16, 18, 19, 21, 23, 24). He speaks about the day in which there will be great “terror” that will overtake the Egyptians. The terror may be likened to the time when Israel came out of Egypt after Yahweh demonstrated his power in the ten plagues.

In Egypt itself five cities will speak the language of Judah (v. 18). Because Jews settled in Egypt during the exile, Isaiah may be referring to the great Jewish centers in Migdol, Tahpanhes, Noph (Memphis), Pathros, and Alexandria. It is not clear what is meant by the “City of Destruction” (v. 18). A number of Hebrew manuscripts read “City of the Sun” and commentators identify it with Heliopolis. The Septuagint transliterates the Hebrew and suggests the reading “The City of Righteousness.” The issue also remains whether one can be certain about the identification of these five cities. To a large extent, the identification rests on our knowledge of Jewish communities in Egypt. Perhaps we should see “five” as symbolic for “many.”

In addition to cultural assimilation, the Egyptians will also assimilate religiously with the people of Judah. There will be an “altar” dedicated to Yahweh in the midst of Egypt and a “monument” (v. 19) as a memorial to his redemptive power. The Egyptians will come with voluntary sacrifices in order to keep the vows that they have made to Yahweh, the God of Israel. They were struck with plagues in the past, but now they will experience healing from Yahweh himself.

The last verses speak about a highway that extends from Egypt to Assyria, following the Fertile Crescent. The highway is symbolic of universal salvation, as it extends from west to east. The nations will join Israel in the worship of the Lord and they will be known as the blessed of the Lord.

The occasion of the prophecy of Egypt’s fall (**20:1–6**) is the conquest of the city of Ashod by Tartan, the supreme commander of the forces of Sargon II. At this time the Lord commands Isaiah to walk about “stripped and barefoot” for three years (v. 2). The period of three years need not be exactly thirty-six months, because in oriental fashion, any portion of a year is considered a year. The behavior of the prophet has a calculated effect. The Lord requires this of his servant because it will be “a sign and a portent” against Egypt and Ethiopia to symbolize the way in which they will be carried off as exiles by the Assyrians. This prophetic word was partially fulfilled in 671 B.C., when Esarhaddon conquered Lower Egypt including the city of Memphis, and in 665 B.C. when Ashurbanipal conquered Thebes in Upper Egypt. Apparently Judah and Philistia continued to look to Egypt for help both in the rebellion of 705–701 B.C. as well as during the last days of Judah, when Zedekiah was looking for Egypt to help the weak state of Judah against the rising power of Nebuchadnezzar.

*H. Babylon, Edom, and Arabia (21:1–17).* These oracles are linked by the theme of the prophet’s office of watchman (vv. 6, 8, 11, 12). Isaiah is waiting to see what the Lord is doing and proclaims what he sees as an oracle.

In the oracle concerning Babylon (**21:1–10**) the meaning of “desert by the Sea” (v. 1) is not exactly clear. It may possibly be the territory of Babylon north of the Persian Gulf. Isaiah compares the attack of Elam and Media on Babylon to whirlwinds coming from the desert. The

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prophet experiences great anguish when he understands the dire vision. He feels like a woman in labor, and like a man who staggers. Anguish and fear fill his heart and incapacitate him. He sees the prepared tables, the banquets, and the drinking of the Babylonians, but he cannot reach the officers to warn them. They are unprepared; their shields have not even been oiled for battle (v. 5). The prophet dramatizes his empathy to portray the sudden fall of Babylon. The picture fits in well with the feast of Belshazzar in Daniel 5. Though Isaiah expresses a longing for the “twilight” of deliverance from Babylon, his empathy keeps him from rejoicing. It is a day full of horror.

Next, the Lord commands him to serve as a watchman and to report on any movement. A man in a chariot gives him the awaited report: “Babylon has fallen” (v. 9; cf. Rev. 18:2). This is God’s word of deliverance to his people.

The meaning of “Dumah” (**21:11–12**) is uncertain. It may be a corruption of the word *Edom*. This fits well with the reference to Seir (v. 11a), where the Edomites settled. Twice an Edomite calls upon the watchman (Isaiah) to predict the end of “the night” of distress. He responds that the morning of “hope” will come, but can say no more.

The Dedanites (**21:13–15**) were an Arabian tribe of caravaneers and traders located close to Edom. The caravaneers are not coming to Tema for commercial purposes, but to hide away in the “thickets” (desert shrubs) of Arabia as refugees from slaughter. They come south to Tema for food and water. They had encountered a strong enemy (Assyrians?) which had put them to flight with sword and bow.

The people of Kedar (**21:16–17**) were also known as caravaneers and were respected for their prowess with bows and arrows. These warlike archers were able to protect the caravans as they migrated across the Arabian desert, but they are not able to defend themselves. In a prosaic statement, the prophet concludes the oracles by saying that disaster will also come on Kedar.

*I. Jerusalem (22:1–25).* “The Valley of the Vision” (v. 5) is an obscure reference to Jerusalem. The context of this oracle is best set in the events of 701 B.C., when Sennacherib’s siege of Jerusalem was lifted. Judah lay in ruins and Jerusalem had paid a dear price for freedom. The leaders had not been loyal and the soldiers were butchered without honor. While the people rejoice in their freedom, Isaiah is disconcerted. He must weep bitterly over what has happened to his people. The prophet speaks of another day, a day determined for the destruction of Jerusalem. The recent events, catastrophic as they were, are a picture of the Valley of Vision which God is preparing for all those who do not respond appropriately.

Isaiah looks out at “the Valley of the Vision,” which was occupied shortly before by foreign troops (represented here by Elam and Kir, vv. 5–7). The ravages of war are all around. Isaiah reminds the people of their anguish and nervous industry as they set out to repair the walls with stones taken from their houses and to store water for the long siege. Yet, they had not looked to the Lord for help. They respond to crisis situations but do not respond to their sovereign God.

With the lifting of the siege, the people care even less for God. They are filled with a self-congratulatory spirit as they celebrate mock victory. The Lord will not forgive their callousness. His judgment on Jerusalem stands firm.

The arrogance of Jerusalem is symbolized in Shebna’s desire for power and recognition (v. 15). The precise circumstances of Isaiah’s outburst against Shebna are not stated, but he is characterized as too ambitious (v. 16). He will be disgraced and Eliakim will take over his office

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with suitable honor. Eliakim did succeed Shebna in office (see 36:3; 37:2), but Shebna maintained a prominent position as secretary (36:3). However, even Eliakim's position was not permanent. In a sense, Shebna and Eliakim represent the attitude of the people of Judah: arrogant and filled with selfish ambition. The fall of these men symbolizes, therefore, the ultimate fall of Jerusalem.

*J. Tyre (23:1–18).* The prophetic word against Tyre is singularly difficult. There are three main difficulties: the change of addressees (Sidon, vv. 2–4, 12; Tyre, vv. 1, 6–9, 15–18; Phoenicia, vv. 10–12), textual problems, and the historical fulfillment of the prophetic word. The cities of Phoenicia were subjugated by Assyria (701 B.C.), Nebuchadnezzar, and Alexander the Great (332 B.C.).

The prophet begins the oracle with an indirect reference to the ships of Tarshish, the large vessels which plied the seas (**23:1–5**). The rumor of Tyre's destruction is spread all around the Mediterranean area. From Larnaka, the port of Cyprus, to the ports around the Mediterranean, it is known that "the marketplace of the nations" (v. 3) has ceased doing business. Egypt, too, will hear. Its reaction is anguished.

The people of Tyre are called upon to flee to Tarshish on the Atlantic coast southwest of Spain (**23:6–9**). Even though the prophet may not have the exact region of Tarshish in mind, he is at least calling upon the people to flee the catastrophe that will befall Tyre. The city had enjoyed great prosperity. It was an ancient commercial center where tycoons ruled like princes. From Tyre these "princes" ruled over colonies and commercial empires. Because of its natural harbor, the history of Tyre goes back well into the third millennium B.C.

But, the exultation of Tyre has turned to lamentation. The ancient city has come to an end and the glory of Tyre has been defiled. The prophet assures the people of God that whatever happens to the great cities of Phoenicia (Tyre and Sidon) is the Lord's doing.

The people of Phoenicia can no longer depend on the trade advantages of Tyre (**23:10–14**). They will have to build up their own land. The Lord will judge Tyre, and his judgment is inescapable. The Babylonians/Assyrians (v. 13—the text is difficult) are the instruments of his judgment. The ruin of Tyre, Sidon, and Phoenicia affects all maritime trade.

Tyre is compared to an old prostitute unable to attract interest (**23:15–18**). Its abandonment will last "seventy years" (cf. Jer. 25:12; 29:10). The round number is symbolic of judgment and restoration. After a period of time the people will be restored, but they must also recognize that a portion of their income must be set apart for the Lord of Hosts (cf. 60:4–14). "Set apart" is related to the word *holy* and the prophet purposely uses this phraseology to indicate that the secular usage of the silver and the gold would be consecrated for God's kingdom purposes.

The prophecy, while it reflects historical events, has eschatological overtones. It is difficult to find a precise fulfillment for the restoration of Tyre except that in the middle of the third century Tyre again became a trading city. However, Tyre did not send a portion of its revenues to support the temple worship in Jerusalem. Tyre, representing all of the port cities and trading capitals of the world, is symbolic of God's judgment on national wealth, unless it is used for the kingdom of God.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> VanGemeren, W. A. (1995). [Isaiah](#). In *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible* (Vol. 3, pp. 484–489). Baker Book House.

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**BABYLON** (בָּבֶל, *bbl*; Βαβυλων, *Babylōn*; Akkadian: *Bab-iliu*; “the gate of god[s]”). The cultural and political center of Mesopotamia during much of the second and first millennia BC. Located in modern-day Iraq along one branch of the Euphrates River, about 59 miles southwest of Baghdad and 6 miles northeast of Hillah.

### History

Babylon rose to prominence in the early second millennium BC and continued its cultural influence through western Asia into the fourth century BC (Beaulieu, “Babylonia, Babylonian,” 111).

### Origins

People began inhabiting the plains of Mesopotamia around 5000 BC. By the third millennium BC, Semitic groups were dwelling in the region (Kienast, “The Name of the City of Babylon,” 248). Ancient Near Eastern texts describe the original location of Babylon as a sacred site dedicated to Marduk. Sargon’s son, Sharkalisharri, provides the earliest literary reference to Babylon in 2250 BC using the Sumerian name *Ka-dingirra*. During the Ur III period, Babylon was small and limited in its influence, maintaining only a regional governor (Wiseman, *Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon*, 43). After the fall of Ur in 2004 BC, Mesopotamia became a patchwork of smaller city-states characterized by rivals and disputes (Oates, *Babylon*, 60–61).

### Old Babylonian Period

The Old Babylonian Period (2003–1595 BC) witnessed the rise of the first Babylonian Dynasty and significant political and geographical expansion under the leadership of King Hammurabi (1792–1750 BC). Hammurabi, the sixth king of the Amorite Dynasty, enlarged the city and developed it into a prosperous center for religion and trade (Wiseman, “Babylon,” 475). He united much of the region surrounding Babylon and viewed his reign as the epitome of justice, commissioning a detailed legal code. Roughly 200 years after Hammurabi’s reign, the Hittite kingdom expanded south and razed Babylon as it progressed down the Euphrates River. This attack left the city vulnerable, and Kassite tribes from the East overtook the empire and ended the Dynasty (Sasson, “King Hammurabi of Babylon,” 913).

### Kassite and Assyrian Domination

From 1595–626 BC (Middle Babylonian period or Early Neo-Babylonian period), Kassite and Assyrian Dynasties shaped the growing city of Babylon. During the Kassite Dynasty (1595–1155 BC), Babylon became the religious and ceremonial capital of the nation. Arnold writes, “Perhaps the single greatest accomplishment of the Kassite Dynasty was the formation of a national monarchy with clearly defined borders similar to the geographical reach of Hammurabi’s brief empire” (Arnold, *Who Were the Babylonians?*, 66). Babylonian influence and culture spread throughout the ancient world during the Kassite reign. Its science was revered all over the world, and the Amarna Letters (1385–1355 BC) discovered in Egypt show that the Babylonian language was the *lingua franca* of the period (Arnold, *Who Were the Babylonians?*, 68). Sommerfeld attributes the Babylonian works *Epic of Gilgamesh* and *Enuma Elish* to the period of the Kassites (Sommerfeld, “The Kassites of Ancient Mesopotamia,” 927–29). The *Enuma Elish* records a creation narrative that elevates Marduk to the supreme position in the pantheon.

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After the fall of the Kassite Dynasty, Babylon lost much of its splendor. The unstable governments of local dignitaries and Assyrian overlords characterized the end of the 2nd millennium (Wiseman, "Babylon," 475). Assyrian king Tukulti-Ninurta I (1244–1208 BC) officially brought Babylon under Assyrian control and moved the statue of Marduk from Babylon to Ashur (Saggs, *The Greatness that was Babylon*, 85). Shalmaneser III (858–824 BC), grandson of Tukulti-Ninurta, claims: "I marched against Akkad [Babylonia] to avenge Mardukshumiddin ... I entered Kutha, Babylon, and Borsippa, offered sacrifices to the gods of the sacred cities of Akkad. I went [further] downstream to Chaldea and received tribute from all kings of Chaldea" (ANET, 277). When the powerful Tiglath-Pileser III (744–727 BC), known as "Pul" in the Old Testament (2 Kgs 15:19; 1 Chr 5:26), ascended to the throne, Assyria became feared as an international power. Tiglath-Pileser took the name "King of Sumer and Akkad," declaring all of Babylon his vassals (Oates, *Babylon*, 114).

#### *Neo-Babylonian Rise and Fall*

Babylon rose to international preeminence under the leadership of Nebuchadnezzar II (604–562 BC), only to be conquered by Cyrus of Persia, Alexander the Great of Macedonia, and Seleucus the Greek. Even during the Assyrian period, Babylonian influence remained: "Babylonian cultural dominance persisted even at the peak of Assyrian power" (Oates, *Babylon*, 126). The Chaldean king Nabopolassar (625–605 BC) successfully pried Babylon from a weakening Assyrian grip, and with the help of the Medes and Scythians sacked Nineveh in 612 BC. Turning his gaze to the west, the king sent the royal prince Nebuchadnezzar to overthrow the Egyptian occupation of Palestine (2 Kgs 23:34–35). In 605 BC, Nebuchadnezzar defeated Egypt at Carchemish and made Judah into a Babylonian vassal (2 Kgs 24:1). In 597 BC, he besieged Jerusalem, raided the temple, and returned to Babylon with King Jehoiachin of Judah and thousands of Judaeans (2 Kgs 24:10–17). Characterized by power and opulence, Nebuchadnezzar's boast in Dan 4:30 seems fitting: "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?"

The splendor of the Neo-Babylonian Empire did not last. Nebuchadnezzar's son reigned only two years before being overthrown, and subsequent leaders experienced severe challenges (Champdor, *Babylon*, 118). Trying to maintain the splendor of Nebuchadnezzar's empire forced heavy taxes on the people (approximately 50 percent between 560–530 BC), with the result of famine and civil unrest (Wiseman, "Babylon," 476). As Babylon weakened, its Persian neighbors to the east grew stronger. Beaulieu writes, "The conflict between the two states erupted in 539 BC when Cyrus the Great led the Persian armies on a swift conquest of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. His capture of Babylon put an end to the last independent political manifestation of Mesopotamian civilization" (Beaulieu, "Babylonia, Babylonians," 111).

The Babylonians mounted two unsuccessful revolts against the Persian Empire in 522 BC and 482 BC. These revolts—especially the latter—were harshly suppressed, incurring much damage upon the city and the people. In 331 BC, Alexander the Great marched into Babylon amid cheers of the people after his defeat of the Medes (Wellard, *Babylon*, 189). He was declared king and planned extensive reconstructions in hopes of establishing the city as his eastern capital (Oates, *Babylon*, 140). After Alexander's death, his general, Seleucus, was declared sovereign over the city. Babylon continued to decline under Seleucus and a new capital city, Seleucia, was erected

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on the banks of the Tigris River. Documents from the first century AD attest that Babylon remained a shrinking but active metropolis after its Hellenistic occupation (Wiseman, "Babylon," 479).

#### **Biblical Relevance**

From Genesis to Revelation, Babylon maintains a significant presence as both a historical empire and a symbol of opposition to God and His people.

#### *Babylon in the Old Testament*

There are 287 references to Babylon in the Old Testament and 82 references to its Chaldean inhabitants. The first biblical references to Babylon (and the only ones in the Pentateuch) occur in Gen 10:10 and 11:9. The Tower of Babel narrative in Gen 11:1–9, often associated with ancient Mesopotamian ziggurats, demonstrates humanity's increasing sin and Yahweh's supremacy over all human nations. Disregarding the Akkadian etymology "the gate of god," the author of Genesis highlights the Hebrew wordplay between *babel* ("the city") and *balal* ("to mix or confuse"). Therefore, instead of understanding Babylon to be a divine city like those in Mesopotamia, the Israelites likely viewed it as the epitome of human pride and confusion in the relationship between God and humans (Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 486).

The prophets frequently reference Babylon and the Neo-Babylonian Empire. Isaiah 39:1 and 2 Kings 20:12–13 describe Babylonian king Merodach-baladan's (722–711 BC) solicitation of Israel's help against Assyria. In 597 BC and 586 BC, Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem and deported thousands of Palestinians to Babylonia (2 Kgs 24:1–25:22; 2 Chr 36:6–13; Ezra 5:12–6:5; Neh 7:6; Jer 21:2–52:28; Ezek 33:21). The following parallel accounts describe the events of 597 BC

#### *The Babylonian Chronicle*

#### *2 Chronicles 36:10*

Year 7: [I]n Kislev, the king of Babylonia called out his army and marched to Hattu [the West]. He set his camp against the city of Judah [Jerusalem] and on 2nd Adar he took the city and captured the king. He appointed a king of his choosing there, took heavy tribute and returned to Babylon (COS, 1.137, 468).

In the spring of the year, Nebuchadnezzar sent and brought him Jehoiachin to Babylon, with precious vessels of the house of the Lord, and made his brother Zedekiah king over Judah and Jerusalem (ESV)

Ezekiel and Daniel served as prophets during the years of exile. Both were taken to Babylon during the deportation described above. Isaiah foretold the collapse of the Neo-Babylonian Empire at the hand of Cyrus of Persia (Isa 13:7). Babylon's fall in 539 BC ended the conflict between Babylon and Israel.

According to the prophets, Yahweh used Babylon to judge His people for their unfaithfulness. Habakkuk prophesies: "For behold I [Yahweh] am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation who march through the breadth of the earth to seize dwelling not their own. They are dreaded and fearsome; their justice and dignity go forth from themselves" (Hab 1:6–7 ESV). However, Yahweh's use of Babylon did not correct their national wickedness. Isaiah

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13–14 captures the theological portrayal of pomp and arrogance that parallels other biblical references to Babylon. Isaiah’s prophecy indicts Babylon for her wickedness and pride: “And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the splendor and pomp of the Chaldeans, will be like Sodom and Gomorrah when God overthrew them” (Isa 13:19, ESV). Isaiah continues in chapter 14 with a taunt against the king of Babylon, declaring his eternal demise in the depths of Sheol (Isa 14:3–9). The power of Babylon could not stand before Yahweh. Even as Daniel portrays the ferocity and wealth of Nebuchadnezzar, the power of the Most High God is undeniable (Dan 4:1–3).

### *Babylon in the New Testament*

The New Testament refers to Babylon 12 times. Friesen comments on these occurrences: “Matthew and Acts refer to Babylonian exile as a way of understanding Jesus in relation to Israel’s history, while 1 Peter and Revelation use Babylon as a symbol for Rome” (Friesen, “Babylon, NT,” 379). Matthew 1:17 highlights the importance of Israel’s time in Babylon by noting the generational symmetry between Abraham, David, Babylon, and Jesus; in this interpretation, Israel’s time in Babylon—cut off from the promised land—serves as a turning point in biblical salvation-history.

Some New Testament references to Babylon may be cryptic allusions to Rome (1 Pet 5:13; Rev 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2). Like Babylon, Rome was an oppressive, imperial power that had besieged Jerusalem and desecrated the temple (Friesen, “Babylon, NT,” 379). The book of Revelation portrays “Babylon the great city” as “the mother of prostitutes and the abominations of the earth” (Rev 17:5), which will be cast down in end-time judgment. Revelation is replete with Old Testament imagery: “The historic city and empire of Babylon were always depicted by the prophets as the ungodly power *par excellence*” (TDNT, s.v. “Βαβυλῶν, *Babylōn*,” 1:515). The extent to which Rome fulfills the characteristics of Babylon in Revelation is still debated. It would have been natural for Christians to see Rome as a contemporary version of the Old Testament Babylon from which God delivered his people (Wiseman, “Babylon,” 479).

### **Archaeology**

Stories of Babylon have continually led travelers back to what remains of the metropolis. Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela visited the city twice (AD 1160 and 1173) to investigate the site lauded as the Tower of Babel (Klengel-Brandt, “Babylon,” 251). In 1811, C. J. Rich of the East India Trading Company conducted the first systematic land survey of the ruins (Rollinger, “Babylon,” 414).

Extensive excavation of Babylon began when Sachau and Koldewey chose to study the area in 1897. Due to the high water level, the teams were unable to uncover the strata of the Old Babylonian Period, but the palace and city structures of the Neo-Babylonian, Persian, Macedonian, and Hellenistic periods are plainly visible. Significant excavated structures include: the Ishtar Gate, the “Hanging Gardens,” the outer city walls, and the temple.

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**BABYLON, CULTURE OF** Explores the religion, social structures, and economy of Babylon, a center of power in ancient Mesopotamia.

### Origins

The early Babylonians inherited much of their culture from the Sumerians of southern Mesopotamia. Likewise, these early Babylonians borrowed many aspects of their writing system, literature, and scribal traditions from the Akkadians (Liverani, *Ancient Near East*, 166–68, 202–06). For roughly two millennia, the city was home to a number of ethnic groups, including the Sumerians, Akkadians, Amorites and Kassites (second millennium BC), and Aramaeans and Chaldeans (first millennium BC; Roux, *Ancient Iraq*, 179–94, 241–52, 273–77, 389–404). The city grew more diverse in the Neo-Babylonian period as more people groups—including deportees like the Judaeans—migrated there. This increased diversity contributed further to the cosmopolitan nature of the city (Liverani, *Ancient Near East*, 549–53).

### Religion

The Babylonian people's thoughts, ideas, values, beliefs, and norms were profoundly influenced by their religion (Jacobsen, "Mesopotamian Gods"; Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 172–83). The patron deity of the city of Babylon and the royal family was Marduk, whom the Babylonians worshiped as king of the gods. At the start of the new year, the Babylonians observed the yearly *akītu* festival, which commemorated Marduk's ascension to the head of the pantheon and his enthronement in his temple in the city (Abusch, "Marduk," 548). Although we have little evidence of popular religion in Babylon, there was a strong connection between private religion and public institutions (Cohen, *Cultic Calendars*, 391–99, 427–53). Mesopotamian religion demonstrates the people's concern with preventing or remedying disasters like death, famine, or defeat in war (Jacobsen, "Ancient Mesopotamian Religion," 473–84).

### Society and Daily Life

Babylonian society was divided into traditional social classes. Babylonian free citizens (Old Babylonian *awīlu*; Neo-Babylonian *mār banī*) could own property, livestock, and slaves. The institution of slavery existed mostly for debtors or captives of war, and often slaves had opportunities to be liberated (Greengus, "Legal and Social Institutions," 469–84).

Babylonian culture was shaped by its urban environment. Although ancient Near Eastern cities were not sharply divided between rural and urban spheres, the walled city held a central role in economy and trade—meaning that the surrounding areas were integrated into the life of the city (Orlin, *Life and Thought*, 162–64). However, the city and its strength was a source of pride for its inhabitants, and cities were considered the roots of civilization (van de Mieroop, *Ancient Mesopotamian City*, 42–62).

Pastimes in which the Babylonian people engaged included music production, singing, and playing games (Saggs, *Greatness that was Babylon*, 157–95; Hoerth, "Games People Played,"

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471–89). Babylonians also participated in athletic competitions involving running, boxing, and wrestling (Yamauchi, “Athletics in the Ancient Near East,” 491–500).

### Economy

The Babylonian material culture, which provides insight into the economy of the city, generally aligns with that of other urban centers in ancient Mesopotamia. Agriculture and trade were cornerstones of the city’s economy. Important agricultural crops include date palms and grains, such as wheat and barley, that could be used for bread and beer (van de Mieroop, *Ancient Mesopotamian City*, 142–75). Babylonians also raised domestic animals, such as:

- cows and goats, whose milk could either be consumed directly or used in the production of other dairy products;
- sheep, whose wool and skin could be used for textiles and whose meat could be consumed on special occasions (Landsberger, “Über Farben im sumerisch-akkadischen,” 139–73);
- oxen, which were used for plowing; and
- mules and donkeys, which could be ridden or used as pack animals (san Nicolò, “Materialien zur Viehwirtschaft” [I–V]).

Other industries include the mining of iron, copper, and bronze; glass-making; and the production of pottery, clay tablets, and bricks (Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 74–142).

### Central Institutions

Laws, legal education, judges, and courts were significant institutions in Babylon, as attested by the law codes of Hammurabi and Eshnunna. Greengus argues that these law collections functioned as textbooks for the training of scribes (Greengus, “Legal and Social Institutions,” 472). The Babylonians kept records of transactions, contracts, marriage and divorce, and loans, among other things, to settle any later disputes. While the king was the ultimate arbiter of the law, judges and courts would settle most matters in public trials (Westbrook, “Mesopotamia: Old Babylonian Period,” 361–430).

Babylonian temples functioned as administrative centers where records of crop yields and economic transactions were kept. In some ways, temples operated in a similar fashion to banks; they were central lending institutions as well as repositories for legal documents, such as contracts, deeds, and loan terms (van de Mieroop, *Ancient Mesopotamian City*, 197–214; Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 83–95).

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### Babylon

In OT times, the commercial, religious and political capital of Babylonia, which was the dominant power in the Near East in the sixth century B.C. In the NT, "Babylon" signifies the world and its forces in opposition to God. It is often contrasted with "the new Jerusalem", in which God will finally reign supreme.

#### The founding of Babylon

**Ge 10:8-10** *Shinar was an alternative name for Babylon.*

#### Biblical events prior to the exile in Babylon

**Inhabitants of Babylon exiled to Samaria** *See also 2Ki 17:24-33*

**Envoys from Babylon visit Hezekiah** **2Ki 20:12-19** pp Isa 39:1-8 *Hezekiah's reception of the envoys was designed to lead to a coalition against Assyria, but in the end it brought about the very opposite of what he had hoped for.*

**Manasseh, king of Judah, exiled to Babylon** **2Ch 33:10-11**

**Jehoiakim, king of Judah, becomes a vassal of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon** **2Ki 24:1-2** pp 2Ch 36:6-7

**Nebuchadnezzar lays siege to Jerusalem** **2Ki 24:10-17** pp 2Ch 36:9-10

**Nebuchadnezzar conquers Jerusalem and deports the population** **2Ki 25:1-21** pp 2Ch 36:17-20 pp Jer 39:1-10 pp Jer 52:4-27

#### Exile in Babylon

**The people of Judah exiled in Babylon** **1Ch 9:1** *See also 2Ch 36:20; Ps 137:1-9; Da 1:1-7*

**Advice for those exiled in Babylon** **Jer 29:4-14**

**Cyrus king of Babylon decrees that the Jerusalem temple should be rebuilt**

**Ezr 5:13-16** *See also 2Ch 36:22-23* pp Ezr 1:1-4

**Exiles return from Babylon** **Ezr 2:1-2** pp Ne 7:6-7

**Babylon, an instrument of divine judgment**

**2Ki 24:2-4** *See also Jer 20:4-6; 21:10*

#### The fall of Babylon

**Predictions of Babylon's fall** **Jer 51:59-64** *See also Isa 14:3-23; 47:1-15; Jer 50:1-10*

**Babylon conquered by Darius** **Da 5:30-31**

#### Babylon used figuratively

**By Peter** *See also 1Pe 5:13* *Babylon is traditionally interpreted as Rome, but may also mean Mesopotamian Babylon, Egyptian Babylon, or Jerusalem.*

**Of the world opposed to God** **Rev 14:8** *See also Rev 17:3-6; 18:1-24*

*See also*

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<sup>7</sup> Kelly, W. L. (2016). [Babylon, Culture of](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, L. Wentz, E. Ritzema, & W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Lexham Press.

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**Babylon.** Capital of the Neo-Babylon Empire of the mid-first millennium B.C. Babylon has both a historic role and a theological role in the Bible. Certain themes become associated with it. In the Book of Revelation, these themes culminate in the image of the whore of Babylon. As a result of this biblical imagery, Babylon has transcended its historical significance to become synonymous with sin and pride in Western art and literature.

Babylon first appears in the Bible under the guise of the tower of Babel (Gen. 11). The Hebrew word for “confused” in verse 9 is *babal*, which sounds like *babel* (Babylon). The great evil of the tower builders is their sinful pride against the rule of God. This theme will reappear in the prophetic writings against the city.

During the reign of Hezekiah, envoys from Babylon came to Jerusalem (2 Kings 20:12–19). The prophet Isaiah chastised the king for showing off the treasures of Judah and predicted that Babylon would some day carry these riches off. This was a startling revelation, for Assyria was the great power of the day and seemingly unassailable. The visit was probably an attempt by Babylon to foment problems for Assyria in the west, thereby diverting attention from Babylon. The postexilic reader would have seen the roots of the destruction of Jerusalem in the foolish pride of Hezekiah and in the greed of Babylon.

The prophets describe Babylon as a city of pride and idolatry. Yet the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon presents the prophets with a dilemma. If God is sovereign and makes use of Babylon to punish Judah, can Babylon—as a tool in the hand of its Master—be blamed for its behavior? Isaiah addresses this problem by portraying Babylon as a woman, the queen of kingdoms (47:5), who should be tender and delicate but is not. God gave his people over into her power, but rather than caring for them she has shown them no mercy. This is a result of her overweening pride, evidenced in her statement that “I am, and there is none besides me” (v. 8). Although the conquest of Jerusalem is in keeping with the will of God, the brutality and greed of the conquerors—the fruit of Babylon’s idolatry and failure to recognize the kingship of God—are not. Because of Babylon’s pride, she will be destroyed. Psalm 137 personifies Babylon as a woman who is doomed to destruction and whose infant children will be savagely killed.

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<sup>8</sup> Manser, M. H. (2009). [\*Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies\*](#). Martin Manser.

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Jeremiah sees the future destruction of Babylon as a punishment because the Babylonians rejoiced at the destruction of Judah and ruthlessly plundered the people of God (50:11). Babylon herself will become a “heap of ruins” (51:37). Daniel reinforces the picture of Babylon as full of pride and defiance toward God. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, is punished with madness because he denied God’s control over “Babylon the Great” (4:30).

Centuries after the destruction of the Neo-Babylonian state by Cyrus of Persia, Babylon reappears in a dramatic role in the Book of Revelation—a role marked by numerous references to Old Testament imagery. Pride, idolatry, cruelty, and greed are associated with the city.

The dominant image of Babylon in Revelation is the city’s personification of a rich woman, the “mother of prostitutes” (17:5). Babylon is a great city that rules over the earth.

Babylon, the historic oppressor of God’s people, represents the new oppressor of Christ’s church. Like the Mesopotamian city, the “great city” (Rome) will be judged and will become a desolate wilderness. The metaphor extends beyond the physical Rome to the entire world, “intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries” (17:2). The people of God, however, will be delivered from the grasp of the prophetic Babylon just as Ezekiel foretold for the exiles held captive in the historic Babylon.

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**Bibliography.** J. M. Ford, *Revelation*; R. E. Clemens, *Jeremiah*; G. E. Wright, *The Book of Jonah*.

**Backsliding.** Condition that results from spiritual apathy or disregard for the things of God, whether on the part of an individual or a group bound by a prior covenantal pledge of commitment to uphold the doctrine and commandments of the Lord. Backsliding includes departure from a good confession of faith and from the ethical standards prescribed for God’s people in the Scriptures. To varying degrees, depending on the extent of neglect of God and his commandments, the spiritually wayward experience a season of estrangement and abandonment from God and his people. In instances of apostasy when one spurns the grace of God by renouncing the blessings of the covenant, there is no possibility of repentance for sin, only a divine sealing unto the day of judgment (Heb. 6:4–6; 10:26–31).

The sin of backsliding raises the important theological question concerning the relation between faith and perseverance. In cases of temporary backsliding, how do we understand the spiritual condition of the true son or daughter of God? Can one who is united to Christ (i.e., one who is regenerated by God and justified by grace through faith) fall again under the dominion of sin? Reformed theologians have maintained that the sinner redeemed by grace has been delivered once-for-all from bondage to sin. For such (elect) individuals, consequently, backsliding does not entail a fall from grace, whereby one is placed once more under sin’s dominion. When a former disciple renounces Christian faith and conduct, however, that person is not a true son or daughter of God, and thus is not numbered among God’s elect. Genuine development in the life history of everyone born into the world reveals the unfolding of God’s decretive purpose in the salvation of the elect and the condemnation of the reprobate who remain under the wrath of God (John 3:18–21, 36; 5:24–29). History is the process of differentiation between the two seeds: the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent (Gen. 3:15).

The frequent occurrence and gravity of backsliding among the people of God is vividly portrayed in the corporate life of Israel during the Mosaic epoch of redemptive history. The house

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of Israel was guilty of committing the sin of backsliding on numerous occasions. In the speech of Hezekiah, the Chronicler highlights Israel's history as a lengthy period of disobedience. "Our fathers were unfaithful; they did evil in the eyes of the LORD our God and forsook him. They turned their faces away from the LORD's dwelling place and turned their backs on him" (2 Chron. 29:6; cf. 36:14). The cause of Israel's backslidings was her stubbornness of heart. Repeatedly the prophets addressed Israel's waywardness and unfaithfulness. As agents of God's covenant lawsuit against the obstinate and stiff-necked people, the prophets pleaded with Israel to repent of her sins and return to God in true faith and holiness. Failing to heed the warning, Israel suffered the full displeasure and abandonment of God in the Babylonian deportation and exile. Hosea describes Israel in particularly graphic terms as an adulterous people (2:5; 4:12; 5:7; 9:1). Her sins of prostitution and sexual immorality, indicative of her spiritual condition, drove her away from God, causing her to apostasize from the faith. Rather than consecrating their life and temporal blessings to the glory of God, the Israelites profaned the name and works of God. "Like Adam, they have broken the covenant—they were unfaithful to me there" (Hos. 6:7).

Israel's backsliding was both a divine chastisement and a rebuke for sin (Jer. 2:19). Only the mercy and compassion of Yahweh could restore Israel to favor (Jer. 3:22; 14:7). The restoration of Israel from exile, however, required the making of a new and better covenant, one that could not be broken (Jer. 31:22–34). Through divine cleansing Israel would once again become the people of God (Hos. 2:23). "They will no longer defile themselves with their idols and vile images or with any of their offenses, for I will save them from all their sinful backsliding, and I will cleanse them. They will be my people, and I will be their God" (Ezek. 37:23).

Israel serves as an example to us. In the teachings of Christ and his apostles the people of God are exhorted to persevere in righteousness and holiness, so as not to fall under divine condemnation. The sin of apostasy is real for covenant confessors. Accordingly, the angel of the church in Ephesus warns those who have forsaken their first love: "Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first" (Rev. 2:5). The saints are to persevere in doing the will of God, remembering the covenant he has made with us in his Son, Jesus Christ. The grace of perseverance is one of the benefits of Christ's atoning sacrifice for our sins. Thus our Lord instructs: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.... If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love" (John 15:5, 10). The cure for backsliding is found in the abiding love and mercy of God who remains faithful to his promise of grace in Christ Jesus, whose righteousness and salvation is apprehended through true faith and repentance.

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*See also* APOSTASY; DENIAL; SANCTIFICATION.

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Revelation 17–18 describes a great city in the end times called Babylon. There are seven clues in these chapters that help identify this great end-times city.

1. Babylon is a literal city (Rev. 17:18).
2. Babylon is a city of worldwide importance and influence, probably the capital city of the world (Rev. 17:15, 18).
3. Babylon and the Antichrist are very closely connected with one another. Revelation pictures the woman (Babylon) riding on the Beast (Antichrist).
4. Babylon is a center of false religion (Rev. 17:4–5; 18:1–2).
5. Babylon is the center of world commerce (Rev. 18:9–19). These two systems, religion and commerce, will share the same geographical location under Antichrist's domain.
6. Babylon persecutes the Lord's people (Rev. 17:6; 18:20, 24).
7. Babylon will be destroyed suddenly and completely at the end of the Tribulation, never to rise again (Rev. 18:8–10, 21–24).

Putting these clues together reveals that Babylon will be the great religious, economic capital of the Antichrist's kingdom in the last days. But what city does Babylon represent?

This great harlot of the last days has been identified with the Roman Catholic church and the Vatican, apostate Christendom, New York City, Jerusalem, and Rome. The most likely view, however, is that Babylon, the literal city on the Euphrates in modern-day Iraq, will be rebuilt in the last days. There are seven main points that favor this identification of Babylon in Revelation 17–18.

**The City's Name** The great city described as the last-days capital of the Antichrist is specifically called "Babylon" six times in Revelation (14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21). While it is possible that the name Babylon is a code name for Rome, New York, Jerusalem, or some other city, since there is no indication in the text that it is to be taken figuratively or symbolically, it seems best to take it as a literal Babylon.

**The City's Mention** With the exception of Jerusalem, no other city is mentioned more than Babylon in the Bible. Scripture refers to Babylon about 290 times and presents this city as the epitome of evil and rebellion against God. The following passages seem to imply that Babylon is Satan's capital city on earth:

- Babylon is the city where man first began to worship himself in organized rebellion against God (Gen. 11:1–9).
- Babylon was the capital city of the first world ruler, Nimrod (Gen. 10:8–10).
- Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the temple in 586 B.C.
- Babylon was the capital city of the first of four Gentile world empires to rule over Jerusalem.

Since Babylon was the capital city of the first world ruler and is pictured as Satan's capital city on earth throughout Scripture, it makes sense that in the end times, Satan will once again raise up this city as the capital of the final world ruler. In his excellent book *The Rise of Babylon*, Charles Dyer writes:

*Throughout history, Babylon has represented the height of rebellion and opposition to God's plans and purposes, so God allows Babylon to continue during the final days. It is*

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*almost as though he “calls her out” for a final duel. But this time, the conflict between God and Babylon ends decisively. The city of Babylon will be destroyed.*

**The City’s Specifications** Babylon fits the criteria for the city described in Revelation 17–18. As Robert Thomas notes:

*Furthermore, Babylon on the Euphrates has a location that fits this description politically, geographically, and in all the qualities of accessibility, commercial facilities, remoteness of interferences of church and state, and yet centrality in regard to the trade of the whole world.*

**The City’s Location** Revelation mentions the Euphrates River by name twice (9:14; 16:12). In Revelation 9:14, the text states that four fallen angels are being held at the Euphrates River, awaiting their appointed time to lead forth a host of demons to destroy one-third of humankind. In Revelation 16:12, the sixth bowl judgment dries up the Euphrates River to prepare the way for the kings of the east. These references to the Euphrates point to the fact that something important and evil is occurring there. The rebuilt city of Babylon on the Euphrates, functioning as a religious and political center for Antichrist, is a good explanation for Revelation’s emphasis on this river.

**The City’s Wickedness** Zechariah 5:5–11 records an incredible vision that pertains to the city of Babylon in the last days:

*The angel who was talking with me came forward and said, “Look up! Something is appearing in the sky.”*

*“What is it?” I asked.*

*He replied, “It is a basket for measuring grain, and it is filled with the sins of everyone throughout the land.”*

*When the heavy lead cover was lifted off the basket, there was a woman sitting inside it. The angel said, “The woman’s name is Wickedness,” and he pushed her back into the basket and closed the heavy lid again.*

*Then I looked up and saw two women flying toward us, with wings gliding on the wind. Their wings were like those of a stork, and they picked up the basket and flew with it into the sky.*

*“Where are they taking the basket?” I asked the angel.*

*He replied, “To the land of Babylonia, where they will build a temple for the basket.*

*And when the temple is ready, they will set the basket there on its pedestal.”*

Around 520 B.C., twenty years after the fall of Babylon to the Medo-Persians, the prophet Zechariah wrote about the evil he saw returning to this city in the future. In this vision Zechariah sees a woman named Wickedness carried away in a basket in the last days to the land of Babylon, where a temple will be built for her.

The parallels between Zechariah 5:5–11 and Revelation 17–18 are striking.

#### **PARALLELS BETWEEN ZECHARIAH AND REVELATION**

##### **ZECHARIAH 5:5-11**

##### **REVELATION 17-18**

Woman sitting in a basket

Woman sitting on the Beast, sevenhills, and many waters (17:3, 9, 15)



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Emphasis on commerce (a basket for measuring grain) Emphasis on commerce (merchant of grain—18:13)

Woman's name is Wickedness

Woman's name is Babylon the Great, Mother of All Prostitutes and obscenities in the World

Focus on false worship

Focus on false worship (18:1-3)

Woman is taken to Babylon

Woman is called Babylon

God's Word teaches that in the end times, wickedness will again rear its ugly head in the same place where it began—Babylon. The prostitute in Revelation fulfills the prophecy of Zechariah 5:5–11, as Babylon is established in the last days as the city that embodies evil.

**The City's Destruction** Since the city of Babylon was never destroyed suddenly and completely as is predicted in Isaiah 13 and Jeremiah 50–51, these passages must refer to a future city of Babylon that will be totally destroyed on the Day of the Lord.

**The City's Description** Jeremiah 50–51 clearly describes the geographical city of Babylon on the Euphrates. The many parallels between this passage and the future Babylon described in Revelation 17–18 indicate that they are both describing the same city.

**PARALLELS BETWEEN JEREMIAH 50-51 AND REVELATION 17-18**

DESCRIPTION	JEREMIAH 50-51	REVELATION 17-18
Compared to a golden cup	51:7	17:3-4; 18:6
Dwelling on many waters	51:13	17:1
Involved with nations	51:7	17:2
Named the same	50:1	18:10
Destroyed suddenly	51:8	18:8
Destroyed by fire	51:30	17:16
Never again to be inhabited	50:39	18:21
Punished according to her works	50:29	18:6
Fall illustrated	51:63-64	18:21
God's people flee	51:6, 45	18:4
Heaven to rejoice	51:48	18:20

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The city of Babylon will be rebuilt in the last days to serve as the religious and commercial capital for the Antichrist's empire. Wickedness will return to this place for its final stand. Then, at the end of the Tribulation, in the seventh bowl judgment, God will put it in Antichrist's heart to destroy the great city of Babylon with fire (Rev. 17:16–17; 18:8). Babylon will fall, never to rise again!

The rise of Iraq in recent years on the world political and economic scene is not an accident. In spite of the Gulf war and tremendous worldwide pressure, Iraq remains a formidable foe. The current rebuilding and rise of Babylon may be a key part of God's plan for the last days.<sup>10</sup>

### **BABYLON IS FALLEN**

#### **REVELATION 14:8**

**<sup>8</sup>And another angel followed, saying, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."**

### **HISTORICIST**

This is the first mention of **Babylon** in Revelation, so we have not thus far been given the keys to unlock the mystery of its meaning. The identification of this power, and its fall, are the great subjects of chapters 17 and 18, respectively. For reasons to be given later, *historicist* interpreters for several centuries tended to equate the Babylon of the Apocalypse with papal Rome. The judgment alluded to briefly in this verse is anticipatory of the judgment series upon Babylon that is detailed in chapter 16.

### **PRETERIST**

With this first reference in Revelation to that great city **Babylon**, a symbol is introduced over which *preterists* are not in full agreement. For reasons that shall be listed later (see note at 17:1ff), J. Stuart Russell and others (Terry, Chilton, etc.) believe Babylon to be a symbolic designation for Jerusalem. Chilton says that "the evidence that the prophetic **Babylon** was Jerusalem is nothing short of overwhelming." Milton Terry concurs:

As Jesus in Matthew 24:14 said that the end of this city [Jerusalem] and the pre-Messianic age would follow the preaching of the Gospel among the nations, so in this Apocalypse the proclamation of the fall of **Babylon the Great** follows immediately after that of the eternal Gospel.

Russell also identifies Babylon as Jerusalem:

This is plainly another declaration of the same impending catastrophe, only more distinctly indicating the doom of the guilty city—the great criminal about to be brought to judgment.

David S. Clark, on the other hand, takes the view of many others (Moses Stuart, Jay Adams, etc.) that the increased attention to Babylon in the second half of Revelation should be taken as a mystic reference to Rome, the persecuting city after the fall of Jerusalem:

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<sup>10</sup> Hitchcock, M. (1999). [\*The Complete Book of Bible Prophecy\*](#) (pp. 96–100). Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

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Rome was called Babylon because [she was] sort of a duplicate of old Babylon, in that she was a persecutor of God's people, she was intensely idolatrous, and she was doomed to overthrow for her sins.

Further arguments over the identification of this Babylon must await the commentary on chapter 17. At this point it is clear that the fall of a great persecuting city is jubilantly announced by a heavenly messenger.

#### FUTURIST

This is the first reference to **Babylon** in Revelation, though the details regarding Babylon's offense and judgment will be dealt with at great length in chapters 17 and 18. Gaebelien writes: "This is an anticipative announcement of what will also happen as the great tribulation nears its close." Ryrle writes that

the repetition of "is fallen" emphasizes the certainty of the utter destruction of Babylon. This is anticipatory since Babylon's actual fall is connected with the outpouring of the seventh [bowl].

For Walvoord, Revelation's "Babylon" may be identified in a number of ways:

Prophetically, "Babylon" sometimes refers to a literal city, sometimes to a religious system, sometimes to a political system, all stemming from the evil character of historic Babylon.

Walvoord goes on to suggest that Babylon, in the first half of the Tribulation period, may be the apostate church, which will be destroyed in the middle of the Tribulation. In the second half of the Tribulation, Walvoord is more inclined to see Babylon as an actual city—perhaps Rome, or even a rebuilt Babylon on its historic site on the Euphrates—which is to be destroyed at the end of the Great Tribulation.

Ironsides holds to the view that Babylon is a religious system:

Just as Babylon of old was the fountainhead of idolatry, so is mystic Babylon today the mother of all false religious teaching in Christianity. In the time of the end it will be headed up in one great false church—that worldly church, which has proved so unworthy and false to her Lord, is to be broken absolutely to pieces, to be utterly destroyed.

Mounce sees in Babylon a reference to "Rome, a contemporary Babylon, a symbol for the spirit of godlessness, the final manifestation of secular humanism." Ladd says that Babylon stands for "the capital city of the final apostate civilization, the symbol of human society organized politically, economically, and religiously in opposition to and in defiance of God."

#### SPIRITUAL

Wilson sees **Babylon** as a symbol for human society organized against God. Hendriksen considers it to represent "the world as centre of seduction." Wilcock writes: "Suffice it to say for the present that Babylon is another picture of the beast from the sea, the world system which is in rebellion against God."

Ancient Babylon was the center of idolatry, the occult, immorality, and rebellion against God. It thus became a fitting symbol for the rebellious world system, which in every age opposes God's kingdom, but which is already judged and fallen, so far as God's eternal perspective is concerned.

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The compound expression **the wine of the wrath of her fornication** combines two metaphors. On the one hand, as a harlot (cf. ch. 17), the intoxication of her paramours is a part of her seduction. On the other, she and her clients will be made drunken with the contents of God's cup of wrath (v. 10; cf. Jer. 25:15).

### **FIRE AND BRIMSTONE FOR THE BEAST'S WORSHIPERS**

#### **REVELATION 14:9–12**

<sup>9</sup>Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, <sup>10</sup>he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. <sup>11</sup>And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name. <sup>12</sup>Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

#### **HISTORICIST**

Those who have demonstrated their allegiance to the papacy by taking the distinctive **mark** (v. 9—see notes at 13:16–18) will suffer eternal damnation. Babylon, in chapter 17, will be seen as holding a "cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication" (17:4), by which "the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk" (17:2), and she herself is "drunk with the blood of the saints" (17:6). In this vision, her followers, who have drunk from "the cup of her fornication," ultimately drink of **the wine of the wrath of God** from **the cup of His indignation** (v. 10). One cannot drink from the cup of the harlot without also drinking from the cup of God's indignation. The reference to **fire and brimstone** (v. 10) may be literal, though Barnes, Vitranga, Grotius, and others think it to be the eternal pangs of remorse and conscience.

#### **PRETERIST**

Though this may be a reference to persons suffering eternally in hell (a traditional association with these verses), the imagery might refer to the permanent destruction of the city Babylon—whether Jerusalem or Rome—and those in it who participated in its worship of the beast. That they must **drink of the wine of the wrath of God** (v. 10) may allude to the practice of giving wine to condemned criminals just before they were crucified (cf. Mark 15:23). In this case it would be a sign of impending death and judgment.

That **the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever** (v. 11) may not be intended literally, as Chilton explains:

The imagery of their permanent doom is taken from the utter destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire and brimstone, when "the smoke of the land ascended like the smoke of a furnace" (Gen. 19:28; cf. its symbolic use in Isa. 34:9–10, describing the fall of Edom).

If one argues that Sodom's smoke did not ascend "forever and ever," it should be noted that Jude spoke of Sodom and Gomorrah as "suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 7). The context in Jude does not indicate that the verse refers to the personal damnation of the

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inhabitants, but rather the visible destruction of the cities as a historical witness to God's wrath toward sin.

Chilton compares the expression **they have no rest day or night** (v. 11) to the ceaseless activity of the four living creatures, who "do not rest day or night" in praising God (Rev. 4:8).

### FUTURIST

The judgment described is for anyone who **worships the beast and his image** (v. 9, 11). As Tenney says,

A clear line of division is drawn on the basis of worship: those who worship the beast (14:11), and those who worship God (14:7). The primary emphasis of Revelation is on this point.

The eternal judgment upon those who take the mark of the beast is declared here in graphic detail. There are not many passages in the Bible that bring out the horrors of ultimate damnation as intensely as does this one. The offenders will be made to **drink of the wine of the wrath of God** (v. 10). It was common practice in all ancient Mediterranean societies to dilute wine with several parts water before drinking it, but not in this case. The wrath of God for these people will be served up **full strength**, meaning "this wine is not to be tempered with water. There is no element of grace or hope or compassion blended with the judgment" (Biederwolf).

Verse 11 strongly affirms that those who reject God's mercy will experience an eternity of torment to regret it.

Because there is a call for **patience** on the part of the **saints** (v. 12), Mounce maintains that this is "a warning to both the pagan population (vv. 15, 17) and those within the church (vv. 12, 13)" of God's eternal wrath on those who deny faith in Christ and worship the beast.

### SPIRITUAL

The **phrase poured out full strength** (v. 10), as a modifier for **the wine** of God's wrath, presents a paradoxical expression. Two literal translations are "mixed undiluted" or "mingled unmixed." The first word refers to the ancient practice of mixing wine with spices to increase its potency. The second word refers to the practice of diluting wine with water, a customary practice at meals. The wrath of God is thus poured out unmitigated and undiminished—i.e., not tempered with mercy—for those who remain in the camp of the beast to the end. Hendriksen writes:

Here on earth this wrath is still mixed with grace. The Lord makes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust (Matt. 5:45). By and by, in hell, the wrath will be unmixed.

No passage in Scripture more vividly portrays the traditional doctrine of eternal torment in hell than do verses 10 and 11 here. While the language is borrowed from a description of the temporal downfall of Edom (cf. Isa. 34:10), where it is no doubt symbolic, that does not prevent this passage from using the terms literally. Hobbs speculates whether the fire of hell is literal or simply a figure. He concludes that the "reality is always greater than the symbol, whether it be of heaven or hell. If hell is not real fire, then it is something worse than fire." As Wilson justly observes,

Had John wished to convey the impression that the punishment of the wicked was only of limited duration, he could hardly have chosen a more misleading phrase to describe it!

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This punishment of the wicked should provide an incentive for **the patience of the saints** (v. 12). Swete writes: “The Caesarcult supplied the Saints with a test of loyalty which strengthened and matured those who were worthy of the name.”<sup>11</sup>

Jeremiah 51

**51** This is what the LORD says:

- “I will soon cause a destroying wind to blow  
against Babylon and the Babylonian people.
- <sup>2</sup> I will send foreign people to destroy Babylon  
like a wind that blows chaff away.  
They will destroy the land.  
Armies will surround the city  
when the day of disaster comes upon her.
- <sup>3</sup> Don’t let the Babylonian soldiers prepare their bows to shoot.  
Don’t even let them put on their armor.  
Don’t feel sorry for the young men of Babylon,  
but completely destroy her army.
- <sup>4</sup> They will be killed in the land of the Babylonians  
and will die in her streets.
- <sup>5</sup> The Lord GOD All-Powerful  
did not leave Israel and Judah,  
even though they were completely guilty  
in the presence of the Holy One of Israel.
- <sup>6</sup> “Run away from Babylon  
and save your lives!  
Don’t stay and be killed because of Babylon’s sins.  
It is time for the LORD to punish Babylon;  
he will give Babylon the punishment she deserves.
- <sup>7</sup> Babylon was like a gold cup in the LORD’s hand  
that made the whole earth drunk.  
The nations drank Babylon’s wine,  
so they went crazy.
- <sup>8</sup> Babylon has suddenly fallen and been broken.  
Cry for her!  
Get balm for her pain,  
and maybe she can be healed.
- <sup>9</sup> “Foreigners in Babylon say, ‘We tried to heal Babylon,  
but she cannot be healed.

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<sup>11</sup> Gregg, S. (1997). [\*Revelation, four views: a parallel commentary\*](#) (pp. 324–331). T. Nelson Publishers.

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- So let us leave her and each go to his own country.  
Babylon's punishment is as high as the sky;  
it reaches to the clouds.'
- 10 "The people of Judah say, 'The LORD has shown us to be right.  
Come, let us tell in Jerusalem  
what the LORD our God has done.'
- 11 "Sharpen the arrows!  
Pick up your shields!  
The LORD has stirred up the kings of the Medes,  
because he wants to destroy Babylon.  
The LORD will punish them as they deserve  
for destroying his Temple.
- 12 Lift up a banner against the walls of Babylon!  
Bring more guards.  
Put the watchmen in their places,  
and get ready for a secret attack!  
The LORD will certainly do what he has planned  
and what he said he would do against the people of Babylon.
- 13 People of Babylon, you live near much water  
and are rich with many treasures,  
but your end as a nation has come.  
It is time to stop you from robbing other nations.
- 14 The LORD All-Powerful has promised in his own name:  
'Babylon, I will surely fill you with so many enemy soldiers they will be like a swarm of  
locusts.  
They will stand over you and shout their victory.'
- 15 "The LORD made the earth by his power.  
He used his wisdom to build the world  
and his understanding to stretch out the skies.
- 16 When he thunders, the waters in the skies roar.  
He makes clouds rise in the sky all over the earth.  
He sends lightning with the rain  
and brings out the wind from his storehouses.
- 17 "People are so stupid and know so little.  
Goldsmiths are made ashamed by their idols,  
because those statues are only false gods.  
They have no breath in them.
- 18 They are worth nothing; people make fun of them.  
When they are judged, they will be destroyed.
- 19 But God, who is Jacob's Portion, is not like the idols.  
He made everything,  
and he chose Israel to be his special people.

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- The LORD All-Powerful is his name.
- 20 “You are my war club,  
my battle weapon.  
I use you to smash nations.  
I use you to destroy kingdoms.
- 21 I use you to smash horses and riders.  
I use you to smash chariots and drivers.
- 22 I use you to smash men and women.  
I use you to smash old people and young people.  
I use you to smash young men and young women.
- 23 I use you to smash shepherds and flocks.  
I use you to smash farmers and oxen.  
I use you to smash governors and officers.
- 24 “But I will pay back Babylon and all the Babylonians for all the evil things they did to Jerusalem in your sight,” says the LORD.
- 25 The LORD says,  
“Babylon, you are a destroying mountain,  
and I am against you.  
You have destroyed the whole land.  
I will put my hand out against you.  
I will roll you off the cliffs,  
and I will make you a burned-out mountain.
- 26 People will not find any rocks in Babylon big enough for cornerstones.  
People will not take any rocks from Babylon to use for the foundation of a building,  
because your city will be just a pile of ruins forever,” says the LORD.
- 27 “Lift up a banner in the land!  
Blow the trumpet among the nations!  
Get the nations ready for battle against Babylon.  
Call these kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz to fight against her.  
Choose a commander to lead the army against Babylon.  
Send so many horses that they are like a swarm of locusts.
- 28 Get the nations ready for battle against Babylon—  
the kings of the Medes,  
their governors and all their officers,  
and all the countries they rule.
- 29 The land shakes and moves in pain,  
because the LORD will do what he has planned to Babylon.  
He will make Babylon an empty desert,  
where no one will live.
- 30 Babylon’s warriors have stopped fighting.  
They stay in their protected cities.  
Their strength is gone,



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- and they have become like frightened women.  
Babylon's houses are burning.  
The bars of her gates are broken.
- <sup>31</sup> One messenger follows another;  
messenger follows messenger.  
They announce to the king of Babylon  
that his whole city has been captured.
- <sup>32</sup> The river crossings have been captured,  
and the swamplands are burning.  
All of Babylon's soldiers are terribly afraid."
- <sup>33</sup> This is what the LORD All-Powerful, the God of Israel, says:  
"The city of Babylon is like a threshing floor,  
where people crush the grain at harvest time.  
The time to harvest Babylon is coming soon."
- <sup>34</sup> "Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has defeated and destroyed us.  
In the past he took our people away,  
and we became like an empty jar.  
He was like a giant snake that swallowed us.  
He filled his stomach with our best things.  
Then he spit us out.
- <sup>35</sup> Babylon did terrible things to hurt us.  
Now let those things happen to Babylon,"  
say the people of Jerusalem.  
"The people of Babylon killed our people.  
Now let them be punished for what they did," says Jerusalem.
- <sup>36</sup> So this is what the LORD says:  
"I will soon defend you, Judah,  
and make sure that Babylon is punished.  
I will dry up Babylon's sea  
and make her springs become dry.
- <sup>37</sup> Babylon will become a pile of ruins,  
a home for wild dogs.  
People will be shocked by what happened there.  
No one will live there anymore.
- <sup>38</sup> Babylon's people roar like young lions;  
they growl like baby lions.
- <sup>39</sup> While they are stirred up,  
I will give a feast for them  
and make them drunk.  
They will shout and laugh.  
And they will sleep forever and never wake up!" says the LORD.
- <sup>40</sup> "I will take the people of Babylon to be killed.

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- They will be like lambs,  
like sheep and goats waiting to be killed.
- 41 “How Babylon has been defeated!  
The pride of the whole earth has been taken captive.  
People from other nations are shocked at what happened to Babylon,  
and the things they see make them afraid.
- 42 The sea has risen over Babylon;  
its roaring waves cover her.
- 43 Babylon’s towns are ruined and empty.  
It has become a dry, desert land,  
a land where no one lives.  
People do not even travel through Babylon.
- 44 I will punish the god Bel in Babylon.  
I will make him spit out what he has swallowed.  
Nations will no longer come to Babylon;  
even the wall around the city will fall.
- 45 “Come out of Babylon, my people!  
Run for your lives!  
Run from the LORD’s great anger.
- 46 Don’t lose courage;  
rumors will spread through the land, but don’t be afraid.  
One rumor comes this year, and another comes the next year.  
There will be rumors of terrible fighting in the country,  
of rulers fighting against rulers.
- 47 The time will surely come  
when I will punish the idols of Babylon,  
and the whole land will be disgraced.  
There will be many dead people lying all around.
- 48 Then heaven and earth and all that is in them  
will shout for joy about Babylon.  
They will shout because the army comes from the north  
to destroy Babylon,” says the LORD.
- 49 “Babylon must fall, because she killed people from Israel.  
She killed people from everywhere on earth.
- 50 You who have escaped being killed with swords,  
leave Babylon! Don’t wait!  
Remember the LORD in the faraway land  
and think about Jerusalem.”
- 51 “We people of Judah are disgraced,  
because we have been insulted.  
We have been shamed,  
because strangers have gone into

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- the holy places of the LORD's Temple!"
- <sup>52</sup> So the LORD says, "The time is coming soon  
when I will punish the idols of Babylon.  
Wounded people will cry with pain  
all over that land.
- <sup>53</sup> Even if Babylon grows until she touches the sky,  
and even if she makes her highest cities strong,  
I will send people to destroy her," says the LORD.
- <sup>54</sup> "Sounds of people crying are heard in Babylon.  
Sounds of people destroying things  
are heard in the land of the Babylonians.
- <sup>55</sup> The LORD is destroying Babylon  
and making the loud sounds of the city become silent.  
Enemies come roaring in like ocean waves.  
The roar of their voices is heard all around.
- <sup>56</sup> The army has come to destroy Babylon.  
Her soldiers have been captured,  
and their bows are broken,  
because the LORD is a God who punishes people for the evil they do.  
He gives them the full punishment they deserve.
- <sup>57</sup> I will make Babylon's rulers and wise men drunk,  
and her governors, officers, and soldiers, too.  
Then they will sleep forever and never wake up," says the King,  
whose name is the LORD All-Powerful.
- <sup>58</sup> This is what the LORD All-Powerful says:  
"Babylon's thick wall will be completely pulled down  
and her high gates burned.  
The people will work hard, but it won't help;  
their work will only become fuel for the flames!"

#### **A Message to Babylon**

<sup>59</sup> This is the message that Jeremiah the prophet gave to the officer Seraiah son of Neriah, who was the son of Mahseiah. Seraiah went to Babylon with Zedekiah king of Judah in the fourth year Zedekiah was king of Judah. His duty was to arrange the king's food and housing on the trip. <sup>60</sup> Jeremiah had written on a scroll all the terrible things that would happen to Babylon, all these words about Babylon. <sup>61</sup> Jeremiah said to Seraiah, "As soon as you come to Babylon, be sure to read this message so all the people can hear you. <sup>62</sup> Then say, 'LORD, you have said that you will destroy this place so that no people or animals will live in it. It will be an empty ruin forever.' <sup>63</sup> After you finish reading this scroll, tie a stone to it and throw it into the Euphrates River. <sup>64</sup> Then say, 'In the same way Babylon will sink and will not rise again because of the terrible things I will make happen here. Her people will fall.' "

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The words of Jeremiah end here.<sup>12</sup>

**49:34–39** The final oracle of the collection is against **Elam**, dated to the accession year of Zedekiah, in the spring of 597 B.C. The capital city of Elam was Susa, about 250 miles east-southeast of Babylon.

**49:34–36 break the bow:** The Elamites were famous for their skilled archers (Is. 22:6), who became an important part of the Persian army under Cyrus. The expression **four winds** indicates the military might that the Lord musters against His enemies (Ezek. 37:9; Dan. 8:8).

**49:37–39 I will set My throne:** This expression depicts the establishment of the kingdom of the God of Israel, the great conquering King in the land of the Elamites (1:15; 43:10). Elam would experience the restorative power of God, as its people were returned and its fortunes restored (48:47; 49:6).

**50:1–52:34** The last oracle is against the greatest nation of the day, Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar. The extended treatise is composed of numerous short poetic proclamations against the nation that on one hand was the servant of the Lord (25:9), and on the other hand was the archenemy of God's people. The previous chapters focused upon the role of Babylon as servant of the Lord in judgment on the nations. These two focus upon: (1) the imminent overthrow of Babylon and the defeat of her many gods, particularly Marduk, the patron god of the city and nation and (2) the restoration of the Jews to their homeland.

**50:1 The Chaldeans,** or Babylonians, were vassals of Assyria until the revolt of Nabopolassar, who gained control of Babylon in 626 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar, the son of Nabopolassar who succeeded his father to the throne in 605 B.C., was the strongest and longest-reigning Chaldean monarch. After Nebuchadnezzar died, the nation declined steadily. In 539 B.C. it was conquered by Cyrus, apparently with little effort.

**50:2, 3 Bel** was a title like Baal, meaning "Lord," for **Merodach**, another name for Babylon's patron deity Marduk. **idols ... images:** The oracle begins with a defamation of the gods of Babylon. The term translated *images* means animal droppings. The Hebrew prophets are openly contemptuous of idols and speak of them with ridicule. **out of the north:** The invading nation is not defined, yet from historical records it is known that Cyrus attacked Babylon from the north after defeating the city of Sippar.

**50:4, 5 Israel and Judah** would be restored as they sought the Lord in mournful repentance, looking for help to return home. They would enter into a **perpetual covenant** with the Lord that they would not forget or reject (Ezek. 16:60).

**50:6, 7 Shepherds** refers to the national princes, priests, and prophets who led the people to sin against the Lord, their true source of hope and sustenance (23:1–4).

**50:8–10** The train of thought turns to the Jews, who should flee from Babylon like **rams** of a flock.

**50:11–13** Babylon's plunder would be its punishment for gloating over Judah's demise and the abuse of God's **heritage**. Great Babylon would be reduced to the **least of the nations**. Defamation, drought, debilitation, desolation, and derision were Babylon's destiny (18:16; 19:8; 49:17).

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<sup>12</sup> [The Everyday Bible: New Century Version](#) (Je 51). (2005). Thomas Nelson, Inc.

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**50:14–16 against her all around:** Assault forces would press hard on every side, as what had been the instrument of God became the object of His wrath.

**50:17–20** The Lord had used Babylon to punish **Assyria** for deporting Israel; He would use another foe from the north to inflict punishment on **Babylon**. The result would be the restoration of Israel and Judah and the pardoning of their iniquities and sins, the very reason for their demise (5:25; 16:10, 18; 31:34; 33:8).

**50:21–28 utterly destroy:** The tables would be turned on Babylon, the soon-to-be-broken **hammer** and future **heaps of ruins**. The **LORD God of hosts** had launched His vengeful weapons upon the city through His anointed servant Cyrus (2 Chr. 36:22, 23; Is. 45:1).

**50:29–34** The wise and righteous Ruler would **plead** the **case** of the oppressed children of Judah and obtain their redemption. A redeemer was one who secured the freedom of a kinsman, protecting family rights. Here God, the **Redeemer** of Israel (Is. 47:4), offers to obtain the legal freedom of His people from captivity.

**50:35–46** The **sword** of God would overturn all elements of Babylon's greatness—its leaders, its weapons, and its wealth. **A drought is against her waters:** Babylon was built on both sides of the Euphrates, and the region of southern Mesopotamia was networked with irrigation canals. The Lord would carry out His judgment against Babylon as He had in the days of Elijah.

**51:1–14** The oracle against Babylon continues amassing image after image of destruction, bringing to bear upon the mighty nation every form of judgment possible within the language. The message is occasionally broken by a message of hope for the exiles of Israel and Judah.

**51:1–5** Though **Israel** and **Judah** had **forsaken** the lordship of God, He had not forsaken His sinful people.

**51:6–10** The imagery of Babylon's **cup** of fury from 25:15–29 is reversed. Here Babylon's cup is broken by the Lord. **balms:** As in the case of Judah (8:22), decadent Babylon was beyond healing and had to be abandoned. The destruction of Babylon was the vindication of the justice of God. Jeremiah's prediction (25:12–14) would be realized: Israel would be made righteous through God's work.

**51:11–14 vengeance:** The Lord would avenge Babylon's fierce abuse of Israel and other conquered nations. The **covetousness** of Babylon is typified in the taking of temple treasures from Jerusalem (2 Kin. 25:13–17). **locusts:** The locust plague depicts the swarm of enemy soldiers pouring into the magnificent city.

**51:15–19** These verses are almost verbatim from 10:12–16. The text is inserted here to demonstrate the futility of Babylon's idols against the power of the Lord, the God of Israel.

**51:20–26** Babylon had been God's **battle-ax** for judgment against the nations, and Judah in particular. **I will repay:** Babylon would experience God's battle-ax of punishment for the **evil** it inflicted on Jerusalem. The seemingly invincible **mountain** of Babylon would be crumbled by the power of God's outstretched arm.

**51:27–32** Babylon's enemies from the north (50:3) are summoned by the trumpet to prepare for the assault on the heavily fortified city.

**51:27, 28 Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz** were mountain tribes from what is today eastern Turkey and Armenia. **The Medes** were from the Zagros mountain region in present-day central Iran.

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**51:29–32 The mighty men of Babylon have ceased fighting:** The Nabonidus Chronicle, a text describing the fall of Babylon, reports that “Cyrus entered Babylon without a battle.” By the time Cyrus reached Babylon, he had conquered all of Babylonia except for the capital city, cutting off roads and supply routes.

### **The (Medo-)Babylonian Empire (560 B.C.)**

In 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar successfully concluded a two-year siege of Carchemish, and most of the Assyrian Empire rapidly became the Babylonian Empire. In 586 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar conquered all of Judah, besieging and destroying Jerusalem and the Jewish temple. At its zenith in 560 B.C., Babylon ruled the entire fertile crescent and Arabia as well, although Egypt regained its autonomy.

**51:33–35** The harvest **threshing floor** depicts the punishment of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar had become like a gluttonous warrior, devouring the nation of Judah and the temple and people of Jerusalem.

**51:36–40 plead your case:** The imagery here involves a legal proceeding. Babylon had been arraigned, indicted, and convicted. Here it is sentenced to punishment by the Lord. The **lions** of Babylon would be slaughtered like **lambs**.

**51:41–48** This section continues the theme of the overthrow and denigration of the proud and mighty city of Babylon.

**51:41–44** The primeval **sea**, conquered by Marduk according to the Babylonian creation myth, would overflow Babylon in the form of enemy nations. **Bel** is an honorary title for Marduk, the patron deity of Babylon. **I will bring out ... what he has swallowed:** Nebuchadnezzar had swallowed up nations like a glutton (v. 34); those very same nations would be returned.

**51:45–48** The release of Israel from captivity is foreseen. The people would be called upon to flee the city because of its impending destruction. In Jeremiah, the expression **days are coming** usually introduces a message of divine intervention into history. **carved images:** Babylon was known for its thousands of images of its numerous gods and goddesses. As the king claimed to conquer nations in the name of his patron deity, so the gods of the defeated would be punished along with their worshipers. The devastation of decadent Babylon would be no cause for mourning among the nations. Instead, the nations would sing joyfully of Babylon’s fall.

**51:49–58** The Hebrew term rendered **plunderer** provides a link from v. 48 to this section, in which emphasis is placed upon the plunder of the city known for its merciless plundering of others, particularly Judah and the temple of the Lord. Several themes recur here: the crushing of idols (v. 52; see v. 47; 50:2); tumultuous waters (v. 55; v. 42); broken bows (v. 56; 49:35); and drunkenness (v. 57; v. 7; 48:26).

**51:51** The prophet expresses feelings of **shame** for himself and his people as he recalls how their sin was ultimately responsible for Nebuchadnezzar’s destruction of the **LORD’s house** in 586 B.C.

**51:59–64** The oracles against the nations are concluded by a symbolic act that was enacted after the deportation of the Jews. The scroll **Jeremiah** wrote probably had contained many of the individual oracles of chapters 50 and 51, or material from earlier chapters (25:12–14). Jeremiah instructed **Seraiah**, a brother of Baruch who was about to be taken captive to Babylon, to read a scroll within the walls of Babylon. (Babylon was proud of her great and numerous walls, built with

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the slave labor of her captives, which made the city almost impregnable. Today the city lies in ruins of stone, mudbrick, and rubble.) The scroll that Jeremiah gave to Seraiah contained a list of the various evils that would befall Babylon as a result of God's judgment. After reading the contents of the scroll, Seraiah was to tie a stone to it and cast it into the Euphrates, which bisected the city. Notably, it was by means of the river that Cyrus conquered the city in 538 B.C. The message of the symbolic act was that as the scroll and stone sank in the river, so would Babylon sink in the silt of the river and surrounding desert sands.

**52:1–34** The closing chapter of the Book of Jeremiah is an appendix of historical material related to the fall of Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple of Lord, the subsequent deportation of leading citizens of Judah to Babylon, and an epilogue recounting the release of Jehoiachin from prison. The contents are based upon 2 Kings 24:18–25:30, excluding the portion in Kings concerning Gedaliah's brief governorship. The purpose of the chapter is to relate the fulfillment of many of the prophecies included in the previous chapters.

**52:1–3 Zedekiah** reigned as king of Judah from 598 to 586 B.C., until God finally cast him out of Jerusalem for doing **evil in the sight of the LORD** (23:1–4).

**52:4–6** The siege of Jerusalem began on the **tenth day** of the **tenth month** (Tebeth)—probably in December 589 B.C. The siege of Jerusalem lasted over two years. In June through July 586 B.C., as food supplies were exhausted, the walls of Jerusalem were breached (39:2).

**52:7–11** The attempted escape, capture, and ultimate fate of **Zedekiah** are also described in 39:1–10.

**52:12–23** The destructions of Jerusalem, the royal palace and the temple of the Lord are described in 2 Kings 25:8–17. Jeremiah provides additional details.

**52:13–16** The entire city of Jerusalem was burned, from the temple to the royal palace to the **houses**. The city **walls** were demolished. Leading citizens and some of the poor were deported under Nebuzaradan's command, leaving only a remnant of peasant farmers to work the fields, vineyards, and orchards.

**52:17–23** Sacred implements and furniture from the temple of God were taken as booty to Babylon. Most of these items are described in 1 Kin. 7:15–51. The **bronze bulls** had been removed by Ahaz and presented to Tiglath-Pileser III (2 Kin. 16:10–18), but apparently had been returned or remade.

**52:24–30** Certain persons were chosen for execution. **Seraiah** was the grandson of Hilkiah, the faithful priest under Josiah. **Zephaniah** is possibly the person of the same name in 29:25. **Doorkeepers** were key temple personnel. Leaders of Judah's forces were executed.

**52:31–34** Jehoiachin was released from prison soon after Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar's son **Evil-Merodach** became king but reigned only two years (562–560 B.C.). **lifted up the head**: A Hebrew phrase expressing the kindness and good will that Evil-Merodach showed toward Jehoiachin in pardoning him. Jehoiachin was provided food and given a seat of honor in Babylon. This restoration was symbolic of the future restoration of Israel and Judah to their homeland.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. (1999). [\*Nelson's new illustrated Bible commentary\*](#) (pp. 942–945). T. Nelson Publishers.

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#### I. *Concerning Babylon (50:1–51:64)*

The prophecy against Babylon (chs. 50–51) is by far the longest of those against foreign nations. Some scholars (S.R. Driver, Eichhorn, Ewald, Frost, Hyatt et al.) have denied Jeremiah's authorship of these chapters on several grounds.

1. Elsewhere Jeremiah speaks well of Babylon and tells the captives to pray for her welfare; here he foretells her overthrow in drastic language.

2. The style of chapters 50–51 differs from that of Jeremiah.

3. These chapters reveal a greater knowledge of Babylon than Jeremiah could have had.

All these arguments against Jeremiah's authorship are, however, vulnerable on the following grounds.

1. To deny the prophet's authorship of these chapters is to misunderstand the very heart of his ministry. He was the Lord's messenger. When he urged Judah to submit to Nebuchadnezzar (cf. 27:6) and foretold the fall of Babylon for her pride and cruelty, he was speaking for the Lord just as much as when he declared Babylon to be the agent for executing God's judgment on Judah. Moreover, he had already spoken of the Lord's future dealings with Babylon in 25:12, 26.

2. The style in chapters 50–51 does resemble that of Jeremiah in other parts of the book; changes in style (and to some extent all writers vary their style) reflect changes in subject matter. Jeremiah's knowledge of Babylon was what would be expected of a man who had personal contact with Babylonians and with those in high office in Judah.

4. The final prophecy against Babylon comes as the logical conclusion to the other prophecies against foreign nations. In these prophecies Jeremiah moved from the nations on the border of Judah and Israel, to the more remote nations, and then to the one under which the Jewish commonwealth fell in 586 B.C. (so Streane).

The chapters at hand emphatically stress the truth of Matthew 25:31–46: The criterion by which God judges the nations is their treatment of his chosen people whom he has made the vehicle of salvation (cf. John 4:22) and placed at the center of the consummation of human history (cf. Isa 2:1–4).

The only clue to the date of chapters 50–51 is 51:59–60, which mentions the fourth year of Zedekiah—i.e., 594–593 B.C. Two main emphases run throughout these chapters: the fall of Babylon and the return of the Jewish exiles to their home. This does not mean that Jeremiah was pro-Babylon or pro-Judah. He declared that Judah must be punished for her sins, and Babylon was God's agent for it. Then Babylon was to be judged for her own sins (cf. Isa 10:5–19, with reference to Assyria, and Hab 2:1–20, with reference to Babylon).

It has troubled some scholars that chapters 50–51 predict the violent destruction of Babylon, whereas its defeat by Cyrus in 539 B.C. took place without a battle and with no damage to the city. But with other predictive prophecies, if a fulfillment does not occur in one period, it is to be sought for in another and future one.

#### 1. *Babylon's doom announced (50:1–10)*

**1–10** Since these two chapters so clearly dwell on one subject, detailed analysis of them is not necessary. Verses on common themes will be treated as units. The references to Babylon are not, as a rule, to the city but to the nation (v.1).



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First of all, the idols of Babylon are discredited. Bel and Merodach (Marduk) are alternate names for the same great Babylonian deity. Jeremiah sees the future doom as already completed. The idols are contemptuously referred to (v.2) as “dung pellets” (NIV, “her idols”; see Notes).

“A nation from the north” (i.e., the Medes and Persians) will execute judgment on Babylon (vv.3, 9). The Lord exhorts his people to flee from Babylon (v.8) because of the impending invasion. Scattered (vv.6–7) and penitent Israel is given a chance to escape. Flight alone will enable her to escape Babylon’s doom. The reunited nation (vv.4–5) will return to Jerusalem to join herself to the Lord, never to forget the eternal covenant.

### Notes

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- 2 Bel is related to the West Semitic Baal (lit., “lord,” “possessor”). Enlil was the Sumerian counterpart of Bel among the pre-Semitic Sumerians. When Babylon rose to power, its chief deity, Marduk (pointed Merodach in OT), was invested with the characteristics of Enlil and accorded the title of Bel, which in time displaced Marduk in common use. Marduk occurs only in 50:2, but Bel appears in 50:2; 51:44; Isa 46:1; and Dan 5:1, 9, 22, 29, 30 (in the Daniel references, it is a constituent part of the name of Belshazzar) (cf. ZPEB, 1:511; 4:72).

גִּלְוֵיָהּ (*gillûleyhā*, “her idols”) is not the usual Hebrew term for idols, one of which appears earlier in this verse. Young’s Concordance lists ten different Hebrew words for idols but even so fails to list the noun under discussion. גִּלְוֵל (*gillûl*), used many times in the OT but always in the plural, denotes “logs,” “blocks,” that is, shapeless things (BDB). Bright translates it “godlets.” Ewald, after the rabbis, derisively renders it “dungy things.”

- 5 The pronouncement and elaboration of בְּרִית עוֹלָם (*berîṭ ‘ôām*, “everlasting covenant”) constitutes one of the great contributions of Jeremiah to OT and, indeed, biblical theology (cf. 31:31–33; 32:40; 33:21; and here).

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### 2. *Babylon’s sin and judgment (50:11–16)*

**11–16** Judgment on Babylon will be in retaliation for her treatment of Israel. Babylon herself is addressed (vv.11–12) so that she may realize the issues involved in her visitation. No nation in ancient times influenced the fortunes of Israel in a more devastating way than Babylon did (so Bright). The desolation of Babylon is expressed in numerous ways, which reveal the brilliant literary skill of Jeremiah. Babylon’s enemies are summoned to wreak destruction on her (vv.14–16). Babylon was in a fertile agricultural area. With the decline of her political power, the irrigation canals were silted up so that the country became desolate (v.13). Cyrus, who unified the Medo-Persian Empire and then overwhelmed Babylon (ZPEB, 1:1054–56), was careful to spare the country; so the references (v.16) must be to a later attack. Babylon will learn the agony the law of retaliation entails.

### 3. *Consolation to Israel (50:17–20)*

**17–20** This short portion summarizes the biblical interpretation of Israel’s history. The sufferings of Israel are stated (v.17), then the judgment God will bring on those who inflicted such sufferings on Israel (v.18), next her return to her land in peace and plenty (v.19), and,

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finally, the greatest blessing of all—the pardon of Israel’s iniquity (v.20). All these will be realized in messianic times, as v.20 declares.

#### 4. *God’s vengeance on Babylon (50:21–28)*

**21–28** Once more God calls on the foes of Babylon to execute his wrath on her. “Merathaim” (v.21)—i.e., “double rebellion”—signifies Babylon. Southern Babylon was known as *mât marrâti* (“Land of the Bitter River”). “Pekod” means “visitation” or “punishment.” An eastern Babylonian tribe was named Puqudu (so Hyatt). Cause and effect are indicated in the play on the place names—i.e., “double rebellion,” “visitation.” The unexpected nature of the visitation is pointed out (v.24). Babylon, who hammered so many nations to pieces (v.23), will know the armory of God opened against her (v.25) through her foes. There will be wholesale slaughter of Babylon’s finest manhood (vv.26–27). Clearly God is reckoning with Babylon for having burned his temple in her capture of Jerusalem (v.28). The escapees from Babylon will announce in Zion that the Lord has avenged the destruction of his temple (cf. 51:11).

### Notes

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**24** According to Herodotus (1.191), Cyrus captured Babylon by diverting the Euphrates River into a trench. The Persians attacked the Babylonians so unexpectedly that when the outer areas of the city had already been taken those in the center did not realize that they were captured (so KD).

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#### 5. *Babylon’s arrogance (50:29–32)*

**29–32** The stress here is on Babylon’s insufferable arrogance against the Lord. The fall of the proud will be complete. The exiles, as they summon archers (v.29), are seen exulting over God’s retribution on Babylon. The rendering “archers” for *rabbîm* (contra “many” so LXX and other ancient translations) agrees with the following words in apposition—i.e., “all those who draw the bow”—and requires a change only in the Hebrew vowels. The call is to complete the extinction of the haughty empire. The view has been set forth (so Cunliffe-Jones) that God could not be judging Babylon for the Fall of Jerusalem, when Jeremiah had informed Zedekiah more than once that Babylon was performing the will of God (37:7–10; 38:18). Such a position, however, fails to take into account God’s sovereign overruling of the innate hatred against his people ungodly men have even when cast into the role of benefactors (cf. Pharaoh and Israel in Egypt; cf. Zeph 1:15, etc.) and their accountability for their pride and cruelty. Verse 30 is practically a verbatim repetition of 49:26, where Jeremiah pronounced judgment on Damascus. It is equally appropriate. Babylon is viewed (vv.31–32) as the epitome of arrogance pride personified! The message originally addressed to Jerusalem is directed against Babylon here, with the necessary changes. For godless Babylon (v.32) the consequences can only be fall, fire, and final consumption.

#### 6. *Israel’s Kinsman-Redeemer (50:33–40)*

**33–40** Few nations have ever realized that God is the Kinsman-Redeemer of Israel (v.34). The OT concept of kinsman-redeemer includes the protection of a relative’s person and property. It involves avenging the murder of a relative, the purchase of his alienated property, and/or the marriage to his widow (cf. Lev 25:25; Num 35:21; Ruth 4). The Kinsman-Redeemer is voluntarily

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committed to champion Israel's cause. He brings peace to his own but unrest to his oppressors. In a sense, Israel is the epitome of all that Babylon enslaved. Notice in vv.35–38 the fivefold mention of the sword (cf. Ezek 21).

### Notes

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**39** Bright attempts to render the assonance of שִׁיּוּיִם וְעֵיִיִם (šîyyîm 'et-îyyîm, "desert creatures and hyenas") by "goblins and ghouls." C.C. Torrey (*The Second Isaiah: A New Interpretation* [New York: Scribner, 1928], pp. 289–90) considered them, not as animals, but probably demons of the desert (cf. KB, pp. 801, 35).

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#### 7. *The permanence of Babylon's doom (50:41–46)*

**41–46** This section should be compared with 6:22–24 and 49:19–21. The lion (v.44) now is Cyrus; in 49:19 it was Nebuchadnezzar. The desolation of Babylon will be permanent, as was that of Sodom and Gomorrah (cf. v.40). The doom of Babylon will indeed terrify the nations who witness it (v.46). That vv.44–46 are also found in 49:19–21 shows affinity between these parts of Jeremiah's writings. In 6:22–24 Judah was warned of an unnamed northern invader. In this portion the offender is seen as Babylon, who is directly addressed with appropriate changes. The "many kings" (v.41) are those who were allied with Persia (e.g., the Medes) to bring about the defeat of Babylon. The executors of Babylon's judgment (v.42) are described as to their war paraphernalia, their vast cavalry, the deafening tumult, their military formation, and their merciless attitude toward their enemy. It is quite clear why the "king of Babylon" (v.43) is overcome with fear. Verses 44–46 are practically a verbatim repetition of the condemnation of Edom in 49:19–21. The reason is clear: since Edom's sins resemble Babylon's, God in righteousness must judge them similarly. The phrase "among the nations" (v.46) indicates a wider audience than the one in view in 49:21 because of the greater prominence of the Babylonian power.

Chapter 51, the longest in the book, continues the message of condemnation and ruin for Babylon and concludes with a word concerning an important mission sent to Babylon by Jeremiah.

#### 8. *The Lord's vengeance on Babylon (51:1–14)*

**1–4** The northern enemy is dispatched against Babylon, which is to be destroyed as chaff is winnowed from grain (v.2). "Leb Kamai" (v.1) is Hebrew for "the heart of those who rise against me." It is a cipher for Chaldea (cf. comments at 25:26 on *Atbash* of Sheshach for Babylon; cf. 51:41). Why Jeremiah used these ciphers is not known, because he generally used the name Babylon. An obvious reason would be to hide the identity of the nation prophesied against. It is the enemies of Babylon who are called on to perform the will of God regarding her. Though the Babylonians with their weapons (v.3) man the walls, yet they are to be attacked and none spared (v.4).

**5–10** The judgment is the vengeance of the Lord on Babylon for her treatment of Judah (vv.5–6). She that was as a cup of wrath to the nations will now be shattered herself (cf. 25:15–16). The cup was a golden one (v.7) because she intoxicated the nations with her wealth and power.

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And there is no healing for her mortal wound (vv.8–9). Thus will God vindicate his cause in Judah (v.10).

**11–14** The aggressor (Media) is now identified (v.11) and the work of judgment described. The Medes were allied with Babylon in the destruction of Nineveh in 612 B.C. Later they joined the Persians to defeat Babylon in 539 B.C. (so WBC; cf. Dan 5:28, 31; 8:20). Again Jeremiah specifies that the judgment is for the destruction of the temple. All Babylon's strength cannot avert her fall that has been determined by the Lord (vv.12–13). The invaders will swarm over her like locusts (v.14).

### Notes

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**11** מְלָכֵי מֵדָי (*malkê māday*, “kings of the Medes”) may refer to the provincial governors; or, as in Isa 13:17, Medes is a general designation for the ancient Indo-European (Aryan) people of northwest Iran who were amalgamated with the Persians in the seventh century B.C. The Babylonian Empire was destroyed by a coalition under Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian (ZPEB, 4:148–50).

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#### 9. *The omnipotent Lord and impotent idols (51:15–26)*

**15–23** In chapter 10, Jeremiah showed how the house of Israel had no cause to fear the impotent idols of the pagans. Here he demonstrates to the Babylonians the uselessness of their idols (vv.17–18), who will all be destroyed before the mighty Creator and Ruler of the universe (vv.15–16, 19). The biblical doctrine of the requital is predicated on the basis of God's control over the affairs of all the nations on the ground of his creative activity (27:5) and his zeal for righteousness (Gen 18:25). The law of retaliation (*lex talionis*) is found in the OT (Isa 10:5–19; 37:22–29; Jer 27:4–11, esp. v.7) and in the NT (Matt 26:52; Rom 2:1). In vv.20–23, Cyrus of Persia, the Lord's “war club,” shatters Babylon. This passage underscores the great power of Persia (so Hyatt et al.). Ten times the phrase “with you” falls like hammer blows (vv.21–23). The Hebrew verb *nippēš* indicates a violent and intensive shattering (cf. Exod 15:6; Pss 2:9; 137:9; Hos 10:14; 13:16).

**24–26** Babylon was situated on a plain; so “O destroying mountain” is a metaphor for a powerful kingdom (v.25; cf. Dan 2:35, 44–45). But Babylon will become as an extinct volcano—“a burned-out mountain.” She will never be rebuilt (v.26).

#### 10. *The nations summoned (51:27–33)*

**27–33** A call summons the nations to fight against Babylon (v.27). As God's avenger, Cyrus will harvest her (v.33). The people north of Babylon, who were conquered by the Medes early in the sixth century B.C., are named: Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz. The first are the Urartu of the Assyrian inscriptions, practically Armenia, north of Lake Van. The second are the Mannaeans of the Assyrian records, who lived south of Lake Urmia. The last, the Ashguzai of the Assyrian inscriptions, were nomads living east of Lake Urmia (cf. Gen 10:3). These three are called to aid the Medes (v.28) against Babylon (so Hyatt).

### Notes

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**27** Ararat is known from Gen 8:4. It is the Urartu (a somewhat altered form being *Uruatri*), which is attested in Assyrian records of the thirteenth century B.C., a land north of Assyria in Armenia, with its center at Lake Van. Minni (Mannaeans) resided in the area south of Lake Urmia in western Iran from the ninth to the seventh centuries B.C. The Assyrian inscriptions describe the people as warlike. In the Bible, only Jeremiah mentions them. Ashkenaz has been identified with the Scythians, who lived near Lake Urmia near Ararat. They were crude and warlike. Herodotus (4:11–12) mentions their conquest of the Cimmerians (Comer). In time their name became synonymous with barbarian. In modern Hebrew Ashkenaz denotes Germany and Ashkenazi signifies a German Jew (ZPEB, 1:255–57, 356, 358; 4:240–41).

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#### 11. *Babylon's defenses useless (51:34–44)*

**34–44** The Lord in his judgment will answer Zion's complaint against Babylon (vv.34–36a). This will mean the end of Babylon (vv.36b–37). Babylon is compared to lions' cubs (v.38). She will be given a feast, followed not by the usual drunken sleep, but by a perpetual sleep of death (vv.39–40). In v.41 another cipher is found in the name of Sheshach (cf. comments at v.1).

Two things for which Babylon was famous were the god Bel and the great wall of the city (v.44). Bel will be compelled to disgorge the nations he has swallowed, and the great wall (admired by Herodotus [1.178–81]) will collapse.

#### 12. *Warning to Israel to flee Babylon (51:45–48)*

**45–48** Again, the Lord's people are warned to flee the doomed city before disaster strikes (v.45). They will need faith and courage until Babylon falls (v.46). But they are not to be terrified by the rumors that will be rife, for each year will have its own rumors of tyrants against tyrants (so Welch). Heaven and earth will rejoice over Babylon's fall (v.48; cf. Rev 19).

## Notes

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**45** There are some commentators who relate Jer 51–52 to Rev 17–18 and feel that the Revelation passages demand a rebuilding of Babylon. It must be stated at the outset that such a discussion does not touch the premillennial position in any vital area since premillennialists can be found on both sides of the issue of the rebuilding of the ancient city. Furthermore, this writer sees no way that the Revelation passages (as will be shown presently) can be determinative in the matter. The decision must ultimately be based on one's interpretation of Jer 51–52. The reason is that the apostle John is not speaking of literal, historical Babylon. First, he uses the word "mystery" with reference to Babylon. This conveys the force of a mystical Babylon. Second, Revelation is fond of using proper nouns figuratively: (1) Jezebel (2:20); (2) the key of David (3:7); (3) Jerusalem (the new) comes down out of heaven (21:2, 10); (4) Sodom and Egypt (11:8); (5) Gog and Magog (20:8, not the same geographical areas of Ezek 38–39); (6) Babylon (chs. 17–18, not the city of Mesopotamia, which was situated on a plain [cf. 17:9]).

The chief references to Babylon are in Genesis, the Prophets, and Revelation. The references indicate that the city of old signified spiritual confusion (Gen 11). The apostle John states that the idolatry of ancient times will be headed up in an ecclesiastical and political colossus with many commercial ramifications (Rev 17–18). It will be all anti-God systems (cults and religions) concentrated in a vast ecclesiastical system. "Rome alone answers to the description given" (H.A.

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Ironside, Lectures on the Book of Revelation [New York: Loizeaux, 1930], p. 297; cf. pp. 302, 307; cf. also the works of A.C. Gaebelein, W.R. Newell, F.W. Grant et al.)

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#### 13. *The certainty of Babylon's fall (51:49–53)*

**49–53** Retribution will overtake Babylon. The remnant of Israel is ashamed when they think of Jerusalem, for they have been the cause of the temple's defilement by strangers. And Babylon's idolatry will not escape judgment.

#### 14. *The completeness of Babylon's destruction (51:54–58)*

**54–58** Jeremiah sees the destroyers of Babylon as already present (v.54). The enemy overruns the land (vv.55–56) as tidal waves sweep over a country (so Cunliffe-Jones). When most needed, Babylon's men are made drunk by God's wrath (v.57). The slave labor of many nations expended in building the wall will have been for naught (v.58).

### Notes

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**58** The Hebrew here is *הַמִּוֹת בְּבָבֶל* (*hōmôt bābel*), which is literally “walls of Babylon.” Many Hebrew MSS, the LXX, and the Vulgate read *hōmat* (“wall of”), which requires minimal consonantal change and agrees with the singular verb that follows. Babylon had a double (“thick,” so NIV) wall for defense, which, according to Herodotus (1.178ff.), surrounded an area of two hundred square miles. The thickness of the wall allowed four chariots to run abreast (Nineveh's wall permitted three chariots).

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#### 15. *The mission of Seraiah (51:59–64)*

**59–64** This is Jeremiah's word to Seraiah, the staff officer who was responsible for looking after the comfort of the king of Judah whenever he stopped for the night (v.59). He was probably the brother of Baruch (cf. 32:12). In lieu of Jeremiah, Seraiah was to perform a symbolic act. This is the only place in Scripture where this visit is recorded. The fourth year of Zedekiah (594–593 B.C.) was, it has been suggested, the year when Zedekiah attempted to clear himself of complicity in a revolt against Babylon.

Seraiah's symbolic act (vv.60–63) was a visual enactment of the fall of Babylon. This passage is an appendix to the prophecy that shows how it was taken to Babylon. It is remarkable that at the very time Jeremiah was advising submission to that city, he was also foretelling her final overthrow. This answers the objections of those expositors who feel that chapters 50–51 could not have been written by Jeremiah in view of his attitude toward Babylon expressed earlier in the book.

Verse 64 is commonly understood to be a compiler's note, added to separate chapter 51 from chapter 52, which parallels passages in 2 Kings.

### V. Historical Supplement (52:1–34)

This chapter is a historical supplement to the Book of Jeremiah. It deals with the Fall of Jerusalem; tells what the Babylonians did to the temple and its vessels; describes how Nebuchadnezzar treated Zedekiah, Jehoiachin, and other officials; and lists the number of Jews

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taken into exile. The purpose of the chapter is to show how Jeremiah's prophecies were fulfilled in contrast to those of the false prophets. The chapter is almost identical with 2 Kings 24:18–25:30.

#### A. *The Fall of Jerusalem (52:1–11)*

**1–11** Verses 1–3 give a brief summary of the reign of Zedekiah and show the proximate cause of the Fall of Jerusalem. The narrative goes on to give a vivid account of how the city fell. So crucial was this event that the OT records it four times—in 2 Kings 25; 2 Chronicles 36:11–21; Jeremiah 39:1–14; and in this passage.

### Notes

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**11** בֵּית הַפְּקֻדֹת (*bêt happ<sup>e</sup>quddōt*, “prisonhouse”; NIV, “prison”) is not the usual term (מִטְּרָח, *mattārāh*, cf. 32:2, 8, 12, 33:1, 37:21 et al.) for “prison.” Because the LXX has οἰκία μύλωνος (*oikia mylōnos*, “house of punishment”), Hitzig held that Zedekiah was compelled to turn the mill, as Samson did Judg 16:21).

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#### B. *Results of the Fall (52:12–27a)*

**12–27a** Here the narrative goes into detail about what happened in Jerusalem after it fell. The slight variations between this chapter and 2 Kings 24–25 are only minor. There is no contradiction between v.12 and v.29. In the former the accession year of Nebuchadnezzar has been included; in the second it has not. The account of the taking of the sacred vessels to Babylon (cf. 1 Kings 6–8) is more elaborate here than that in 2 Kings. Zedekiah's revolt surely had an effect opposite from what the priests and false prophets had wanted. Solomon's magnificent temple, one of the wonders of the ancient world, was plundered and ruined. In v.24 the three orders of the priests are referred to. Apparently the priests and false prophets had been largely responsible for inciting Zedekiah's revolt against Nebuchadnezzar. They and the chief officers of the city were captured because of their responsibility for the calamity (vv.24–27a).

#### C. *Nebuchadnezzar's Captives (52:27b–30)*

**27b–30** The deportations to Babylon listed here (so Hyatt) occurred (1) in 598–597 B.C., (2) in 587–586 B.C., and (3) in 582–581 B.C. Under Judean kings there were three deportations: (1) under Jehoiakim (606 B.C.), which marked the beginning of the seventy years of exile; (2) under Jehoiachin (597); and (3) under Zedekiah (586) (so Jensen). If only Jews are numbered or only males reckoned in vv.29–30, the ultimate total of exiles was doubtless much higher (so Freedman). The smallness of the figures has been a chief reason why scholars of liberal persuasion tend to credit them, since they generally believe that figures are inflated with time. But this cannot be a final criterion.

### Notes

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**28–30** Most expositors follow the list of deportations given by Hyatt, beginning with Jehoiachin (597) and concluding with an invasion in 582–581 B.C. (the twenty-third year of Nebuchadnezzar), in retaliation for the assassination of Gedaliah. Jensen's list is preferable because it takes into account

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Dan 1:1–3. Possibly those who do not take the first deportation as Dan 1:1–3 do so because there is no numerical reckoning of the captives given there. Cowles, commenting on this passage, says, “By this account, captives were taken from Jerusalem to Babylon at three different periods. There was still a fourth, not named here, viz., in the fourth year of Jehoiakim and the first year of Nebuchadnezzar, or, rather, just before he ascended his throne. (See 2 Kings 24:1–4, and 2 Chron 36:5–7, and Dan 1:1–5.)” The discrepancy of one year can be explained on the basis of accession and nonaccession years.

It is obvious at first glance that the writers of 2 Kings and Jeremiah were not in collusion concerning the numbers of deportees, else they would not have allowed so clear a discrepancy in numbers to remain. Second, no writer has yet been able to prove that either writer was in error in the enumeration. They are both explicit in their figures. Third, the records indicate that both writers were counting from different perspectives. For instance, the smaller figure may include only adult males and the larger number may give the total number of exiles. It has been suggested that one figure gives the Jews, that is, those from Judah only, whereas the other figure is more inclusive. Until further information is forthcoming, no one can be dogmatic as to what principle was followed. Least of all can anyone fault the sacred records for inaccuracies. All too often in the past such an approach has been found in sad error!

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#### D. *Evil-Merodach's Kindness to Jehoiachin (52:31–34)*

**31–34** This passage agrees with 2 Kings 25:27–30. The humane treatment accorded Jehoiachin (c. 561 s.c.) is confirmed by cuneiform tablets (cf. E.F. Weidner, “Jojachin, König von Juda, in babylonischen Keilschrifttexten,” *Melanges syriens offerts a Monsieur Rene Dussaud*, II [Paris, 1939]: 923–35). These verses conclude Jeremiah’s somberly beautiful book with a comforting thought—viz., that the Lord did not forget the Davidic line, even in exile.

### Notes

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**31** אֵיִל מְרֹדַךְ (*‘ēwîl mērōḏaḳ*, “Evil-Merodach”) is a transliteration of the Assyro-Babylonian Amel (“man of”)—Marduk (“Marduk”). He was Nebuchadnezzar’s son, who reigned from 562 B.C. to 560 B.C.

נָשָׂע רֹעַשׁ (*nāsā’ rō’s*, “lift up the head; NIV, “released”) is first found in Gen 40:13, 20, in the Joseph account. Jewish tradition claims Evil-Merodach was imprisoned by his father for some action in the government during a period of Nebuchadnezzar’s indisposition. While in prison, Evil-Merodach became a friend of Jehoiachin. On his accession to the throne, Evil-Merodach released Jehoiachin and gave him a prominent place at the royal table (so Freedman). The tradition has marks of an ad hoc explanation.

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<sup>14</sup> Feinberg, C. L. (1986). [Jeremiah](#). In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel* (Vol. 6, pp. 671–691). Zondervan Publishing House.



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**BABYLON, CITY OF [BAB uh lon]** — ancient walled city between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers and capital of the Babylonian Empire. The leading citizens of the nation of Judah were carried to this city as captives in 586 B.C. after Jerusalem fell to the invading Babylonians. Biblical writers often portrayed this ancient capital of the Babylonian people as the model of paganism and idolatry (Jer. 51:44; Dan. 4:30).

Babylon was situated along the Euphrates River about 485 kilometers (300 miles) northwest of the Persian Gulf and about 49 kilometers (30 miles) southwest of modern Baghdad in Iraq. Its origins are unknown. According to Babylonian tradition, it was built by the god Marduk. The city must have been built some time before 2300 B.C., because it was destroyed about that time by an invading enemy king. This makes Babylon one of the oldest cities of the ancient world. Genesis 10:10 mentions Babel (the Hebrew spelling of Babylon) as part of the empire of Nimrod.

Sometime during its early history, the city of Babylon became a small independent kingdom. Its most famous king was HAMMURAPI (about 1792–1750 B.C.), who conquered southern Mesopotamia and territory to the north as far as Mari. He was known for his revision of a code of law that showed concern for the welfare of the people under his rule. But the dynasty he established declined under his successors. It came to an end with the conquest of Babylon by the Hittite king Murshilish I about 1595 B.C. Then the Kassites took over for a period, ruling southern Mesopotamia from the city of Babylon as their capital. The Assyrians attacked and plundered Babylon about 1250 B.C., but it recovered and flourished for another century until the Assyrians succeeded in taking over the city with their superior forces about 1100 B.C.

After Tiglath–Pileser I of Assyria arrived on the scene, the city of Babylon became subject to Assyria by treaty or conquest. Tiglath–Pileser III (745–727 B.C.) declared himself king of Babylon with the name Pulu (Pul, 2 Kin. 15:19), deporting a number of its citizens to the subdued territory of the northern kingdom of Israel (2 Kin. 17:24).

In 721 B.C. a Chaldean prince, Marduk–apal–iddina, (Hebrew Merodach–Baladan), seized control of Babylon and became a thorn in Assyria’s side for a number of years. He apparently planned a large-scale rebellion of eastern and western parts of the Assyrian Empire (2 Kin. 20:12). In retaliation against this rebellion, Sennacherib of Assyria (704–681 B.C.) attacked Babylon in 689 B.C., totally destroying it, although it was rebuilt by his successor Esarhaddon (680–669 B.C.). After this, Assyrian power gradually weakened, so the city and kingdom of Babylonia grew stronger once again.

In 626 B.C. Nabopolassar seized the throne of Babylon. He was succeeded by Nebuchadnezzar II (605–562 B.C.), the greatest king of Babylon, who enlarged the capital city to an area of six square miles and beautified it with magnificent buildings. This period of the city’s development has been the focal point of all archaeological research done in ancient Babylon. The city’s massive double walls spanned both sides of the Euphrates River. Set into these walls were eight major gates. One of the numerous pagan temples in the city was that of the patron god Marduk, flanked by a ZIGURAT or temple-tower. To this temple a sacred processional way led from the main gate, the Ishtar Gate. Both the gate and the walls facing the way were decorated with colored enameled bricks picturing lions, dragons, and bulls.

The city of Babylon also contained a palace complex, or residence for the king. On the northwest side of this palace area, the famous terraced “hanging gardens” may have been

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situated. They were one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world. According to tradition, Nebuchadnezzar built these gardens for one of his foreign wives to remind her of the scenery of her homeland.

Babylon's glory reflected the king's imperial power. Captured kings were brought to his court at Babylon. These included Jehoiachin (2 Kin. 24:15) and Zedekiah (2 Kin. 25:7), kings of Judah. During the reign of Nabonidus (555–539 B.C.), while Belshazzar was co-regent (Daniel 5), the city surrendered to the Persians without opposition.

Eventually the balance of power passed from the Persians to Alexander the Great, to whom Babylon willingly submitted in 331 B.C. Alexander planned to refurbish and expand the city and make it his capital, but he died before accomplishing these plans. The city later fell into insignificance because one of Alexander's successors founded a new capital at Seleucia, a short distance away.

The books of Isaiah and Jeremiah predicted the downfall of Babylon. This would happen as God's punishment of the Babylonians because of their destruction of Jerusalem and their deportation of the citizens of Judah (Is. 14:22; 21:9; 43:14; Jer. 50:9; 51:37). Today, the ruins of this city stand as an eloquent testimony to the passing of proud empires and to the providential hand of God.

**BABYLON IN THE NEW TESTAMENT** — In the Book of Revelation the world in rebellion against God is called "Babylon." The Old Testament prophets often prophesied the fall of Babylon, the capital of an empire that destroyed God's city, Jerusalem, and carried His people away as captives. So in Revelation Babylon is a word-picture for a society that persecuted God's people but that God will eventually destroy.

When the Book of Revelation was written, Babylon may have been a kind of code name for pre-Christian Rome, which was built on seven hills (Rev. 17:9) and which was already persecuting the church. Since that time, generations of Christians have been able to identify their own Babylons and have found reassurance in Revelation's message.

In Revelation 14:8 Babylon's power to make people resist God's claims in the gospel is admitted, but its doom is certain. In Revelation 16:19 Babylon is a "great city" that falls because God remembers its sin and brings His punishment. Throughout chapters 17–18 Babylon is prominent, pictured as a prostitute because it seduces people away from God with its glamor. But it is a false union that cannot satisfy.

"Babylon" stands over against the church, the "New Jerusalem" (Rev. 21:2), which is "the bride, the Lamb's wife" (Rev. 21:9). God reveals the "mystery" or divine truth (Rev. 17:5) about it and all such manmade societies that are organized independently of God. Its fall is celebrated by God's people (Rev. 18:20; 19:1–5).

In Matthew 1:11–12, 17, Judah's captivity in Babylon is mentioned in Jesus' genealogy. In Acts 7:43 Babylon appears in Stephen's famous speech about the history of the Jewish people. In 1 Peter 5:13 "Babylon" probably refers to the city of Rome.

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This drawing of Babylon shows the main avenue of the city, passing through the Gate of Ishtar in the city wall.

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**BABYLONIA [bab i LOW nih uh]** — ancient pagan empire between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in southern Mesopotamia. The Babylonians struggled with the neighboring Assyrians for domination of the ancient world during much of their history. At the height of their power, the Babylonians overpowered the nation of Judah, destroyed Jerusalem, and carried God’s Covenant People into captivity in 586 B.C.

The fortunes of the Babylonians rose and fell during the long sweep of Old Testament history—from about 2000 B.C. to about 500 B.C. References to these people—their culture, religion, and military power—occur throughout the Old Testament.

Babylonia was a long, narrow country about 65 kilometers (40 miles) wide at its widest point and having an area of about 8,000 square miles. It was bordered on the north by Assyria, on the east by Elam, on the south and west by the Arabian desert, and on the southeast by the Persian Gulf.

Among the earliest inhabitants of this region were the Sumerians, whom the Bible refers to as the people of the “land of Shinar” (Gen. 10:10). Sargon I (the Great), from one of the Sumerian cities, united the people of Babylonia under his rule about 2300 B.C. Many scholars believe Sargon was the same person as Nimrod (Gen. 10:8).

In 1792 B.C. HAMMURAPI emerged as the ruler of Babylonia. He expanded the borders of the Empire and organized its laws into a written system, referred to by scholars as the Code of Hammurapi. Abraham had earlier left UR, one of the ancient cities in lower Babylonia, and moved to Haran, a city in the north. Abraham eventually left Haran and migrated into the land of Canaan under God’s promise that he would become the father of a great nation (Gen. 12:1–20).

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This reconstruction of Babylon from the time of King Nebuchadnezzar II shows the huge ziggurat on the left and the temple of the pagan god Marduk on the right.

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Any account of Babylonia must also mention Assyria, which bordered Babylonia on the north. Assyria’s development was often intertwined with the course of Babylonian history. About 1270 B.C., the Assyrians overpowered Babylonia. For the next 700 years, Babylonia was a second-rate power as the Assyrians dominated the ancient world.

In 626 B.C., Babylonian independence was finally won from Assyria by a leader named Nabopolassar. Under his leadership, Babylonia again became a great empire. In 605 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar, the son of Nabopolassar, became ruler and reigned for 44 years. Under him the Babylonian Empire reached its greatest strength. Using the treasures he took from other nations, Nebuchadnezzar built BABYLON, the capital city of Babylonia, into one of the leading cities of the world. The famous “hanging gardens” of Babylon were known as one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world.

In 586 B.C., the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and carried the leading citizens of the nation of Judah as captives to Babylon. During this period of captivity, the Persians conquered Babylonia, and the Babylonians passed from the scene as a world power.

Photo: Matson Photo Collection

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The ruins of Babylon, once the proud capital city of the mighty Babylonian Empire.

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During its long history, Babylonia attained a high level of civilization that was influential beyond its borders. Sumerian culture was its basis, which later Babylonians regarded as traditional. In the realm of religion, the Sumerians already had a system of gods, each with a main temple in a particular city. The chief gods were Anu, god of heaven; Enlil, god of the air; and Enki or Ea, god of the subterranean ocean. Others were Shamash, the sun-god; Sin, the moon-god; Ishtar, goddess of love and war; and Adad, the storm-god. The Amorites promoted the god Marduk at the city of Babylon, so that he became the chief god of the Babylonian religion, beginning about 1100 B.C.

Babylonian religion was temple-centered, with elaborate festivals and many different types of priests, especially the exorcist and the diviner, whose function was to drive away evil spirits.

Babylonian literature was dominated by mythology and legends. Among these was a “creation” myth called Enuma Elish, written to glorify a god known as Marduk. According to this myth, Marduk created heaven and earth from the corpse of the goddess Tiamat. Another work was the Gilgamesh Epic, which includes a flood story and was written about 2000 B.C. Scientific literature of the Babylonians included treatises on astronomy, mathematics, medicine, chemistry, botany, and zoology.

An important aspect of Babylonian culture was a codified system of law. Hammurapi’s code was the successor of earlier collections of laws going back several centuries. The Babylonians used art for the celebration of great events and glorification of the gods. It was marked by stylized and symbolic representations, but it expressed realism and spontaneity in the depiction of animals.

The Old Testament contains many references to Babylonia. Genesis 10:10 mentions four Babylonian cities: Babel (Babylon), Erech (Uruk), Accad (Agade) and Calneh. These, along with Assyria, were ruled by Nimrod.

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## ANGELS—SERVANTS OF GOD

**FOR YOUR INFO 7:1** The four angels that John saw standing at the four corners of the earth (Rev. 7:1) are among the countless ministering spirits that serve God and His people (Heb. 1:7, 14). Angels figure prominently in the Book of Revelation (for example, Rev. 1:20; 5:2, 11; 7:2, 11; 8:2, 6; 12:7; 14:6; 15:1; 18:21; 20:1; 22:8). But they also played a part in many other events of the New Testament, as the following table shows:

### The Ministry of Angels

Calmed Joseph’s doubts about Mary’s faithfulness (Matt. 1:20–25).

Warned Joseph to flee from Herod’s plan to kill Jesus (Matt. 2:13).

Encouraged Joseph to return to Israel with his family (Matt. 2:19–20).

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<sup>15</sup> Youngblood, R. F., Bruce, F. F., & Harrison, R. K., Thomas Nelson Publishers, eds. (1995). In [Nelson’s new illustrated Bible dictionary](#). Thomas Nelson, Inc.

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Ministered to Jesus after His temptation in the wilderness (Matt. 4:11).

Told the women at the empty tomb that Jesus was alive (Matt. 28:2–6).

Foretold to Zacharias the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:11–20).

Told Mary that she would bear the Christ (Luke 1:26–38).

Announced Jesus' birth to shepherds near Bethlehem (Luke 2:8–15).

Appeared to Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane to give Him strength (Luke 22:43).

Promised the crowd observing Jesus' ascension that He would return in like manner (Acts 1:10–11).

Brought Peter and John out of prison (Acts 5:17–20).

Told Philip to go into the desert where he met the Ethiopian treasurer (Acts 8:26).

Told the centurion Cornelius to send for Peter (Acts 10:3–8).

Released Peter from prison (Acts 12:7).

Struck down Herod for not giving glory to God (Acts 12:23).

Stood by Paul during a storm at sea to assure him that he would stand before Caesar (Acts 27:23–24).

*Learn more about angels in "Spiritual Realities Beyond You" at Zech. 3:1, and "Spiritual Realities Beyond You" at Matt. 8:29.*

### **A GREAT MULTITUDE OF ALL NATIONS**

**CONSIDER THIS 7:9** Jesus sent His followers to make disciples of all the nations (ethne-, "peoples"; see **"TO ALL THE NATIONS"** at Matt. 28:19). As John takes us into the throne room of heaven, we see the fulfillment of Jesus' mandate. There, standing before the Lamb (Christ) is a crowd so large that it cannot be counted, made up of "all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues" (Rev. 7:9).

Actually, two groups are present—representatives from God's people, the Jews (7:3–8), and countless Gentile believers (7:9–10). Just as Jesus said it would, the gospel has spread out from Jerusalem to reach people from "the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Now Jews and Gentiles have come together to receive the salvation that God has promised. Now God dwells among His people. Jesus is their Shepherd, supplying all their needs (Rev. 7:14–17).

In response to this spectacular, worldwide, multiethnic salvation, the creatures of heaven and earth fall down before God in worship and song (7:11–12). What a breathtaking picture this is!

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But of course this vision lies in the future. For now, we live in a world wracked by ethnic divisions and racial prejudice. Yet knowing that God intends to populate heaven with people from every ethnic background has important implications for those of us who claim to follow Christ. If God's heart reaches out to the whole world, then our hearts need to as well.

#### **FOR YOUR INFO 8:1 THE STRUCTURE OF REVELATION**

**A cascade of dramatic events pours from the book of Revelation as the book unfolds. John narrates his vision in a torrent of images such as the seventh seal (Rev. 8:1), many of which may seem confusing to some readers. However, close observation reveals that the action is not random. John's vision is told in a tightly woven structure that offers important clues to understanding the book.**

One way to summarize the material in Revelation is based on the three time frames that Jesus told John to write about: "Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this" (1:19). This yields the following outline for the book:

- I. "The things which you have seen" (1:1–20)
  - A. Greetings and praise (1:1–8)
  - B. A vision of the risen Christ (1:9–20)
- II. "The things which are" (2:1–3:22)
  - A. Letter to the church at Ephesus (2:1–7)
  - B. Letter to the church at Smyrna (2:8–11)
  - C. Letter to the church at Pergamos (2:12–17)
  - D. Letter to the church at Thyatira (2:18–29)
  - E. Letter to the church at Sardis (3:1–6)
  - F. Letter to the church at Philadelphia (3:7–13)
  - G. Letter to the church at Laodicea (3:14–22)
- III. "The things which will take place after this" (4:1–22:21)
  - A. Worship in heaven (4:1–5:14)
  - B. Seven seals (6:1–8:5)
  - C. Seven trumpets (8:6–11:19)
  - D. Seven signs (12:1–14:20)
  - E. Seven bowls (15:1–16:21)
  - F. The final judgment and the triumph of God (17:1–20:15)
  - G. A new heaven and new earth (21:1–22:5)
  - H. Conclusion (22:6–21)

In the portion of the book devoted to the seven seals, seven trumpets, seven signs, and seven bowls (6:1–16:21), a common pattern repeats. In each case, six of the seven items play out their action and then there is a break during which God's people are challenged to perseverance and faithfulness. Then the seventh item unfolds.

Some have suggested that the seventh item in each group holds or gives rise to the action that follows: the seventh seal contains the seven trumpets, the seventh trumpet contains the seven signs, the seventh sign contains the seven bowls, and the seventh bowl contains the final judgment. This suggests that the apocalyptic events increase in their intensity with each passing event, spiraling toward the final defeat of evil and the triumph of Christ.

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Throughout these events, a message to believers remains clear: God is in control; ultimately His will will be done; therefore His people need to stand firm, trust in His power, and wait for deliverance from whatever trials befall them. ♦

*In addition to the structure of Revelation, it's important to read the book as a kind of literature known as apocalyptic in order to appreciate its meaning. See "The Genre of Apocalyptic Literature" at Rev. 10:1–10.*

#### **CONSIDER THIS 9:4 FAITH AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Global warming. Overpopulation. Acid rain. The destruction of rain forests. Is the Bible concerned with the earth's ecology? Or does it teach that the earth's resources exist purely for people's pleasure, to be used as they will, with little thought for long-term consequences?**

"The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness," declared the psalmist (Ps. 24:1). Again, "The earth is full of [God's] possessions" (104:24). These and many other passages indicate that creation is not ours to plunder, but rather a resource which God has entrusted to our management, to be used in service to each other (see "**God and the Environment**" at Ps. 104:14–23). We will ultimately answer to God for its use.

In John's description of the end times, there is much destruction and violence. But not all is to be consumed. Nor does the earth exist only for people's pleasure and consumption. The command not to harm "the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree" (Rev. 9:4) is a curious echo of Gen. 1:29–30: "every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed ... every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth."

The same concern for earth's resources occurs when God sends one of His angels to cry with a loud voice to the four angels "to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea ... 'Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees'" (Rev. 7:2–3). Likewise, the new heaven and earth include a "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal ... the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" (22:1–2).

When God created the world's resources, He declared them to be "very good" (Gen. 1:31). He assigned people to care for them, develop them, and use them for good (1:26–31). This management role is part of our calling to live according to the image and likeness of God. He has made us to be more than mere consumers who gratify their own desires. He wants us to serve Him as we manage His creation. Our work is a gift from God to develop and deliver the benefits of that resource to other people (see "People at Work" at Ps. 8:6).

Do you treat the world with respect as a resource for which God has given you responsibility? Does your work please God and serve other people? Can you think of ways to do a better job of managing the environment in a way that God would approve? ♦

#### **NAMES FOR SATAN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

**FOR YOUR INFO 9:11** Two names are given to the "angel of the bottomless pit" (Rev. 9:11), Abaddon ("destruction") and Apollyon ("destroyer"). There is no mistaking this reference to Satan, the

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archenemy of God (the name Satan means “adversary”). Other names used for him in the New Testament reveal his evil character:

#### **SATAN’S MANY ALIASES**

Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons (Matt. 12:24)  
The wicked one (Matt. 13:19, 38)  
The enemy (Matt. 13:39)  
Murderer (John 8:44)  
Liar (John 8:44)  
The ruler of this world (John 12:31; 14:30)  
The god of this age (2 Cor. 4:4)  
Belial (2 Cor. 6:15, according to some interpretations)  
The prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2)  
The tempter (1 Thess. 3:5)  
A roaring lion (1 Pet. 5:8)  
The adversary (1 Pet. 5:8)  
The dragon (Rev. 12:7)  
The accuser of our brethren (Rev. 12:10)  
The serpent of old (Rev. 20:2)  
The deceiver (Rev. 20:10)

*Satan leads a vast army of fallen angels who are in open rebellion against God. See “Demons” at Luke 11:14.*

#### **FOR YOUR INFO 10:1–10**

##### **THE GENRE OF APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE**

*An angel from heaven, straddling land and sea (Rev. 10:1, 3). A voice from heaven (10:4). The number seven (10:4, 7). Prophecies about “peoples, nations, tongues, and kings” (10:11). These are features of the style of literature known as apocalyptic, of which Revelation is the preeminent example. It’s important to understand this genre if one wants to understand the book’s meaning. Although Revelation is more than just a typical apocalyptic work, in that it is part of Scripture, it pays to study such literature as a category.*

The Greek word apocalypse means a “revelation,” “unveiling,” or “disclosure.” Thus apocalyptic literature seeks to reveal certain mysteries about heaven and earth, humankind and God, angels and demons, the life of the world today, and the world to come. This type of writing arose among the Jews and Christians during the period from 200 A.D. to A.D. 200.

##### **Characteristics**

Apocalyptic literature employs a number of literary devices, styles, and motifs that set it apart from other literature, including:

- *visions* as a way of revealing secrets from heaven about the present and future. Often these visions are caused by some trauma or major event that creates a crisis in the writer’s experience (for example, Rev. 1:10). Often one vision leads to others.
- *ethical conclusions* drawn on the basis of the writer’s visionary experiences. For instance, John’s seven letters to seven churches in Rev. 2–3 are written after the



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apostle sees a vision and is commissioned by God to write (1:19). The letters call the churches to specific ethical and moral decisions.

- *anonymous or attributed authorship*. Revelation is an exception among apocalyptic works in that it gives the name of its author (1:1, 9). Many non-canonical apocalyptic books attribute their origins to famous prophets of the past, such as Ezra, Enoch, Jeremiah, and Moses. This may be a way to add credibility to the work.
- *the use of powerful symbolism*. Apocalyptic books stretch the reader's imagination through highly dramatic images in which actions and outcomes occur in extremes. Numerology is especially important. Those for whom the books were originally intended presumably knew the meaning of the symbols used by the authors, connecting them to events of the time.
- *a stark contrast between good and evil*. Apocalyptic writing is dualistic in that it separates things into definite categories of good and evil, right and wrong. In Revelation, for example, one is either on the side of God, who is holy, righteous, and just, or on the side of Satan, who is surrounded by abominations, idolatries, and wickedness.
- *a concern with end times*. The future plays prominently in these writings. The authors look ahead to coming events, on the one hand offering hope to those who long for justice and delivery from evil, and on the other issuing warnings to those who are in rebellion against God's ways.

#### Messages

Through apocalyptic writing, authors communicate important messages to their readers. The following themes occur in all the apocalyptic writings:

- *The end is coming soon*. Apocalyptic writers frequently connect the arrival of the end times with the near future. This sense of immediacy lends urgency to the message.
- *The whole cosmos is involved*. The end of the world is not a solitary event for the earth alone; it extends to the whole universe. Apocalyptic writings emphasize worldwide events and cataclysmic judgments.
- *History is divided into fixed segments*. Along with a pessimistic view of history, apocalyptic literature takes the view that history has been determined by God before creation. World history has been divided into fixed time periods, and people simply live out a predetermined drama. Many of the writings divide history into two major periods—the present world, ruled by Satan and his legions, and the world to come, in which wickedness will be abolished and God will rule supreme.
- *Angels and demons*. Spirits are common figures in the apocalyptic genre who are actively involved in the drama of events. Pointing to Satan and his demons (fallen angels) explains the problem of evil. Likewise, angels who have not fallen are used by God to protect and serve His faithful people.
- *A new heaven and a new earth*. The end times as portrayed in apocalyptic writings bring a return to the beginning of creation. Out of heaven will come a new heaven and a new earth. The old will be destroyed, replaced by a new creation where God will rule.
- *A Messiah*. A Messiah or mediator between God and man appears in most of the apocalyptic writings as one who accomplishes the final salvation of the world. In Revelation, the Messiah is shown to be Christ, the "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Rev. 19:16).

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Because the book of Revelation forms a part of God's revealed Word, it is in a class by itself among the apocalyptic works of its period. Like the rest of the inspired Scriptures, it is reliable and authoritative, and possesses an integrity and a trustworthiness not found in uninspired writings that resemble it as to its genre. But studying apocalyptic literature helps us to identify Revelation's themes, and thereby to better understand God's message to us in it. ♦

#### **CONSIDER THIS 11:17** POWER

**Business, government, nonprofit organizations, and churches all feel the impact of people pursuing and defending power. Here in John's vision of God triumphing over evil, God holds the ultimate power (Rev. 11:17).**

What does the New Testament teach about power?

- There is tremendous power in humility. It gives us strength that is a gift from God to be used for His purposes. See "The Power of Humility" at Matt. 3:11.
- Forgiveness is powerful and liberating and is a power that Jesus has delegated to His followers. See "The Power of Forgiveness" at Matt. 9:4-8.
- When others observe us and the way we use power and authority, they ought to see Jesus. See "You Remind Me of ..." at Mark 6:14-16.
- Like fire, power can be used to accomplish good. But always lurking in its shadow is the temptation of abuse. See "Three Dangers of Power" at Luke 3:14.
- Jesus described the power that He supplies as the right and ability to lay down one's life for others. See "The Power of Self-Sacrifice" at John 10:17-18.
- All power ultimately comes from God, and we are ultimately accountable to Him for how we use power. See "Seeing Behind Power" at John 19:10-11.
- Jesus gives His followers a unique kind of power to accomplish His tasks. See "Power" at Acts 1:8.
- God's power has little or nothing to do with outward appearances or worldly acclaim. See "Give Me Power!" at Acts 8:18-19.
- Paul was competent in and comfortable with the powerful Roman judicial system and its procedures, even when he faced officials who dealt in bribes and political favors. See "Paul and the Structures of Power" at Acts 24:25-26.
- The message of Christ is powerful enough to transform lives. See "The Power of the Gospel" at Rom. 1:16.
- The gospel appears foolish to many people. Yet the irony is that it is far more powerful than even the strongest players in our culture can imagine. See "The Power of Foolishness" at 1 Cor. 1:18.
- Sometimes we give away the control of our lives to things like status and possessions. When we do, they overpower us: we no longer possess our possessions—they possess us! See "What Controls You?" at 1 Cor. 6:12.
- Our world prizes strength and power, but Scripture puts a new twist on the notion of strength: weakness can make a person strong. See "When I Am Weak, Then I Am Strong" at 2 Cor. 12:7-10.
- Do you have what it takes to "make it" in life? Scripture teaches that God's power gives us what we need to experience real life in a way that pleases Him. See "Do You Have What It Takes?" at 2 Pet. 1:3-4. ♦

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### **FOR YOUR INFO 12:1–2** WOMEN IN REVELATION

**John's first-century readers no doubt understood more of Revelation than we do today. Nevertheless, even they may have struggled with some of the complex imagery and bizarre descriptions. One interesting group of characters in the narrative is women, such as the woman in labor (Rev. 12:1–2).**

The women in Revelation are described in extremes of moral character, either very good or very bad. These heavy contrasts are typical of apocalyptic literature, which tends to be dualistic (see 10:1–10). This, along with the unusual actions that these women take, suggest that we understand them as symbols rather than literal women.

#### **Jezebel (2:20–23)**

Christ rebukes the church at Thyatira for allowing “that woman Jezebel” to teach people to worship false gods and to encourage immorality. In the Old Testament, Jezebel was the wife of King Ahab. Together, they were perhaps the most wicked of the Jewish rulers (see “**Jezebel**” at 2:20–23). Note that Christ says that He will judge not only Jezebel, but her children as well—people who follow her ways.

#### **The Woman Giving Birth (12:1–6, 13–17)**

This woman stands in marked contrast to Jezebel. Attacked by an evil dragon, she finds protection and refuge provided by God. Her identity has been variously interpreted. Because she bears the Child (capital C), some have seen her as Mary, the mother of Jesus, others as Israel, the collective “mother” that brought forth the Messiah. The attempts of the dragon to destroy her, along with “the rest of her offspring” (12:17), may be references to Satan's attempts to destroy Israel and disrupt the Messianic line.

#### **Babylon, the Great Harlot (14:8; 17:1–6, 15–18; 18:1–24)**

Old Testament prophets (for example, Hosea; Ezek. 16:8–58) often referred to adulterers and prostitutes to represent people who practiced idolatry. Just as an adulteress is unfaithful to her husband, so God's people are unfaithful to Him when they allow their hearts to be divided and they worship other gods (see “**Harlots Enter the Kingdom**” at Matt. 21:31–32).

The harlot in Rev. 17 is identified as Babylon, which first-century readers would probably have identified as Rome (see “**A Symbol of Evil**” at Rev. 14:8). In contrast to the new Jerusalem that descends from heaven with glory and blessing (ch. 21), Babylon is shattered and destroyed in judgment for persecuting God's people and corrupting the peoples of the earth with wickedness (ch. 18).

#### **The Wife (Bride) of the Lamb (19:7–8)**

As the marriage feast of the Lamb approaches, a bride has made herself ready. The description of this woman clothing herself in righteous acts (19:8) suggests that she may represent the church. ♦

## **WOMEN AGAINST EVIL**

**CONSIDER THIS 12:1–17** Women have often been identified in folk wisdom as a peculiar source of evil. For example, confusion over the temptation in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:1–16) has sometimes resulted in holding women particularly responsible for sin.

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But in Rev. 12, John describes a woman who is the source of all life and the parent of the One who will rule the nations, Christ (Rev. 12:2, 5). When she is pursued by a dragon that opposes God's work and seeks its destruction (12:3-4), God cares for her and prepares a place of refuge for her (12:6).

This leads to a cosmic war between the angel Michael and the dragon (12:7-13). The evil dragon loses and the woman emerges safe and sound (12:13-16). Nevertheless, the dragon, which is mortally wounded, declares war on the woman's children (12:17). This suggests that our bondage to sin and battles against evil are not ultimately the fault of a woman, but of powerful forces beyond our imagining (see "Who Is the Enemy?" at Matt. 8:29, and "Who Is the Enemy?" at Eph. 6:10-13).

#### Beastly Rome

**A CLOSER LOOK 13:1** *The beast from the sea (Rev. 13:1) has long been understood to be a symbol for the Roman Empire. This image of a power that deserved to fall was a far cry from the one that Paul urged Christians to obey. See "The Limits of Political Authority" at Rom. 13:1-7.*

#### CONSIDER THIS 13:1-18 GOD RESTRAINS EVIL

**The presence of pain, suffering, and evil in the world causes some people to wonder whether a good God exists, and if He does, why He doesn't put an end to it if He can. John's vision of a beast rising up out of the sea (Rev. 13:1) and causing great havoc in the world does not explain why there is evil, but it does sound an important note of encouragement: the evils of the world happen only by "permission" and those that do occur have precise limits imposed on them by God. Notice that the beast "was given authority to continue for forty-two months" (13:5, emphasis added).**

Clearly, God has placed restraints on evil. We have not and will not experience the full onslaught of pain and suffering that could be delivered. This restraining work of God can be seen in several incidents in the Old Testament:

- Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:22-24). After Adam and Eve sinned, God sent them out of the garden and sealed it off. According to Genesis, this was not a matter of retaliation by God but a protection from the possibility of eating from the tree of life and being separated from Him forever.
- The Flood (Gen. 6:5-8). When evil had corrupted the entire world, God acted with "severe mercy" by sending the flood. This restricted evil and made possible a second start for the earth.
- The Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9). Again, widespread evil threatened to consume the creation. God intervened by confusing the languages of the peoples to limit their collusion in wickedness. This was a case of God preserving sinful humanity from itself.
- Job (Job 1:6-2:10). Satan wanted to prove to God that Job's faithfulness was merely the result of God blessing him. So God granted Satan limited permission to inflict suffering.

John was writing to believers to help them maintain a realistic view of good and evil in the midst of intense persecution. Today, as we watch televised reports of death and disaster around the world, and as we experience pain and suffering in our own families and among our neighbors and associates, we too need to maintain a godly perspective. God has placed limits on evil. The very fact that we have a distaste for it reflects that we do indeed bear God's image as His creatures. ♦

*There can be no question that evil and pain are a massive problem to both belief and behavior. But the Bible does give us ground to stand on as we try to live in a world where*

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*suffering is real. See “Ten Myths about Christianity, Myth #10: All the Evil and Suffering in the World Proves There Is No God” at Rev. 20:1–10.*

### THE TWO BABYLONS

#### **FOR YOUR INFO 14:8 A SYMBOL OF EVIL**

In Revelation, Babylon (Rev. 14:8) probably represents, more than a city, an entire world system in rebellion against God. The Old Testament prophets often prophesied the fall of Babylon, the capital of an empire that destroyed Jerusalem and carried away God's people into captivity. So here Babylon becomes a fitting image for a society that persecutes believers but which God will ultimately destroy.

#### **Babylon in Revelation**

In the first century, Babylon may have been a code word for Rome, built as it was on seven hills (17:9). Under the Roman emperor Domitian (A.D. 81–96), Christians were severely persecuted, especially for refusing to participate in the cult of emperor worship. Each mention of Babylon in Revelation shows that it is linked with evil and resistance to God.

Historically, Babylon oppressed and captured Judah (see “The Three Campaigns of the Babylonians” at 2 Chr. 36:6, and “The Three Campaigns of the Babylonians” at Jer. 52:4–7). In the same way, John's figurative Babylon oppresses the people of God and holds them captive under its mighty grip. History is a war between two cities: “Babylon,” the capital of idolatry and oppression, and “Jerusalem,” the center of Christ's peace and justice.

John's buildup to the clash of these two titans is epic in scope and drama. The climax comes here in chapter 14, where judgment finally falls on Babylon, and the bowls, plagues, and intoxicating wine of God's wrath are poured out on her. A tremendous tidal wave of evil sloshes back and forth in the passage, like the last great battles of World War II. But the outcome is assured; Christ will prevail. ♦

#### **FOR YOUR INFO 16:21 MONEY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

The hail that falls from heaven is described as weighing “the weight of a talent” (Rev. 16:21). A talent was a measure normally used as a monetary unit (for example, Matt. 25:15). The table below shows the various monetary systems used among New Testament peoples.

#### **New Testament Monetary Units**

*Learn more about the origins and use of money among ancient peoples in “A History of Money” at 1 Chr. 29:7–8.*

#### **FOR YOUR INFO 17:4**

#### **COLORS IN THE BIBLE**

*The woman that John sees in the wilderness sits on a scarlet beast and wears purple and scarlet (Rev. 17:3–4). In apocalyptic literature, color plays an important role in conveying symbolic*

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*meanings (see "THE GENRE OF APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE" at Rev. 10:1–10). Here, the purple and scarlet suggest that the woman has become affluent, probably through evil means.*

Individual colors mentioned in the Bible fall into two major types—natural colors and artificial colors.

#### Artificial Colors in the Bible

Artificial colors, such as paints and dyes, were used widely in the ancient world. The Israelites had an advanced textile industry. They were skilled not only in weaving but also in dyeing. Since dyes were made from vegetable sources or from shellfish, quality control was difficult. The completed colors were often impure and inexact. These problems were compounded by the fact that many dyes were closely guarded family recipes which were sometimes lost or changed.

#### Natural Colors in the Bible

### THE DELUSIONS OF LUXURY

**CONSIDER THIS 18:1–24** Just as overeating can make a person sick and too much insulation in a home can trap toxic air inside, too much wealth can be dangerous to the moral and spiritual health of an individual, a city, or a nation. In fact, Jesus warned about the "deceitfulness of riches" (Matt. 13:22). Luxury can easily delude us into spiritual carelessness, greed, and ultimate ruin.

Such is the case of Babylon in John's vision of her fall (Rev. 18:2–3, 7–8). Historically, Babylon achieved wealth, power, and dominance through constant warfare, oppression, and deception. It was known throughout the ancient world for plundering others for its own gain. Here in Revelation, Babylon is probably a symbol not only of Rome, but of a world system that operates in open rebellion against God (see "A Symbol of Evil" at Rev. 14:8).

But there is a heavy price to pay for the self-indulgent lifestyle that Babylon's people live, and for the injustices they resort to in maintaining it. Cruelty and deception do not go unanswered:

- The city becomes a dwelling place for demons (18:2).
- Her patterns of luxury become addictive, similar to alcoholism, sexual excess, and a lifestyle of greed (18:3).
- Insulated from pain, she lives in denial of her true condition (18:4–8).
- Her economic systems are taken away and her trading partnerships are dissolved (18:11–18, 22–23).
- All of her possessions disappear and ultimately she is left desolate (18:19).

What happens to Babylon is instructive for those of us who follow Christ, especially as we live in a culture of affluence. Is there a note of warning in this text for us?

### MAGIC AND SORcery

**FOR YOUR INFO 18:23** There is today a growing interest in occult beliefs and practices, such as fortune-telling, witchcraft, and astrology. But John reveals the true nature of the occult when he writes that the sorcery of Babylon has deceived all the nations (Rev. 18:23).

Occult practices were common among the pagan nations of the ancient world. But attempts to contact or control evil spirits were expressly forbidden to the Hebrews, and the prohibition extends to believers today. Among the practices that Deut. 18:10–12 calls "an abomination to the Lord" are:

- child sacrifice (making one's son or daughter "pass through the fire").
- witchcraft.
- soothsaying, a form of divination which may have been similar to tea leaf reading or astrology.

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- interpreting omens.
- sorcery.
- conjuring spells.
- consulting mediums.
- spiritism.
- calling up the dead.

In the New Testament, the gospel exposed two sorcerers, Simon (Acts 8:9–25) and Elymas (13:6–8). They may have been something like the “itinerant Jewish exorcists,” also mentioned in the book of Acts (19:13), who attempted to drive evil spirits out of people in the name of Jesus.

The New Testament word translated “sorcery” comes from the same Greek word as our English word “pharmacy.” Obviously this has to do with drugs; a more relevant and contemporary application could hardly be found. The denunciations of Rev. 9:21; 18:23; 21:8; and 22:15 apply to those who use drugs to bring on trances during which they claim to have supernatural knowledge or power. *There is no denying the seduction of magic and the occult. Yet Scripture strongly warns God’s people against dabbling in any such thing. See “The Seduction of Spirits” at Deut. 18:9–14.*

#### **CONSIDER THIS 19:6–10** THERE IS HOPE FOR THE FAMILY

**The fact that John’s vision ends in a marriage between Christ (the Lamb) and His bride the church (Rev. 19:6–10) offers great hope to families. In this world, almost every family experiences some pain and suffering in its relationships. After all, families are made up of people who struggle under the burden of sin.**

Of course, things were not intended to be that way. In the beginning, God instituted the family when He created Adam and Eve and joined them together as “one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). However, their sin and rebellion against God brought havoc into their relationship and into all subsequent families. In their own family they soon experienced violence as Cain murdered his brother Abel, causing an ongoing cycle of trouble (4:1–16).

Even in a fallen world, however, God desires His best for the family structure. Scripture holds out great hope for the restoration of marriage. For example:

- It encourages parents to raise children in an environment of truth and integrity (Deut. 6:2–9).
- It offers a touching illustration of aid to a family devastated by death and the prospect of poverty (Ruth 1–4).
- It shows a family destroyed by senseless evil but restored twofold by a faithful God (Job 1:13–21; 2:9; 42:10–17).
- It affirms the beauty of sexual love within marriage in terms of passion, fidelity, and integrity (Song of Solomon).
- It encourages the restoration of broken relationships, just as God will do with His people (Hos. 1:2–2:23).
- It offers guidelines for marriage in terms of mutual submission, loyalty, love, and discipline for children that does not alienate them—a way of relating that is similar to Christ’s relationship to His bride the church (Eph. 5:21–6:4).

God’s original design for the family will not be destroyed. Right now you may be experiencing the struggle of human relationships or even the pain of a broken family. But you

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can take hope from the knowledge that God's healing and love will ultimately win out, and He will "wipe away every tear ... there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying" (Rev. 21:4).

◆  
*The vision of families provided by Revelation is especially hopeful in light of the problems that many families in the Bible exhibit. To gain perspective on Scripture's sobering but realistic presentation of family life, see "Family Expectations" at Gen. 42:36. Scripture offers a great deal of help on a variety of family-related issues. See "Family Helps in the New Testament Letters" at Heb. 12:3–13.*

#### **CONSIDER THIS 20:1–10**

##### **MYTH: ALL THE EVIL AND SUFFERING IN THE WORLD PROVES THERE IS NO GOD**

*Few stories offer a more dramatic or thrilling climax than the closing chapters of Revelation. The scene of God finally and ultimately destroying Satan and his hosts (Rev. 20:1–10) brings a bright, joyful conclusion not only to the Revelation of John, but to the entire Bible. Once and for all, evil will be banished, never again to trouble God's creation.*

Yet while Christians look forward to that day with hope, many other people reject God and the gospel precisely because of evil in the world. Their reasoning goes something like this:

- (1) A God who is good and loving would not allow evil and suffering in His world.
- (2) Yet evil exists in the world.
- (3) If God is all-powerful, He could remove evil if He wanted to.
- (4) Yet evil remains. In fact, at times it seems to grow worse.
- (5) Therefore, a good and powerful God must not exist.

This is a powerful argument, and there can be no question that evil and pain are a massive problem to both belief and behavior. Christianity offers no knock-down solution, but the Bible does give us ground to stand on as we try to live in a world where suffering is real.

(1) The Bible teaches that God did not create evil. The world He made was utterly good (Gen. 1:31). Where, then, did evil come from? The record finds people themselves turning against God, using His gift of free will to rebel against Him. With that moral rebellion, the perfection of God's world came tumbling down and people began to suffer.

The Bible also claims that behind human wickedness lies a great outside influence, Satan. This fallen angel hates God and everything to do with Him. He is out to destroy both humanity and the environment and does everything He can to attack God and His purposes. To that end he promotes much of the evil and suffering that we see. (See "Spiritual Realities Beyond You" at Matt. 8:29.)

(2) The Bible teaches that even though God did not create evil, nor does He will it, He nevertheless uses it to accomplish His purposes. For instance, God sometimes uses pain in a profound way to draw people to Himself, especially when they otherwise would not respond to Him. Likewise, the struggle against evil has led many to strive for good. Like an irritating grain of sand in an oyster, it has produced pearls of character in countless people—courage, endurance, self-sacrifice, compassion.

(3) Why then, if God is all-powerful, does He not remove evil from the world? The question assumes, of course, that He has done nothing. But in fact, He has, is, and will. First, God Himself came into this world, with all its sorrow, pain, and wickedness, and lived as a man. Jesus was well acquainted with suffering. He knew poverty, thirst, hunger, injustice, physical



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abuse, heartbreak, and betrayal. He ended his life in excruciating pain. So God certainly understands our condition. He has personally experienced it.

In the process, God dealt with the problem of evil at its root. On the cross, Jesus took on Himself the wickedness of every man and woman who has ever lived in order to do away with it. We may never fully understand what happened in that incredible act of self-sacrifice. But we know that Christ broke the grip of evil that holds the world captive. Already we can see among God's people a glimpse of the new life that He has brought about (Rom. 8:4, 11).

(4) That brings us to God's final solution to evil, which John describes in Rev. 20. In the end, God will triumph by doing away with evil itself and those who promote it. He will restore His creation and His creatures to their original purpose, to the original relationship they enjoyed with Him. Suffering will be but a memory. Goodness, justice, and peace will characterize the moral climate of God's new heaven and earth. ♦

*A book of the Bible that deals extensively with the question of evil and suffering in light of a good and powerful God is the Book of Job.*

### WILL EVIL EVER GET ITS REWARD?

**CONSIDER THIS 20:1-5** Anyone who pays attention to today's headlines is likely to wonder whatever happened to ethics and justice. Sometimes it seems like fairness never happens in matters of business, government, the law, and world affairs. But for those who long to see justice reign, the Bible offers powerful hope.

God will not turn His back on injustice. His character demands that He give people what is coming to them. Moreover, Scripture promises that He will deal with evil in absolute, final ways. John's vision foresees that triumphant accomplishment:

- God will bind evil and cast it into a bottomless pit (Rev. 20:2-3).
- He will place a seal on the source of evil (20:3).
- He will administer judgment and restore believers who have been killed unjustly (20:4).
- He will deal finally with Satan after allowing him one last attempt to deceive (20:7-9); the devil's punishment will include eternal torment (20:10, 14).
- the dead will stand before God and be judged (20:11-15).

This picture offers tremendous hope to anyone concerned about the injustices of our world today. As we seek to deliver God's righteousness into our communities, workplaces, and families, it's a relief to know that no human being—no matter how impartial and objective or biased and corrupt—is the final judge. Ultimate justice will someday be administered by One who can be thoroughly trusted—God, through Christ.

### **FOR YOUR INFO 21:1** GENESIS AND REVELATION—THE FIRST AND LAST VOLUMES

**The word "Bible" comes from the Greek word *biblos*, which means "book." The Bible is a complete book, unified in its theme and message. But it is also a collection of 66 books, a virtual library of God's Word to humanity. Genesis, the first book in the Bible, and Revelation, the last, help to define the collection, showing us the beginning and the end of history.**

Here in Rev. 21, John reveals a new heaven and earth. In reading it, we can't help but look back to the beginnings of the world:

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*One way to view the Bible is to see it as a magnificent three-part story. See “The Bible: Getting the Big Picture” at 2 Tim. 3:16–17.*

### **CONSIDER THIS 22:1–11** A GLANCE AT WORK IN THE BIBLE

As John’s Revelation draws to a close, we see creation restored to its original intention (Rev. 22:1–11). since work plays such an important role in the world—whether Eden, today, or the end time—this is a good place to review Scripture’s teaching on work, considered according to three different eras: work as it was originally intended, work in a fallen world, and work as it will be when Christ returns.

#### **Main Point and Key Texts**

**Why not use this overview of the Bible’s teaching on work as an outline of study for yourself, and others at your church, or coworkers who want to know what God has to say on the subject?**

*For related articles on work, see the Themes to Study index in the back matter.*

*To understand more about Scripture’s teaching on the three different time periods shown—God’s original design, life in a fallen world, and the period after Christ returns—see “The Bible: Getting the Big Picture,” 2 Tim. 3:16–17.*

## THE NEW JERUSALEM

### **CONSIDER THIS 21:1–2**

As John draws Revelation to a close, he offers a glimpse of a new Jerusalem descending from heaven (Rev. 21:2). It is Jerusalem as it was intended to be—fulfilling its prophetic calling as a light to the nations, a place of justice and peace, and the capital city and dwelling place of God.

### **CONSIDER THIS 22:2** FRESH FRUIT SALAD!

**When you think of the new heavens and new earth that God will someday create, what images come to mind? John’s vision includes a unique species of tree, the tree of life that bears twelve kinds of fruits—a different fruit every month (Rev. 22:2)!**

Trees that productive will afford little rest for the workers who cultivate and harvest them. Yet surely those fruit pickers will be happy because the text also says, “there shall be no more curse” (22:3, emphasis added). Work will be free of the painful toil and drudgery that now characterizes it (see also Rev. 21:4).

This view of the new creation, with delightful work and enjoyable results, is very similar to the description of God’s future society in Isaiah 65:17–23. There the picture includes such attractive images as:

- joy and rejoicing (65:18).
- an end to weeping and crying (65:19).
- building and living in one’s own house (65:21).
- owning, planting, and enjoying the fruit of one’s vineyard (65:21–22).

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- enjoying the work of one's hands (65:22).
- an end to laboring in vain or bringing children into a world of trouble (65:23).

These statements from Revelation and Isaiah recall the original design that God had for His creation, a creation that was "very good" (Gen. 1:31). God created people to be His coworkers in managing the resources of His world for the benefit of all (see "People at Work" at Ps. 8:6. God will restore that ideal. As Paul promised, the world will be freed from its sufferings, futility, and bondage to corruption and be made again to fulfill its original design (Rom. 8:18–25).

What a hope to look forward to—the reign of God over a joyful new world where trouble-free families work painlessly together and enjoy fresh fruit salad month after month! ♦  
*Most of us know all too well how burdensome work can be. Yet the Bible calls it a gift from God. See "Is Work a Curse?" at Gen. 3:17–19.*

### THERE'S A WELCOME HERE

**CONSIDER THIS 22:17** Perhaps you or someone you know feels hesitant about spiritual things. Matters of faith may feel forbidding, even scary. Religion may seem like nothing but judgment and condemnation.

Yet Jesus came not to condemn, but to save. His primary purpose was to offer life to dying people, inviting them to experience forgiveness, healing, and hope. "Come!" He says to those who are thirsty, "Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17; see also John 7:37–38).

Centuries prior to Jesus' coming, a prophet foretold this invitation (Is. 55:1, 3):

Ho! Everyone who thirsts,  
Come to the waters;  
And you who have no money,  
Come, buy and eat.  
Yes, come, buy wine and milk  
Without money and without price ...  
Incline your ear, and come to Me.  
Hear, and your soul shall live.

This is a powerful invitation because the same Jesus who makes it wields the power to withdraw it from those who refuse His call and continue to live in rebellion and sin (Rev. 22:14–15, 18–19). Just as He has authority to welcome us into eternal life, so He has the authority not to welcome us. Yet in His grace He chooses to offer life to sinful people.

You may be confused about many issues of religion, but hear God's gracious offer: Jesus wants to forgive your sins and welcome you into new life. If you haven't already accepted His invitation, why not do so now and begin the exciting journey that leads to eternal life!<sup>16</sup>

### *The drying up of the Euphrates to prepare for the kings of the east (Rev 16:12)*

As with so much else in Revelation, the imagery of the sixth bowl is based on historical precedents which are then used typologically. The drying up of the Euphrates and the kings from the east appears to draw on God's judgment of Babylon, which itself followed the pattern of the drying up of the Red Sea and the Jordan River at and following the exodus. Isaiah and Jeremiah had

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<sup>16</sup> [Word in life study Bible](#) (electronic ed., Re 7:1–22:17). (1996). Thomas Nelson.

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prophesied that judgment on Babylon would include the drying up of the Euphrates. The prophecies were fulfilled by Cyrus's diversion of the water (see Isa 44:27–28). That allowed Cyrus's army to enter Babylon unexpectedly and defeat it. Cyrus, his princes and kings, were "from the east."<sup>473</sup>

Beale describes how John takes the fall of historical Babylon and typologically universalizes it in Revelation:

As at the exodus and especially at the fall of historical Babylon, the drying up of the Euphrates again marks the prelude to the destruction of latter-day Babylon. And just as Babylon has been universalized and become symbolic, so the Euphrates cannot be a literal geographical reference to the Euphrates in modern Iraq, Syria, and Turkey but must be figurative and universal, despite those who contend that the reference is literal. This is indicated by 17:1, where the Babylonian harlot "sits on many waters," which is another way of referring to "the Euphrates and its water" (16:12). The "many waters" of 17:1 are figuratively interpreted as "peoples and multitudes ... and nations and tongues" in 17:15.... Therefore, the drying up of the Euphrates' waters is a picture of how the multitudes of Babylon's religious adherents throughout the world become disloyal to Babylon [see 17:15–18]. Disenchantment with Babylon is a prelude to Babylon's judgment, and the final judgment itself.

There is dispute concerning the identity of "*the kings of the east.*"

#### THE "KINGS OF THE EAST" AS UNBELIEVERS

The majority sees the "*kings of the east*" as "a figurative universalization of not only Babylon and the Euphrates River but also of Cyrus and his allies, 'the kings from the rising of the sun,' who are interpretively escalated into 'the kings of the whole inhabited earth' (16:14; cf. 18:18)." A similar view, expressed by Ladd, is that "the kings of the east—the pagan hordes—join forces with the kings of the whole (civilized) world to do battle with Messiah, for it is clearly the eschatological 'battle on the great day of God the Almighty' (vs. 14)."

#### THE "KINGS OF THE EAST" AS BELIEVERS

Others see the "*kings of the east*" in positive terms. The reasons are stated by Desmond Ford, who notes that the word for "east" (Greek = *anatolē*, which also means "rising" or "the position of the rising sun") was a familiar symbol for the Messiah in NT times: "It pointed to something or Someone of heavenly origin. Elsewhere the Apocalypse used the term in this manner [Rev 7:2], and it is hardly likely that a book so carefully written should change the meaning of this symbol in the later chapter.... The 'kings of the east' may be intended as a direct contrast to the 'kings of the whole world' mentioned in the same paragraph, and could represent heavenly beings who come to deliver the saints, as the Median kings from the east came with Cyrus to deliver Israel of old from Babylon." Since the sixth bowl is the preparation for the final battle and the *parousia*, the "*kings of the east*" may therefore refer to the heavenly armies that accompany Christ in Rev 19:11–16.

#### Rev 17:1–19:10: final judgment of Babylon

As has been seen elsewhere throughout Revelation, humanity consists of two, and only two, types or groups: those who are committed to Christ and those who are not. Babylon epitomizes the system and worldview of everything and everyone that is not Christ's. The world's system

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appears all-powerful but contains the seeds of its own destruction. God's judgment on the ungodly economic, cultural, and religious system of the world leads to the establishment of God's consummated reign (Rev 19:6) and the union with his people (Rev 19:7–9). Rev 13:4 raised the question, "Who is able to wage war with him [the beast]?" That is answered in Rev 17:14: the Lamb and those who are with him ("the called and chosen and faithful") will overcome the beast because the Lamb is "Lord of lords and King of kings." In yet another recapitulated image, the saints are vindicated, the blood of the martyrs is avenged, and the prayer of Rev 6:10 is answered. *Babylon the great, the mother of harlots (Rev 17:1–5, 9, 15, 18) in its first-century context*

Most commentators identify Babylon as Rome, based on the reference to the seven hills (Rev 17:9). The Greek word which the NIV translates as "hills" is the plural of *oros* which, as BDAG puts it, is "a relatively high elevation of land that projects higher than a *bounos* ('a minor elevation, hill')." Consequently, most translations (e.g., ESV, NASB, NKJV, RSV) translate the term as "mountains" rather than "hills." Although the allusion probably is to Rome, the use of *oros* in 17:9 suggests that "Babylon the great" transcends historical Rome since Rome's hills are actually of very minor elevation even compared to the hills of Palestine. Indeed, the fact that John uses the name "Babylon the great" rather than "Rome" indicates that he is not limiting his identification to the then-existing Roman state or society. While John uses Roman power, economy, and culture as the historical backdrop for his depiction of Babylon the great, Rome is seen as a paradigm or "type." Specifically, Rome/Babylon is depicted as a *corrupting influence* on people (i.e., it is a "harlot").

There are two major sources for John's depiction of Babylon the great: Jeremiah's oracle against historical Babylon (Jeremiah 50–51), and Ezekiel's oracle against Tyre (Ezekiel 26–28). Richard Bauckham's extensive study of this portion of Revelation has led him to conclude that what is in view here primarily is a two-fold corruption: first, cultural and economic exploitation and corruption; and second, religious corruption.<sup>486</sup> They are, of course, related: Jesus frequently warns believers about the fact that the lure of riches can turn one's head, choke the word in one's life, and thereby become one's new, true Lord. Paul does the same thing.<sup>488</sup>

The images of the harlot, drawn from the OT oracles concerning Tyre (Isa 23:15–18; Ezekiel 26–28), primarily relate to the first of these two forms of corruption:

The reference there is obviously to the vast trading activity through which the city of Tyre had grown rich. Tyre's commercial enterprise is compared with prostitution because it is association with other nations for the sake of profit.... In other words, Rome is a harlot because the associations with the peoples of her empire are for her own economic benefit.... Rome offered the Mediterranean world unity, security, stability, the conditions of prosperity. But in John's view these benefits are not what they seem: they are the favors of a prostitute, purchased at a high price.

#### *The list of cargoes (Rev 18:12–13)*

Bauckham has compared Ezekiel's account of Tyre's trade in Ezek 27:12–25 with John's account of Rome's trade and concludes that Ezekiel's account was an accurate portrayal of Tyre's trade in the sixth century BC and John's list of cargoes is an accurate list of Rome's imports in the first century AD.

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John completes his list of cargoes in 18:13 by referring to slaves. Slavery was the basis of Rome's economic system. Yet the way John phrases the mention of slaves as part of Babylon the great's cargoes is profoundly theological, as Bauckham explains:

That John gives both the common term for slaves in the slave markets ["bodies"] and a scriptural description of slaves ["souls of people"] must mean that he intends a comment on the slave trade. He is pointing out that slaves are not mere animal carcasses to be bought and sold as property, but are human beings. But in this emphatic position at the end of the list, this is more than just a comment on the slave trade. It is a comment on the whole list of cargoes. It suggests the inhuman brutality, the contempt for human life, on which the whole of Rome's prosperity and luxury rests.

#### *Those who mourn for Babylon (Rev 18:3, 9–11, 14–19)*

In Revelation 18, John observes that three classes of people lament the destruction of Babylon the great: *"the kings of the earth"* (18:9); *"the merchants of the earth"* (18:11); and *"every shipmaster, passenger, sailor, and all who make their living by the sea"* (18:17). Bauckham concludes, "These are precisely the people who themselves benefited from Rome's economic exploitation of the Empire. What they lament is the destruction of the source of their own wealth."

#### *Babylon is not limited to Rome but is universal*

Although the context of Revelation 17–18 may have been the social, economic, political, and religious circumstances of his own day, John's apocalypse far transcends Rome. Although there are some identifying first-century markers ("seven hills"; the list of cargoes), "they are sufficiently few to make the reapplication of the images to comparable situations easy." This is seen in the language John uses. In his description of Babylon as a *"great harlot"* and the *"mother of harlots,"* John stands in a long line of prophets who employ the language of illicit sexual relations to condemn economic injustice, cultural corruption, and religious faithlessness.<sup>495</sup> For example, Isa 23:1–18 condemns Tyre as a harlot for its commercial trade practices. Ezekiel condemns Jerusalem as a harlot for its idolatry, cultural corruption, and economic injustice (Ezek 16:1–59). The entire book of Hosea is a graphic portrayal of Israel's "harlotry" in its use of its money and resources (Hos 2:5–9), its idolatry (Hos 2:11–13; 4:11–13; 13:1–2), and its general cultural corruption (Hos 4:1–2, 7–8, 14; 10:13).

Further, John constantly speaks in "universal" terms: the expected trial *"is about to come upon the whole world"* (Rev 3:10); the beast has authority *"over every tribe and people and tongue and nation"* and *"all who dwell on the earth will worship him"* (Rev 13:7–8); the kings *"of the whole world"* are gathered for the final battle (Rev 16:14); Babylon corrupts and deceives *"all the nations"* (Rev 14:8; 18:3, 23) and is guilty of the blood *"of all who have been slain on the earth"* (Rev 18:24).

Just as the beast of Rev 13:1–2 combines all of the features of the four beasts of Dan 7:3–8 into one, so Babylon the great combines in itself all of the evils of the two great evil cities (Babylon and Tyre) on which it is prophetically based. Thus, Babylon is not an individual city, or even an individual empire, but appears to be a world-wide entity. It may be seen as "the ultimate seductive expression of secular wrongdoing," or "the final manifestation of the total history of godless nations ... who will seduce all the world to worship that which is not God,"<sup>498</sup> or material

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seduction and fallen human culture. Indeed, “John’s Babylon is the final climax of the enterprise begun at Babel (= Babylon) in Genesis 11: the age-long human enterprise of organizing human society in opposition to God.... Thus the Babylon of Revelation is not only a specific visionary image of contemporary Rome, but also an eschatological image. In other words, it transcends its original reference and becomes a symbol of the whole history of organized human evil whose fall will be the end of history.”

In his portrayal of Babylon the great, John is again confronting his audience with the choice between the beast or the Lamb, the world or the church, those who dwell on the earth or those who are citizens of heaven, because Babylon is the “anti-kingdom”—the alluring, all-encompassing alternative to the kingdom of God. Thomas Torrance concludes, “Ostensibly Babylon is a world-wide civilization and culture, magnificent in her science and arts and commerce, but it is drugged with pride and intoxicated with its enormous success. At the same time it is a strange mingling of world power and religion, of paganism and Christianity, which becomes the greatest hindrance to the Christian Gospel. Its inner mystery is revealed at last as the great dominion of Satan that desires to entrench itself forever in the creation of God, in sharp antagonism to the dominion that supervenes upon the world from above, the Kingdom of God.”

#### *The spiritual nature of Babylon*

As mentioned above, there are two aspects to Babylon the great’s corruption of humanity: the cultural-economic and the religious. The religious aspect of Babylon the great’s corrupting influence may be inferred from an OT referent, according to Milligan: “In conjunction with the fact that Babylon is a harlot [Rev 17:5], destruction by fire [Rev 18:8] leads us directly to the thought of the spiritual, and not simply the civil, or political, or commercial, character of the city. According to the law of Moses, burning appears to have been the punishment of fornication only in the case of a priest’s daughter [Lev 21:9].... The conclusion to be drawn is that Babylon is a spiritual city.”

Throughout the Bible, the language of harlotry, sexual immorality, and infidelity are equated with *spiritual* infidelity (i.e., forsaking God to pursue other gods and ungodly practices). Desmond Ford points out, “While it is true that Scripture uses the harlot symbol for cities such as Tyre and Nineveh [to indicate economic and cultural corruption] it is much more frequently applied to the apostatizing people of God.”<sup>505</sup> Ford goes on to discuss what he sees as the literary background for the symbolism John uses concerning Babylon the great:

“Harlot” and not “adulteress” is the most appropriate figure, for the emphasis is upon the many lovers and the wages gained. The literary origin of the symbolism in Rev. 17 is to be found in Jer. 2:33–34 and 3:1–11, where Judah is a harlot (Jer. 2:20) with a sign upon her forehead (Jer. 3:3), who causes transgression in others (Jer. 2:33), and “on whose skirts is found the lifeblood of the guiltless poor” (Jer. 2:34). She is clothed in crimson (Jer. 4:30) and golden ornaments. Her lovers will despise her (Jer. 4:30) and seek her life.... *Pornē* [prostitute; whore] is used in the LXX [Greek OT] at least fifty times to describe the spiritual fornication of Israel and Judah.

Babylon the great’s religious and spiritual corruption certainly was present in the first century. Bauckham discusses the nature of civilization’s religious corruption in the first-century context in which John writes:

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From John's Jewish Christian perspective, the political religion of Rome was the worst kind of false religion, since it absolutized Rome's claim on her subjects and cloaked her exploitation of them in the garb of religious loyalty. Thus, for John, Rome's economic exploitation and the corrupting influence of her state religion go hand in hand.... In John's perspective, the evils of Rome came to a head in her persecution of Christians, because here Rome's self-deification clashed with the lordship of the Lamb to which the Christian martyrs bore witness and so what was implicit in all of Rome's imperial policies here became explicit.

One aspect of this religious corruption may also have been the cooperation between first-century Judaism and Rome. Some commentators identify the harlot with unfaithful Israel, especially Jerusalem. "The description in [Rev 17:6; 18:24] of the harlot's killing the martyrs is distinctly reminiscent of Jesus' accusations against Jerusalem (Mt 23:29–39).... When John speaks of the beast turning on the harlot and destroying her [Rev 17:16–18], he in all probability alludes to the divine judgment that befell Jerusalem for cooperating with the imperial cult."

As was true with respect to cultural and economic corruption, the religious corruption of Babylon the great is not limited to first-century Rome. As Ford states, John was not particularly interested in the current political and economic situation *per se*, although of course he was fully aware of it. Rather, "To him Babylon is essentially religious and personifies the whole world's apostasy from God.... John saw more than just Rome, and ... was particularly concerned with the final apostasy which will have as its centre the issue of the relationship to God rather than political matters. Furthermore, he was writing to professing Christians, not for unbelieving citizens of Rome. Therefore, he intends by his portrayal to admonish the flock, lest its members be led by Antichrist into spiritual fornication."

#### ***Babylon the harlot is the counterpart to the pure woman of Rev 12:1***

The universal nature of Babylon the great is seen in its obvious contrast with the woman of Revelation 12. Ford states, "As the woman of Rev. 12 obviously is a figure for the people of God in all times, so the woman in Rev. 17 encompasses the rebels of every era. But as John particularly applies the bride eschatologically [see Rev 19:7–8; 21:2, 9], so with the harlot. Paul had spoken of [the apostasy] and Babylon to John summarizes the rebellion spoken of by the apostle to the Gentiles. Babel had originated in rebellion, and thus it will end."

The table below shows how the woman, the ideal Zion, the heavenly representative of the people of God (Rev 12:1–2, 5–6, 13–17), is clearly contrasted with "*the great harlot*" of Revelation 17–18:

<b><i>The Woman of Rev 12</i></b>	<b><i>The Great Harlot of Rev 17–18</i></b>
Clothed with the sun (12:1)	Clothed with purple & scarlet (17:4; 18:16)
The moon is under her feet (12:1)	Sits on many waters (17:1, 15)
Wears a crown of 12 stars (12:1)	Adorned with gold, precious stones, & pearls (17:4; 18:16)
Gave birth to a son (12:5)	Is the mother of harlots (17:5)



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Fled into the wilderness (12:6, 14)	Lives sensuously with the kings and merchants of the earth (17:2; 18:3, 9)
Is sustained by God (12:6, 14)	Is carried by the beast (17:3, 7)
Is persecuted by the dragon (12:13, 15)	Is drunk with the blood of the saints (17:6; 18:24)

### *Babylon is the counterpart of the New Jerusalem*

Both Babylon and the New Jerusalem are symbolic. Babylon the great's universal nature is seen in its obvious contrast with the New Jerusalem. The fact that Babylon is described both as a woman and a city, and the New Jerusalem likewise is described both as a woman and a city (Rev 21:2), shows not only the universal nature of the comparison but also the connection of culture, economics, and religion: they mutually interact, and all determine and reveal one's true loyalties. Resseguie summarizes this comparison of Babylon the great and the New Jerusalem: "Babylon, the city of this world, the place of exile and alienation for Christians, is the spiritual capital for those who are earthbound, whose point of view is from below (that is, from this world). The earthbound includes not only those outside the church but also those within. Babylon is where the 'inhabitants of the earth' dwell and the followers of the beast make their home. Yet Babylon is not only the home of the earth's inhabitants; it is also where Christians live, although it cannot be called their home."

The parallels between Babylon and New Jerusalem show the seductive nature of the world and its values; the contrasts show that the world and its values ultimately are deadly:

#### ***Babylon (Rev 17–18)***

#### ***New Jerusalem (Rev 21–22)***

##### **Introduction**

##### **Introduction**

Approach of the angel (17:1)	Approach of the angel (21:9)
Invitation: "Come, I will show you" (17:1)	Invitation: "Come, I will show you" (21:9)
Translation of seer by angel (17:3)	Translation of seer by angel (21:10)
To a wilderness (17:3b)	To a high mountain (21:10)
Opening of the vision (17:3)	Opening of the vision (21:10b)

##### **Comparisons**

##### **Comparisons**

Dressed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet (17:4; 18:16)	Dressed in fine linen, bright and clean (19:8)
Adorned with gold (17:4; 18:16)	Made of pure gold (21:18, 21)

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Adorned with jewels (17:4; 18:16)

Brilliance is like crystal-clear jasper (21:11); city wall is jasper (21:18); foundation of city wall is adorned with every kind of precious stone (21:19–20)

Adorned with pearls (17:4; 18:16)

Twelve gates are twelve pearls (21:21)

#### Contrasts

#### Contrasts

The great harlot (17:1)

The bride, the wife of the Lamb (21:2, 9)

Dwelling place of demons (18:2)

Dwelling place of God (21:3, 22)

A name written on her forehead (17:5)

God's name written on its citizens' foreheads (22:4)

Her followers are not in the book of life (17:8)

Its citizens are in the Lamb's book of life (21:27)

Holds a golden cup full of abominations and unclean things of her immorality (17:4); a prison of unclean spirits and unclean birds (18:2)

Nothing unclean will enter it (21:27)

Her wine makes the nations drunk (17:2; 18:3)

The water of life is given freely, and the tree of life brings the healing of the nations (21:6; 22:1–2)

Corrupts & deceives the nations; the kings of the earth committed immorality with her (17:2; 18:3, 9, 23)

The nations will walk by its light; the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it (21:24, 26)

God's people are called to come out of Babylon (18:4)

God's people are called to enter New Jerusalem (22:14)

Doomed to destruction (17:16–17; 18:8–23)

The saints will reign forever and ever (22:5)

#### *“Come out of her, my people” (Rev 18:4)*

In connection with the church in Revelation, we earlier noted the allusion to Isa 48:20; 52:11; Jer 50:8; 51:6, 9, 45 as the background for John's exhortation to *“come out of her, My people.”* Theodore Stylianopoulos makes the perhaps obvious point that, in John's first-century context, John's command or exhortation “is not for physical withdrawal but for a distinctly countercultural way of life in the midst of Greco-Roman society.”

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Since Babylon the great transcends first-century Rome, John's exhortation applies at all times and places to Christians who always are at the risk of seduction by the allure of the world's many charms. Onesimus Ngundu emphasizes this: "Even in its OT setting, this was no mere warning to leave the city of Babylon. John, like the OT prophets, is exhorting God's people to shun the charms and snares of the prostitute city. Babylon exists wherever there is idolatry, prostitution, self-glorification, self-sufficiency, pride and complacency, reliance on luxury and wealth, and violence against life (18:4–8, 24). Believers are to separate themselves from all forms of Babylon. While they still have to live and work in the world, they also need to claim a distinctive identity and to develop habits of resistance that will enable witness to take place."

*The judgment of Babylon is patterned on the judgment of historical Babylon (Rev 18:1–24)*

In connection with the sixth bowl (Rev 16:12), we saw how God's judgment in Revelation is patterned in part on the destruction of historical Babylon. Now, Rev 18:7 quotes Isa 47:7–8 concerning Babylon's sensuality. However, the comparison between historical Babylon and the world's Babylon the great of Revelation 18 is not limited to that one quotation. Revelation 18 uses Isaiah 47 something as a template to pronounce God's judgment on Babylon the great for its pride, sensuality, sorceries, and ungodliness, just as God similarly judged historical Babylon. The following table shows the similarities between the two Babylons:

<b><i>Historical Babylon—Isaiah 47</i></b>	<b><i>Babylon the Great—Revelation 18</i></b>
Calls herself a queen, not a widow (47:7–8)	Calls herself a queen, not a widow (18:7)
Thinks she is secure (47:8, 10)	Thinks she is secure (18:7)
Glorifies herself (47:8, 10)	Glorifies herself (18:7)
Sensual (47:8)	Sensual (18:3, 9)
Uses sorcery (47:9, 12–13)	Uses sorcery (18:23)
Sinful (47:10)	Sinful (18:4–5)
Judgment will come suddenly (47:9, 11)	Judgment will come suddenly (18:8, 10, 17)
Will burn (47:14)	Will burn (18:8–9, 18)
Those who slept with her cannot save her (47:15)	Those who slept with her cannot save her (18:3, 9–19)

Beale summarizes the correspondence between the two Babylons:

As elsewhere in Revelation, the pride and fall of historical Babylon is taken as a typological pattern of the hubris and downfall of the worldwide Babylonian system at the end of history. As with old Babylon, latter-day Babylon sees herself as a mother to all her

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inhabitants, whom she nourishes. She has complete confidence that she will never be without the support of her children. As with the Babylonian nation, latter-day Babylon's political and economic security will be removed suddenly. And her proud confidence in such security will be revealed as without foundation and as a delusion (as in Isa. 47:9–11; Jer. 50:31–32). Such confidence is self-idolatry, which must be judged. The church must beware of trusting in economic security lest its members be judged along with the world.

#### *Rev 18:1–19:6: the judgment on Babylon*

Rev 18:1–19:6 has an interconnecting structure:

- 18:1–3: An angel pronounces judgment on Babylon
- 18:4–20: A voice from heaven predicts the fall of Babylon
- 18:21–24: An angel pronounces judgment on Babylon
- 19:1–6: Voices in heaven praise God for the fall of Babylon\*

Although Rev 18:6 might be taken as giving Babylon twice the punishment she deserves, the references to “double” and “twice” are idiomatic Hebrew expressions for “equivalent” retribution. That is confirmed by Rev 18:7 which says, *“To the degree that she glorified herself and lived sensuously, to the same degree give her torment and mourning.”*

#### Rev 19:11–21: the second coming of Christ

In this section, Christ reveals his sovereignty and faithfulness to his promises when he comes again to bring judgment on all those who have opposed him and oppressed his people. In keeping with the progressively parallel structure of the book, the *parousia* or its effects have been mentioned or described at Rev 1:7; 6:12–17; 8:1–5; 11:11–19; 14:14–20; 16:17–21; 19:1–6 (the *parousia* or its effects will also be described at 20:7–10, 11–15; and 21:1–2). Revelation 19 symbolically describes the *parousia* in detail. The events of Revelation 19 are clearly linked with previous *parousia* passages. Mealy describes these connections:

In Revelation 19, preceding the revelation of Jesus on a white horse, John describes a triumphal liturgy before the throne of God, which has affinities both with the scene of 7:9–12 and with that of 11:15–17. Praises are offered to ‘God who sits on the throne’ because of the justice of his judgment in the overthrow of Babylon (19:1–3); and then, as in 16:17, ‘A voice came from the throne’.... The first sentence [19:5] clearly harks back to Rev. 11:18, where the *parousia* was predicted as the time for God’s reward to be given to ‘Thy bond-servants the prophets and to the saints and to those who fear Thy name, the small and the great’. Similarly, the giving of praise to God because he has taken up his eschatological reign (v. 6) points back to 11:15–17.... In Revelation 19, the throne of God is shown for the third time [19:1–6] (cf. 7:9–17; 11:15–18) to denote the *parousia* not only as an occasion of wrath, but also one of rejoicing. It all depends on what group of people is facing the throne.

As the *parousia* itself begins, John sees *“heaven opened”* (Rev 19:11) which harks back to previous *parousia* and judgment passages. The consummate nature of this scene is indicated in that the only weapon involved in the warfare being described is, *“From His mouth comes a sharp sword”* (Rev 19:15). Ladd notes, “The idea goes back to creation. God created the worlds by his word. He spoke and it was done. This creation was mediated through the living word, Christ (John 1:3; Heb. 1:2). The judgment of the old order will also be mediated through the word of Christ.”

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Jesus' name, "*King of kings and Lord of lords*" (Rev 19:16), indicates his ultimate rulership over all other authorities.

The *parousia* entails different things. It can be described as having a dual nature, which John describes in different ways. The *parousia* entails both the vindication of the righteous and the judgment of the unrighteous. The *parousia* also is described both as a courtroom proceeding and as a battle or war.

#### *The parousia as vindication of the righteous*

When Jesus returns he will come, symbolically, not on a donkey (see John 11:13–15) but on "*a white horse*" along with his armies "*on white horses*" (Rev 19:11–14). In ancient Rome, victorious generals in major wars sometimes had a public "triumph" in which they entered Rome in a chariot pulled by four white horses with their victorious army following behind them. The color white thus suggests victory.

White also conveys the ideas of righteousness, holiness, and vindication. Beale explains:

Throughout the Apocalypse "white" has represented a reward for purity or purity itself, resulting from persevering faith tested by persecution [3:4–5].... 19:7–8 has refined this idea by understanding "white" garments not only as representing righteousness but also as a reward of *vindication* for those who have persevered through persecution. Vindication is probably included in most of the earlier uses of "white" (e.g., the Son of man and the saints stand vindicated by God after their faithful witness is rejected by the world and they are persecuted: 1:14; 2:17; 3:4–5; 4:4; 6:11; 7:9, 13; 14:14). In particular, in 14:14 and 20:11 "white" conveys ideas of not only divine holiness and purity but also juridical vindication of truth through judgment. Likewise, the white color of the horse here suggests the same idea of vindication in introducing the following judgment scene, especially because of its close connection to vv 7–8 and especially to the "white linen" of v 14, which also contains the idea of vindication.

As we have seen throughout Revelation, God's identifying with and vindicating his people follows the pattern of his identifying with and vindicating Christ: believers will suffer, die, and appear defeated in this world, but their faithfulness to death results in their eternal victory and vindication.

#### *The parousia as judgment of the unrighteous*

In addition to vindicating the righteous, the *parousia* entails the judgment of the unrighteous. Rev 19:15–21 concentrates on the *parousia* as judgment on the unrighteous.

#### *The judgment at the parousia as both a battle and a courtroom proceeding*

In describing the *parousia*, Rev 19:11 says "*in righteousness He judges and wages war.*" That is consistent with the picture throughout the Bible of God's judgment at his coming as both a court of law and a war or battle. VanGemeren explains this: "The imagery of trial and war is a metaphorical expression of God's rule. He rules in his judgments and in his battles. In his wrath, he vindicates his name, but he also vindicates all who belong to him and who trust in him for protection and deliverance."

THE JUDGMENT OF THE LORD AS A COURT OF LAW

VanGemeren states:

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The Lord's coming may be compared to a court scene. In his court Yahweh is the *prosecutor, witness, and judge*. He is the sovereign judge seated above his creation: "But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him" (Hab. 2:20; see Zeph. 1:7). When he comes, he will assemble all nations and "enter into judgment against them" (Joel 3:2). He brings charges (Hos. 4:1–3), serves as witness for the prosecution (Jer. 29:23; 42:5; Mic. 1:2), condemns, and executes the verdict. The bases of the accusation and condemnation are human arrogance, the rejection of his kingdom, and a selfish and greedy lifestyle [Mal 3:5].

In the NT, we see the judgment described in courtroom terms in Matt 25:31–46; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Rom 14:10; 1 Cor 4:4–5; and 2 Cor 5:10. In Revelation, the judgment-as-courtroom proceeding explicitly appears at Rev 11:18 and 20:11–15. In Revelation 19, the judgment-as-courtroom theme is suggested by the metaphor "*His eyes are a flame of fire*" (Rev 19:12). That indicates Christ's role as divine, all-seeing judge. It is also seen in Rev 2:18–23 where, by the same metaphor, Christ's all-seeing eyes pierce through the exterior to the interior of the church of Thyatira and the prophetess Jezebel and her followers. The result is vindication and reward of the faithful and judgment of the unfaithful.

#### THE JUDGMENT OF THE LORD AS A BATTLE OR WAR

In the battle theme, "Yahweh is the *Divine Warrior*, who comes to establish order out of chaos, anarchy, and autonomy of the kingdoms of humankind. The warrior vents his wrath against all opposition in his realm [Isa 13:13]. In his wrath he comes with vengeance, likened to war and a bloodbath [Jer 46:10]." Vos elaborates this:

The setting is martial; the background that of a fierce battle and a decisive victory. In the Old Testament this is for a long time the prevailing mode of representation, though from Daniel and the Psalms onward the formal forensic picture becomes increasingly in evidence, without, however, entirely superseding the other. In the martial judgment there is no apparatus of records kept and examined, and no verdict solemnly pronounced on the basis of these.... There is one peculiar feature about this execution of judgment ... the immediateness of its effect. This is best illustrated by the description of the disposal of the "Man-of-Sin" [2 Thess 2:8]; it is brought about by the breath of the mouth of Christ, by the mere manifestation of His coming. Plainly this feature was borrowed from [Isa 11:4]. In Isaiah it is simply one of the illustrations of the prophet's conception of the instantaneousness of Jehovah's supernatural working particularly in judgment.

In Revelation, the judgment-as-battle appears at Rev 6:12–17; 11:18; 14:17–20; 16:14–21; 17:14; 18:17–24; 19:11–21; 20:7–10. In Revelation 19, the reference to Christ's riding on a white horse (19:11) and his "armies" also following on white horses (19:14) indicate the *parousia*-and-judgment-as-war theme. That is made explicit in Rev 19:17–21. In 19:17, "*the great supper of God*" parodies the "*the marriage supper of the Lamb*" (19:9). That connection is seen in that both Rev 19:9 and 19:17 contain the same phrase, *eis to deipnon* ("to the supper"). As Beale notes, "the link implies that judgment is but the other side of the coin of salvation."

Rev 20:1–15: the binding of Satan; the reign of the saints; the judgment of Satan; and the final judgment

The "thousand years" or "millennium" is the period between Christ's first coming until shortly before his second coming. During that period, God limits Satan's deceptive powers and deceased

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Christians are vindicated by reigning in heaven. The period is concluded by a resurgence of Satan's deceptive assault against the church. That, in turn, is concluded by the *parousia* and the final judgment.

Although there are four paragraphs or subsections in Revelation 20 (20:1–3, the binding of Satan; 20:4–6, the reign of the saints; 20:7–10, the final destruction of Satan and his forces; and 20:11–15, the last judgment), those really are subsets of two larger sections: events before the *parousia* (20:1–6); and events connected with the *parousia* (20:7–15).

The events recorded in Rev 20:1–15 do not follow chronologically from where 19:21 left off. Instead, following the progressively parallel structure of the book, Revelation 20 recapitulates history from Christ's first coming to the *parousia* and final judgment, adding new details and emphases. Milligan points out, "*The overthrow of Satan*, and not the reign of a thousand years, is the main theme of the first ten verses of the chapter." Satan is Christ's greatest adversary. In Revelation 19, John described the end of the beast and false prophet. It is therefore proper that the end of Satan (the "power behind the throne") be emphasized separately in this chapter.

#### *The binding of Satan (Rev 20:1–3)*

Beale begins our discussion of Revelation 20 by reminding us of the danger of "literalism" (in a physical sense) when John is writing about spiritual truths in an apocalyptic genre: "It is wrong to picture the devil being 'cast out of the earth' in some spatial sense, so that he is no longer present on the earth. This would be to take the 'abyss' in an overly literalistic manner. Rather, like 'heaven' throughout the Apocalypse, it represents a spiritual dimension existing alongside and in the midst of the earthly, not above it or below it (as with, e.g., the heavenly sphere in 2 Kgs. 6:15–17 and the Satanic sphere in Eph. 6:10–17; cf. 2 Cor. 10:3–5)."

Beale's point is highlighted when we consider the language John uses in 20:1–3. "Satan is not a literal dragon who can be bound with a physical chain or locked away in a physical pit." To hold to a "literal" thousand years requires, to be consistent, that the "key" and "chain" held by the angel in Rev 20:1 are a physical key and chain and that the "abyss" of Rev 20:3 is an actual pit in the earth which has a physical lock and physical "seal." That, of course, is not what is intended by such language. Satan is a spiritual, not a physical, being. The language John uses is figurative or symbolic.

#### THE BINDING OF SATAN OCCURRED AT CHRIST'S FIRST COMING

The first issue is *when* did this "binding" occur? Premillennialists contend that the binding occurs after the *parousia*. All others agree that the binding occurred in connection with Christ's first coming. Both the NT and contextual clues within Revelation itself make clear that Satan's binding occurred in connection with Christ's first coming. Hoekema tells us why: "Is there any indication in the New Testament that Satan was bound at the time of the first coming of Christ? Indeed there is. When the Pharisees accused Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Satan, Jesus replied, 'How can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods unless he first binds the strong man?' (Matt. 12:29). Interestingly enough, the word used by Matthew to describe the binding of the strong man is the same word used in Revelation 20 to describe the binding of Satan (the Greek word *deō*)."

Jesus' own words in John 12:31 correspond to Rev 20:3: John 12:31 ("*Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out [Greek = *ekballō*]*"); Rev 20:3

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(“He threw [Greek = *ballō*] him into the abyss).” Consequently, the NT often talks of Satan’s judgment, fall, limitation, and defeat in connection with Christ’s first coming and during this age.<sup>538</sup>

Jesus’ giving his disciples the Great Commission (Matt 28:18–20) reflects this new state of affairs. Gentry discusses this: “The earthly political authority to which Satan arrogantly laid claim, by which he oppressed the nations, and which he offered to Christ [Matt 4:8–9; Luke 4:5–6; Eph 2:1–2] was righteously won by Christ’s glorious redemptive labor.... We should remember that the Great Commission opened with this noble declaration: ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth’ (Matt. 28:18b). That authority encompassed heaven and earth and is ‘above every name that is named [Eph 1:21; Phil 2:9–10; 1 Pet 3:22].’ ”

#### THE BINDING OF SATAN IN REV 20:1–3 IS PARALLEL TO THE CASTING DOWN OF SATAN IN REV 12:7–12

Grenz states, “The Apocalypse itself also gives evidence to the correctness of this interpretation [that Satan’s binding occurred at Christ’s first coming], for the twelfth chapter, which forms the center of the book, depicts Christ’s coronation as bringing about the ejection of Satan from heaven.” In other words, the binding of Satan in Rev 20:1–3 is parallel to Satan’s being “*thrown down to the earth*” (Rev 12:9) and “*coming down to the earth and the sea*” (Rev 12:12). William Shea notes the fact that the same four names for Satan (“*the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan*”) “occur in the same order in both passages of the Greek text [12:9; 20:2], and these two passages are the only places in the entire book where this series as a whole is applied to him. This unique parallel between these two passages provides some evidence of an intent to connect the two narratives.” The parallels between the two chapters are consistent with the recapitulatory nature of the entire book. As with the many other inter-textual cross-references throughout the book, the parallels between chapters 12 and 20 indicate that they depict the same events from different perspectives, to bring out different nuances or emphases.

The parallels between Revelation 12 and 20 are reflected in the following table:

#### **Rev 12:7–12**

#### **Rev 20:1–6**

Angels’ evil opponent is “*the great dragon ... the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan*” (12:9)  
Angels’ evil opponent is “*the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan*” (20:2)

Satan cast to earth [and the sea] (12:9; 12)

Satan cast into the abyss (20:3)

Satan “*knows that his time is short*” (12:12)

Satan to be “*released for a short time*” (20:3)

Satan’s fall results in the kingdom (12:10–11)

Satan’s fall results in the kingdom (20:4–6)

The saints’ kingship is based not only on Satan’s fall but on Christ’s victory and their faithfulness  
The saints’ kingship is based not only on Satan’s fall but on their faithfulness “*of their testimony to “the word of their testimony” even to death of Jesus and because of the word of God*” even to death (12:11)  
death (20:4)



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The scenes of the woman and the dragon (Rev 12:1–17) and the binding and release of Satan (Rev 20:1–3) are also consistent with the scene of the two witnesses and the beast (Rev 11:3–12). All three scenes use different imagery to picture the same time period and same events (the spiritual protection of the church despite the opposition to it and its suffering in this world): the two witnesses are divinely protected until they have finished their testimony; the woman is protected in the wilderness; Satan is bound for a thousand years to prevent him from deceiving and gathering the nations to destroy the church.

Nevertheless, the the “binding” of Rev 20:3 is not identical in all respects to the “casting” of Rev 12:9, but is an aspect of it. The reason is that Satan will be “loosed” from his “binding” (i.e., from the restrictions that have been placed on his ability to “deceive the nations”) for a short time before Christ returns (Rev 20:3, 7, see below). On the other hand, “the victory [Christ] won over Satan was won once and for all.” Satan will never again ascend to the place, status, or authority he had before he was “cast down” by what Christ accomplished on the Cross.

#### THE PURPOSE OF THE BINDING OF SATAN

Satan has been an active agent in the world since Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:1–13). Jesus called him the “*father of lies*” (John 8:44). He is the accuser of believers and “*deceives the whole world*” (Rev 12:9–10). Therefore, Satan’s binding obviously does not mean that he is now impotent. Rather, his binding at Christ’s first coming is a relative, not absolute, curtailment of Satan’s activities for a specific purpose during a specific time. Satan is bound “*so that he would not deceive the nations any longer*” (Rev. 20:3). Gentry elaborates this: “In Old Testament times only Israel knew the true God (Ps. 147:19–20; Amos 3:2; Luke 4:6; Acts 14:16; 17:30). But Christ’s incarnation changed this as the gospel began flowing to all nations (e.g., Isa. 2:2–3; 11:10; Matt. 28:19; Luke 2:32; 24:47; Acts 1:8; 13:47).”

In understanding the nature of this binding, Rev 20:7–8 clarifies matters, since v. 7 picks up where v. 3 leaves off. Thus, 20:3 states that Satan is bound “*so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed.*” Verses 7–8 then pick up the thought, “*When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released ... and will come out to deceive the nations ... to gather them together for the war.*” The “deception” which Satan is not allowed to do during the “thousand years,” therefore, is very specific. Johnson highlights the significance of 20:7–8 on the meaning of 20:3:

Although it is true throughout history that Satan, the ancient serpent, “deceives the whole world” (Rev. 12:9), in this vision a specific deception to obtain a specific objective is in view. We see this objective when, at the end of the thousand years, the dragon is released and comes out “to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war” (20:8)... In light of this explanation of the aim behind the dragon’s deception (20:8), his binding during the thousand years prevents Satan from gathering the nations in a worldwide conspiracy to blot out the church.

#### THE BINDING OF SATAN AT CHRIST’S FIRST COMING REFLECTS THE “TWO AGE” ESCHATOLOGICAL STRUCTURE OF THE NT AND THE “ALREADY, BUT NOT YET” NATURE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Satan and demonic forces remain active in the world, but the scope of their deceptive authority has been significantly limited, their power has been decisively broken, and their ultimate defeat

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has been definitely insured. That is seen in Paul's discussion in Ephesians of the effect of Christ's first coming on the heavenly powers. Peter O'Brien explains this:

[Eph 6:10–20] integrates appropriately within the “already—not yet” poles of Pauline eschatology. Christ's triumph over the powers has “already” occurred (1:21). Because of believers' union with him in his resurrection and exaltation (2:5, 6), they no longer need to fear the powers. The fruits of Christ's victory have “not yet” been fully realized. However, those in him possess all the resources needed to resist the influence and attacks of the devil and his hosts (cf. 6:10–20). Believers must be aware of the conflict and appropriate the divine power to withstand them. On the final day Christ's victory over the powers will be consummated.... [In Eph 3:10] the fact that evil powers are present in the heavenly realm indicates that heaven, like earth, must participate in Paul's two-age eschatological framework. It, too, is involved in this present evil age, and the powers which reside there have already been defeated through Christ's death and now await their final overthrow.

#### *The releasing of Satan (Rev 20:3, 7)*

The different scenes and imagery throughout Revelation follow a consistent pattern and paint a coherent picture. We have previously seen that the beast receives his authority from Satan (Rev 13:2, 4). The fact that the beast is “given” authority (by God) to make war against the saints and overcome them (Rev 13:7) is consistent with the fact that Satan *now* is “bound” in a way that was not true before Christ came the first time, since Satan cannot give authority to his agent (the beast) until God authorizes it.

We also have seen that the context of Rev 20:1–10, especially 20:7–8, clarifies which specific activities of Satan are “bound.” Not only is the “binding” of Satan consistent with the progressively parallel, recapitulatory nature of the book, but so is his “releasing.” Beale describes the scenario the Bible depicts when Satan is released shortly before Christ comes again:

Throughout the time between Christ's first and second comings, Satan will not be able to deceive any of “the full number” (6:11) of those purchased by Christ because they have been “sealed.” When “the full number” has been gathered in, then the devil will be permitted to deceive the majority living at the end of history, causing them not only to be blinded to the truth of Christ but also to seek to annihilate Christ's followers.... At the end of the age, persecution by deceived multitudes will break out against the church, such that it would vanish were it not for God's intervention on its behalf (so also Mark 13:19–22; Matt. 24:21–24). “The beast coming up out of the abyss” to “make war ... and overcome” the witnessing community in Rev. 11:7 is the devil's earthly agent in leading the final deception and onslaught, as 16:12–16 and 19:19–21 also attest. Most commentators agree that the beast ascends from the abyss of 11:7 directly before Christ's second coming. This ascent should probably be identified with Satan's ascent from the abyss in 20:3b, 7, which further confirms that Satan's ascent is prior to the final coming of Christ. Just as the beast represents Satan's authority throughout history in 13:1–2 (cf. 12:3), so the beast's ascent at the end of history can be spoken of in 20:3, 7 as the dragon's ascent because the former again represents the latter.

*The binding and release of Satan before the parousia and his destruction at the parousia are parallel to the restraint, revealing, and destruction of the “man of lawlessness” in 2 Thess 2:6–12*

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The binding of Satan now, but his release shortly before the *parousia*, also is consistent with 2 Thess 2:6–12 where “*the mystery of lawlessness is already at work,*” but “*the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan*” currently is restrained. When the restraint “*is taken out of the way ... the lawless one will be revealed.*” In fact, both Revelation 20 and 2 Thessalonians 2 are parallel in multiple respects, including the essential order of the events they describe.

**2 Thess 2:6–12**

**Rev 20:1–15**

Man of lawlessness (MOL) is currently restrained Satan is bound by an angel (20:1–3)  
(2:6–7)

Restraint will be taken out of the way (2:7) After the “1000 years” Satan will be released  
(20:3, 7)

MOL will be revealed & come in accord with Satan will come out (20:8)  
Satan (2:8–9)

MOL will deceive those who perish (2:8–12) Satan will deceive the nations and gather them  
together for the war (20:8–9)

MOL will be slain at Christ’s coming (2:8) Satan will be destroyed [at Christ’s coming]  
(20:9–10)

Those who did not believe the truth and took pleasure in wickedness will be judged (2:12) The dead will be judged; those whose names are  
not in the book of life will be thrown into the  
lake of fire (20:11–15)

Sydney Page highlights the parallels between the two passages:

Both passages speak of a restriction that prevents a major outbreak of evil for a limited period of time but that will eventually be removed, with the result that there will be a period of heightened opposition to God that will be brought to an end by divine intervention. Besides having this basic sequence of events in common, Revelation 20 and 2 Thessalonians 2 exhibit a number of similarities of detail. The overarching sovereignty of God is emphasized in both accounts.... Both accounts also highlight the role of deception in connection with this eschatological rebellion.... Not only do the two passages have the theme of deception in common, but in both Satan occupies a prominent position in relation to it. In Revelation he is presented as the one who deceives, and in 2 Thess 2:9 he is seen as the real force behind the lawless one’s program of deception. Finally, there is a significant similarity between the Johannine and Pauline conceptions of how the rebellion is terminated.... But the resemblance is even closer than this, for in [2 Thess 1:7–9] Paul, like John, associates the return of Christ with fire and the execution of final judgment on the enemies of God.

Those parallels demonstrate that the events of both passages end (not begin) at the *parousia*.  
*The reign of the saints (Rev 20:4–6)*

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Because the overthrowing and permanent destruction of Christ's greatest adversary is the main theme of Rev 20:1–10, no specifics are given concerning the nature of the "thousand years" other than the summary fact that the saints "sat on [thrones], and judgment was given to them" (20:4). Premillennialists place this scene *after* the second coming of Christ, think that the "first resurrection" is the resurrection of believers at the *parousia*, and maintain that "the rest of the dead" who "come to life" refers to the resurrection of everyone, believers and unbelievers alike, a thousand years years after the *parousia*. Amillennialists hold that the "thousand years" is a figurative description of the current time, after Christ's resurrection but *before* the second coming. They contend that the "first resurrection" refers to Christians' new life in and union with Christ, Christ's resurrection in which believers spiritually participate,<sup>554</sup> or the Christians' translation to heaven upon their physical death. "The rest of the dead" who "come to life" refers to the general resurrection that takes place at the *parousia*.

#### *The timing of the "thousand years"*

Hoekema points out:

That the millennial reign described in verses 4–6 occurs before the second coming of Christ is evident from the fact that the final judgment, described in verses 11–15 of this chapter, is pictured as coming after the thousand-year reign. Not only in the book of Revelation but elsewhere in the New Testament the final judgment is associated with the second coming of Christ. (See Revelation 22:12 and the following passages: Mt. 16:27; 25:31–32; Jude 14–15; and especially 2 Thess. 1:7.) This being the case, it is obvious that the thousand-year reign of Revelation 20:4–6 must occur *before* and *not after* the second coming of Christ.

The reign of the saints as a *current*, not future, phenomenon is consistent with the rest of Revelation and the NT, which picture the church currently as raised with Christ in heaven.<sup>558</sup> For example, Rev 20:4b clearly parallels Rev 6:9:

<b>Rev 6:9</b>	<b>Rev 20:4b</b>
I saw ( <i>eidon</i> ) under the altar	I saw ( <i>eidon</i> )
the souls ( <i>tas psuchas</i> )	the souls ( <i>tas psuchas</i> )
of those who had been slain	of those who had been beheaded
for the word of God ( <i>dia ton logon tou theou</i> ) and the witness ( <i>kai dia tēn marturian</i> ) they had borne.	for their witness to Jesus ( <i>dia tēn marturian Iēsou</i> ) and for the word of God ( <i>kai dia ton logon tou theou</i> )

In short, "The opening verses of the chapter declare the cosmic victory won by Christ at his first advent. Verses 4–6 speak of the resultant victory of his faithful witnesses, despite apparent defeat, whether that victory be in the heavenly realm of the intermediate state or the earthly realm of Christian living." Thus, "When saints are translated to heaven at death they join Christ

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on his judicial throne to rule over the enemy in inaugurated fulfillment of the promise given to 'overcomers' in 3:21 and 2:26–27, though these promises will also reach complete fulfillment at the final resurrection of the saints."

#### *The final destruction of Satan and his forces (Rev 20:7–10)*

THE BATTLE OR WAR OF REV 20:7–10 IS THE SAME AS THE BATTLE OR WAR OF REV 16:14–16 AND 19:17–21 WHICH OCCURS JUST BEFORE THE PAROUSIA

Premillennialists see the battle or war of Har-Magedon (Rev 16:14–16) and the battle or war of Rev 19:19–21 as two descriptions of the same event which occurs just before the *parousia*. However, they see the battle or war of Rev 20:7–10 as another similar battle or war that takes place after the *parousia* and after Christ has reigned on the earth in perfect righteousness for a thousand years. That idea contradicts the very nature of the second coming which entails resurrection, judgment, and renewal of the earth, and begins the "age to come" in which there will forever be no more sin or evil. Grenz comments:

Another difficult dimension of the premillennial chronology is its conception of the ultimate victory of Christ. According to Paul, the final enemy of Christ is death, and the Lord destroys this last foe at the resurrection of the believers (1 Cor 15:25–26, 50–55 [which occurs as part of the *parousia*]).... Because of their loyalty to the premillennial doctrine, they teach that death is not destroyed until the end of the millennial reign. The premillennial chronology, therefore, places the final victory of Christ a full thousand years after the resurrection and thus a thousand years after the event that Paul declares marks the triumph of the Lord.

In addition to the effect Christ's second coming has in eliminating sin and death, the context of Revelation itself reveals that the battle of 20:7–10 is the same as that of 16:14–16 and 19:17–21. All three passages draw on the Gog-Magog prophecy of Ezekiel 38–39. Meredith Kline discusses the interrelationship of Ezekiel 38–39; Rev 16:14–16; 19:17–21; and 20:7–10. He details how Revelation indicates they must all be referring to the same battle that occurs at the time of the *parousia*:

The war (*polemos*) of Rev 20:8 is certainly "the war of the great day of God, the Almighty," the battle of Har Magedon described in 16:14–16. In each case it is the war to which Satan, the dragon, gathers the nations of the whole world.... The relationship of Rev 20:7–10 to Ezekiel 38–39, obvious enough from the adoption of the Gog-Magog terminology in Revelation 20, is also evidenced by a set of basic similarities: the marshaling of hordes from the four quarters of the earth (Ezek 38:2–7, 15; 39:4; Rev 20:8); the march of the gathered armies to encompass the saints in the city of God, center of the world (Ezek 38:7–9, 12, 16; Rev 20:9); the orchestration of the event by God (Ezek 38:4, 16; 39:2, 19; Rev 20:3, 7); the timing of the event after a lengthy period in which God's people were kept secure from such a universal assault (Ezek 38:8, 11; Rev 20:3); the eschatological finality of the crisis (Ezek 39:22, 26, 29; Rev 20:10ff.); and the fiery destruction of the evil forces (Ezek 38:22; 39:6; Rev 20:9–10). Just as clearly, the Gog-Magog prophecy of Ezekiel 38–39 is a primary source drawn on by Rev 16:14–16; 19:17–21 and other Apocalyptic prophecies of the final conflict. Prominent in these passages is the major feature that marked the dependence of Rev 20:7–10 on the Ezekiel prophecy—namely, the universal gathering of the enemy armies (Rev 16:14–16; 17:12–14; 19:19; and compare 6:15 with

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Ezek 39:18–20), including too the historical setting of that event at the close of the world-age (Rev 6:12–17; 11:7–13; 16:16–17 [cf. 17:10–14]; 19:15–21), following an era in which it is given to the Church to fulfill its mission of gospel witness (11:3–7; cf. 12:6, 14).... It therefore follows that the thousand years that precede the Gog-Magog crisis of Rev 20:7–10 precede the Har Magedon-*parousia* event related in the other passages. Har Magedon is not a prelude to the millennium, but a postlude. Har Magedon marks the end of the millennium. And that conclusion spells the end of premillennialism.

Since Revelation as a whole has a progressively parallel structure, in this recapitulation of the final destruction of Satan and his forces we see a subtle development of the ideas that had previously been discussed in chapters 16 and 19: “In Rev. 16:14 the worldly rulers are mustered for the battle, by demonic spirits, on the Day of the Lord; in 19:19 the beast, with the rulers of the earth and their armies, wages war against the Messiah and his followers; while in 20:8 the Satan himself assembles innumerable and hostile nations from the four corners of the earth ... to do battle with God’s people on the earth and in heaven (20:9).” In other words, the culminating picture of this event reveals Satan to be the “power behind the throne” who directs both the demons and the beast.

SATAN IS “THROWN INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE ... WHERE THE BEAST AND THE FALSE PROPHET ARE” (REV 20:10)

Premillennialists contend that the beast and false prophet have been in the lake of fire for a thousand years before the devil is cast there. Most English translations appear to imply this by saying that Satan is thrown into the lake of fire “*where the beast and the false prophet are*” (NASB; NKJV), or “*were*” (ESV; RSV), or even “*had been thrown*” (NIV). In fact, the judgment of Satan, the beast, and the false prophet are simultaneous, not sequential. The judgment in Rev 20:10 is a recapitulation of the judgment in Rev 19:20, with the additional reference to Satan, since the defeat of Satan is the focus of Rev 20:1–10.

The Greek grammar of this clause is ambiguous and most naturally supports the simultaneous, recapitulation view, not the sequential judgments view. Andrew Steinmann explains why:

20:10 should be seen as a recapitulation of the judgment in 19:20 with the addition of Satan’s judgment. 20:10 literally reads: “And the devil who had deceived them was thrown (*ēblēthē*, aorist passive indicative) into the lake of fire and sulfur, where both the beast and the false prophet.... and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” The ellipsis of a verb governing “beast” and “false prophet” requires the translator to supply one in English. Most translators supply “where the beast and the false prophet were/are”—as if the two judgments are sequential, not synonymous. But the ellipsis of a third-person-plural form of *einai* is rare (BDF 71). A more common form of ellipsis would be the omission of a verb coinciding with the preceding verb. Thus the most natural translation of 20:10 would be: “And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were thrown” (cf. NIV). (Note: “Were thrown” [aorist] = at the same time, not “had been thrown” [pluperfect] = prior to the time when the devil was thrown in.).<sup>568</sup>

*The last judgment (Rev 20:11–15)*

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“John has already set the precedent for the idea that the same judgment can be viewed first as a battle/confrontation, and then as a courtroom scene.... The scene of 20:11–15 invites understanding as a restatement, using different imagery, of the final judgment just narrated in 20:7–10.” Thus, while Rev 20:7–10 and 20:11–15 both describe the final judgment, each description has its own emphasis. Shea lists those emphases: “The earlier of the two emphasizes the destruction of the devil and his agents, perhaps because the whole narrative of Rev 20 began with him as its subject. Then the closing scene which follows places its emphasis upon God as the judge, who presents his final judgment at this time.” The fact that 20:11 states “*earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them*” both recapitulates the prior depictions of the final judgment and sums up the creation-changing nature of the *parousia* and the judgment that occurs in connection with it.

#### THE FINAL JUDGMENT OCCURS AS A PART OF THE EVENTS ENTAILED BY THE PAROUSIA

There is a clear correspondence between Rev 20:11–15 and 1 Cor 15:20–54. In 1 Cor 15:26 Paul said, “*The last enemy that will be abolished is death.*” First Cor 15:50–54 describes when Christ abolishes death. 15:50 says, “*Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.*” 15:52–53 states that the perishable will “*put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality*” at “*the last trumpet*” when “*the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.*” 15:54 concludes, “*When this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, ‘death is swallowed up in victory.’*” The “clear temporal reference [to the events of 15:54] is to the *parousia* (cf. verse 52).” Thus, the abolition of death (15:26) occurs at Christ’s “coming” (i.e., the *parousia*, 15:23).

Rev 20:14 says that “*death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire.*” Page states, “The symbolic description of the destruction of Death and Hades [at the eschatological judgment] corresponds to Paul’s statement in 1 Cor 15:26.... For both John and Paul the last scene in the drama of redemption before the inauguration of the eternal state is the elimination of death.” As we have seen, the Gospels, Epistles, and Revelation tell a coherent story: the *parousia* entails resurrection and judgment; it is the dividing point between “*this age*” and the “*age to come.*”

#### JUDGMENT OF UNBELIEVERS ONLY OR OF ALL PEOPLE?

Some people, primarily dispensationalists, think that there are multiple, distinct judgments in the NT: the judgment of the “nations” to see who will enter the millennial kingdom (Matt 25:31–46); a separate judgment of believers before the “judgment seat of Christ” to receive their rewards (2 Cor 5:10); and the “great white throne” judgment of Rev 20:11–15 which they think applies only to unbelievers. Others see Rev 20:11–15 as the general judgment of all people, believers and unbelievers alike. Although the emphasis in this passage may be on unbelievers, all people are included, since, as previously discussed,<sup>577</sup> the Bible indicates that there is only one general judgment of all people. Ladd summarizes, “The final issue of the judgment of the nations is not the millennial kingdom but is either eternal life or eternal punishment (Matt. 25:46). This is clearly the final judgment which decides the eternal destiny of men. The judgment seat of Christ is also the judgment seat of God before which all believers must stand (Rom. 14:10).”

In keeping with the progressively parallel nature of the book, Rev 20:11–15 is an elaboration of the judgment that already was mentioned, although not described, at Rev 11:18. Beale points out that the statement “*the dead were judged*” shows that Rev 20:11–15 “is an expansion of the

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earlier brief account of final punishment in 11:18 ('the time [came] for *the dead to be judged*'). 11:18 also focuses on judgment of the wicked, but includes 'the reward' for God's 'servants the prophets and the saints and those fearing' God."

The wording of Rev 20:11–15 (i.e., "*the great and the small*"), when compared with the limitations or qualifications of that phrase when it is used elsewhere in Revelation, leads to the conclusion that all people, believers and unbelievers, are being judged. Thus, in Rev 11:18 and 19:5 "*the small and the great*" refers to *all believers*, and in Rev 13:16 and 19:18 "*the small and the great*" refers to *all unbelievers*. On the other hand, as David Brown points out, "in the passage before us, the only party to whom 'the small and great' belong—as far as appears—is '*the dead*.' Are we not irresistibly led, then, to conclude that the meaning intended is, the dead—universally, or at least indiscriminately?"

In its reference to the "books," Rev 20:12 alludes to Dan 7:10; 12:1–2. The allusion to those two Danielic passages again indicates the all-inclusive nature of the judgment in Rev 20:11–15. Beale and McDonough explain why: "The point of the books in Dan. 7 is to focus on the evil deeds of the end-time persecutor of God's people, for which the persecutor(s) would be judged. The book in Dan. 12:1 also concerns the end time, but it is an image of redemption. Those written in the book will be given life, but those excluded from the book will suffer final judgment (12:1–2). These two Daniel prophecies are depicted to find realization at the time of the last judgment."

Finally, the NT makes clear that all people must appear before the judgment seat of God.<sup>582</sup> Rev 3:5 specifically refers to believers in the book of life (see also Rev 13:8). Nowhere else in Revelation besides 20:11–15 does the judgment-as-courtroom-proceeding *with the book of life* appear. Beasley-Murray comments on this: "[Rev] 3:5 assumes that the believer in Christ will appear before the tribunal of God for judgment, exactly as in this scene. If the Church is excluded from the last judgment, it can only be because it has already appeared before God in judgment. John himself gives no hint that such an event has taken place. It is wiser to recognize that John teaches that all must submit to the judgment of God, saints and sinners alike." Because the judgment of Rev 20:11–15 applies to believers as well as to unbelievers, the preliminary mention in 3:5 of believers' names not being erased from the book of life is thereby tied up and fulfilled.

#### THE NATURE OF THE JUDGMENT

Rev 20:12 states that people are judged "*according to their deeds*." We cannot work our way to heaven or do enough "good deeds" to justify our acquittal in God's judgment; we are saved only by God's grace through faith in Christ. Nevertheless, as Ngundu summarizes:

Works are an index of the spiritual condition of a person's heart.... The judgment will reveal whether or not people's loyalties have been with God and the Lamb or with God's enemies. John's theology of faith and its insuperable relation to works is the same as that of Jesus Christ (John 5:29), Paul (Rom 2:6–8) and James (Jas 2), and that is why another book, the *book of life*, seems to be decisive (20:12, 15; 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 21:27). Those who have their names in the Lamb's "book of life" will also have records of righteous deeds. The opposite will also be true. The imagery reflects the delicate balance between grace and sin.

Beale concludes, "The 'life' granted the saints in association with the book comes from their identification with the Lamb's righteous deeds, and especially his death, which means likewise



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that they are identified with his resurrection life (cf. 5:5–13). They do not suffer judgment for their evil deeds because he has already suffered it for them: he was slain on their behalf (so esp. 1:5 and 5:9). The Lamb acknowledges before God all who are written in the book (3:5) and are identified with his righteousness and death.”

#### Rev 21:1–22:5: the new heaven and new earth: the New Jerusalem

In this section, the new creation and the church are perfected in glory. The word for “new” (Rev 21:1–2, 5; also in 2 Pet 3:13) is *kainos*. Richard Trench explains the meaning of *kainos* in this context: “*Kainos* refers to something new in *quality* and is contrasted with that which has seen service—the outworn, the exhausted, or that which is marred through age.... Thus, in the kingdom of glory, everything will be new: ‘the new Jerusalem’ (Rev. 3:12; 21:2), the ‘new name’ (2:17; 3:12), ‘a new song’ (5:9; 14:3), ‘a new heaven and new earth’ (21:1; cf. 2 Pet. 3:13), ‘all things new’ (Rev. 21:5).” Consequently, Wilbur Smith concludes that “this passage does not teach that the heavens and earth are now brought into existence for the first time, but that they possess a new character.”<sup>588</sup>

#### *Is the new heaven and new earth present or future?*

Preterists, some postmillennialists, and some idealists contend that in the New Jerusalem “we have essentially a picture, not of the future, but of the present; of the ideal condition of Christ’s true people, of His ‘little flock’ on earth, in every age. The picture may not yet be realized in fullness; but every blessing lined in upon its canvas is in principle the believer’s now, and will be more and more his in actual experience as he opens his eyes and his heart to receive.” Thus, Christ’s giving the “*water of life*” (Rev 21:6) relates to His promises in John 4:13–14; 7:37–39 to give believers, in the present, “*living waters*.” The reference to “*the nations*” (Rev 21:24) is taken literally to be unconverted nations, as is the reference to the “unclean” (Rev 21:27), which “must be supposed to be alive upon the earth after the New Jerusalem has appeared.” That position has the merit that, in principle, the New Jerusalem does exist now. Christians’ citizenship is in heaven (Phil 3:20); already we have come to Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb 12:22).

On the other hand, as was suggested above in the section “Interpretive approaches,” although Revelation emphasizes the principles that apply to believers now and in all eras, it does more than that: it also gives us the account of the end of this age and the beginning of the age to come. The description of the new heavens and new earth as the future eternal state is a necessary counterpart to Revelation’s earlier descriptions of the end of history. Rev 17:1–19:6 describes the overthrow of the harlot city of the world and the rejoicing that occurs in heaven as a result. Rev 19:11–21 describes the *parousia*. Rev 20:1–15 recapitulates the church age, ending with the judgment at the *parousia*. Those passages indicate that there is an end of history. One of John’s purposes in writing the book was, as Beasley-Murray puts it, to “inspire in his readers the faith that the empire of the Antichrist and his minions is destined to be replaced by the rule of Christ and his saints. He could not but believe that the overthrow of the harlot-city and the Antichrist would be followed by the establishment of the bride-city in the rule of the Christ.” If Rev 21:1–22:5 does not describe in visionary form the age to come, then we would have *no* description of the age to come at all but would be left at the point of the final judgment. In a book that is designed in part to culminate God’s story and bring to conclusion the entire Bible, that is unlikely.

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In this final part of the book, therefore, every visible and invisible threat to all of God's people, both spiritually and physically, is eliminated: all past hurts, sorrows, and regrets are wiped away, and all is made new. There is no longer any injustice, sin, or discord, but perfect holiness, joy, and harmony reign among people and between people and God. This is not merely an idealization of the "already" of the kingdom but is a visionary depiction of the "not yet" of the kingdom. Consequently, the majority view sees Rev 21:1–22:5 as referring to what will happen in the future, beginning with the *parousia*.

#### *The events described in Rev 21:1–4 take place at the parousia*

Rev 21:3 describes Christ's return to the earth. In doing so, it uses the phrase "*the tabernacle of God is among men.*" The Greek word for "tabernacle" is *skēnē*. This is important, because it both links the *parousia* with Christ's first coming and, at the same time, shows how the *parousia* fulfills the Jewish hopes of God's coming to dwell with them. G. R. Beasley-Murray explains:

The Jews looked for a return of the *Shekinah* in the kingdom of God. Greek-speaking Jews were conscious that the term *Shekinah* has the same consonants as the Greek *skēnē*, and this enabled them to associate with *skēnē* the conceptions of the *Shekinah*. A notable example of this occurs in John 1:14, 'The word became flesh and pitched its tent (Greek *eskēnōsen*, from *skēnē*) among us, and we beheld his glory.' In the incarnate Lord the hope of the return of God in his *Shekinah* glory was fulfilled. This same revelation of divine glory reaches its consummation in our text.

The descent of the New Jerusalem as part of the *parousia* is seen in the parallels and contrasts between the people of the world and Satan ("Babylon the great") and the people of God: just as Babylon the great is both a harlot and a city, so God's people are described as a bride (Rev 19:7–8; 21:2, 9) and a city. The symbolism of the bride and the city "depict fundamentally the same thing, namely, God's people in fellowship with their Redeemer." Just as the "marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev 19:9) was immediately followed by a description of the *parousia* (Rev 19:11–21), so the same event is recapitulated in Revelation 21 using different imagery. In Rev 19:7–8 the bride "*made herself ready*"; in 21:2 she is seen "*coming down out of heaven from God.*" Beasley-Murray concludes, "John clearly wishes to indicate that the bride will appear in splendour along with the bridegroom, and that the marriage supper will then be celebrated."

#### *Rev 21:1–22:5 fulfills the NT promises that Christ's second coming brings with it the restoration of creation*

The new earth is an integral aspect of God's redemptive program. The need for a redeemed creation stems from the fall of mankind and the "curse" which affected all of creation (Gen 3:14–19). Hoekema discusses this: "God now sent his Son into this world to redeem that creation from the results of sin. The work of Christ, therefore, is not just to save certain individuals, not even to save an innumerable throng of blood-bought people. The total work of Christ is nothing less than to redeem this entire creation from the effects of sin."

Earlier we saw that Christ's *parousia* entails the destruction or cleansing of the present world. That the descent of the New Jerusalem—i.e., the restoration of creation—occurs as part of the complex of events of the *parousia* is indicated in Rev 21:1 which states that "*the first heaven and the first earth passed away.*" The redeemed creation described in Rev 21:1–22:5 is not merely an idealized picture of "*this age.*" Rather, the "*new heavens and new earth*" are "new," i.e., new in

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*quality*. They are not like the “*first earth*” or the “*first things*” which have “*passed away*” (Rev 21:1, 4). Consequently, Rev 21:4 says that, in the new earth, “*there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain.*” Rev 22:3 adds, “*There will no longer be any curse.*”

Those facts rule out premillennialism, since premillennialism holds that both sin and the curse, which is the result of sin, are still in effect (although modified) after the second coming. Because the renewal of creation at Christ’s second coming includes the removal of death, mourning, crying, pain, and the curse, of necessity there no longer can be any sin. Consequently, the idea that there will be a massive sinful rebellion a thousand years after Christ returns cannot possibly be correct.

#### *The parousia and judgment: negative and positive aspects*

Although the judgment described in Rev 20:11–15 included both the righteous and the unrighteous, the focus there was on the judgment of the ungodly who are thrown into the “*lake of fire.*” Rev 21:1–22:5 likewise depicts the negative aspect of the judgment entailed by the *parousia*, but different imagery is used. Beasley-Murray explains, “The lake of fire signifies not extinction in opposition to existence, but torturous existence in the society of evil as opposed to life in the society of God. For which reason John is able to represent the same reality by the very different symbol of life outside the city (21:27) in contrast to life inside the city (21:24ff.), the separation being effected by the city’s wall (21:14).”

In Rev 21:1–22:5, while negative effects of the *parousia* and judgment are mentioned, the references to those who are excluded from the New Jerusalem are almost stated as asides. Instead, the emphasis is on the positive effects of the *parousia*. Most of Revelation 21–22 recounts the elimination of all suffering and death, the healing of the nations, the presence of God and the Lamb, and the great glory, light, and life of the new, eternal kingdom. Mealy discusses one subtle aspect of the “positive” emphasis of the *parousia* that, again, shows the progressively parallel nature of the book:

In Rev. 21:6, the Enthroned One announces that ‘It is done’ (literally, ‘They are done’ [*gegonan*]). This echoes the equivalent phrase that was heard from the throne upon the outpouring of the seventh and final bowl of God’s wrath in 16:17 (*gegonen*). If the significance of the cry ‘It is done’ in the context of the seventh bowl was to signal the fulfillment of the *parousia* as the judgment of the world, then perhaps the positive ‘They are done’ here refers to the completion of both sides of the eschatological transition to God’s kingdom, both negative and positive. As 21:4 affirms, ‘The first things have passed away’. Yet not only has the old been judged and removed, but the new has been established in its place.

#### *Rev 21:1–22:5 fulfills what was promised to believers earlier in the book*

Earlier, when discussing the repetition of themes, phrases, and promises to the church, we noted how Rev 21:1–22:5 fulfills the promises made to the church in the first three chapters of the book. Similarly, in Rev 7:16–17 believers were promised that they would no longer hunger or thirst, the Lamb would “*guide them to springs of the water of life,*” and “*God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.*” Those promises likewise are fulfilled in Rev 21:4; 22:1–2. Additionally, all of the instances of persecution, oppression, and evil committed against the church throughout

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the entire book now are reversed. The church finds everlasting compensation—indeed, more than compensation—in the new world of the New Jerusalem. As Schüssler Fiorenza puts it, “Not oppressive rulership and subordination but the life-giving and life-sustaining power of God characterizes God’s eschatological reign and empire.”

#### *Rev 21:1–22:5 fulfills Isa 65:17–66:24*

The only places in the OT where a “*new heavens and a new earth*” are referred to are in Isa 65:17 and 66:22. Isa 65:18–19; 66:10, 13, 20 also speak about a restored Jerusalem. As he has done throughout Revelation, John draws on OT imagery but universalizes and reinterprets it to apply to God’s new, true people—the church. The parallels between Isaiah 65–66 and Revelation 21–22 indicate that John is describing the consummated kingdom after the *parousia*. Indeed, the parallel between Revelation 21 and Isaiah 65 reveals that “*New Jerusalem*” is equivalent to the “*new earth*.” In Isa 65:17–18 “*Jerusalem*” appears to be equal to the “*new heavens and new earth*.” Similarly, John describes “*a new heaven and a new earth*” (Rev 21:1) but then immediately describes “*the holy city, New Jerusalem*” (Rev 21:2–3, 10–22:5), because the New Jerusalem is the new heaven and new earth.

*The references in Rev 21:24–27 and 22:2, 14 to the “nations,” “nothing unclean,” and “entering the city” are figurative portrayals of the perfect righteousness of the new creation*

Rev 21:24–27 is figurative language. The kings and nations are not separate from or outside the city but are another way of describing the nature of the city. Gundry points out that “ ‘Bring into it [i.e., into the city (Rev 21:24)]’ is spatial language, but the meaning is non-spatial, just as the dimensions of the city are spatial but their meaning non-spatial.... The meaning of ‘bring into it’ has to do with the glory and honor of the saintly nations of kings that make up the city, not with unsaintly traffic from countryside into city.... To enter the city is to help make it up—and there is nothing about leaving it once the glory and honor have been brought in.” Rev 21:24–27; 22:14 mean that only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life will be able to enter the new heaven and new earth at all, because Rev 20:15 says, “*if anyone’s name was not written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*”

Martin Kiddle states, “*The nations* are the redeemed, who belong spiritually but not racially to the twelve tribes. Did not Christ redeem ‘men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation’? Very well, *that* is how Christians must read these old prophecies: *they* are *the nations*. Similarly, the *kings of the earth* ... (so we must infer) are the martyr monarchs, who reigned as the successors of the heathen rulers (cf. 20:4–6); or perhaps all loyal Christians, of whom the heavenly hosts cried out: *they shall reign on earth* (v. 10).” Here again we must keep in mind a key purpose of John’s writing: the vices John lists in Rev 21:8, 27; 22:11, 15 and his statements about entering the city (Rev 21:24–26; 22:14) or not being able to enter the city (Rev 21:27; 22:15) both warn believers not to betray their faith and values and exhort them to live steadfast lives of faithfulness, since the glorious end is so clearly in sight.

#### REV 21:24–27 ALLUDES TO ISAIAH 60

Isaiah 60 speaks of glorified Zion. Isa 60:3 says that in glorified Zion “*nations will come to your light.*” Rev 21:24 similarly says, “*The nations will walk by its [New Jerusalem’s] light.*” Isa 60:11

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says, *“Your gates will be open continually; they will not be closed day or night.”* Rev 21:25 similarly says, *“In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its [New Jerusalem’s] gates will never be shut.”* Isa 60:20 (see also Isa 60:19) says, *“Your sun will no longer set, nor will your moon wane; for you will have the Lord for an everlasting light.”* Rev 21:23 similarly says, *“The city has no need of sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.”* Isa 60:21 says, *“Then all your people will be righteous; they will possess the land forever.”* Rev 21:27 similarly says, *“Nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”* Isa 60:3–14 says that the kings of the nations will come and bring their wealth to Zion. Rev 21:24–26 similarly says, *“The kings of the earth will bring their glory into [New Jerusalem]”* and *“they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it.”* These comparisons show how, as he has done throughout the book, John has taken OT passages and prophecies relating to Israel, and has redefined and reapplied them to the everlasting, universal church.<sup>609</sup>

REV 22:1–2 SAYS THAT THE “TREE OF LIFE” WHICH IS ALONG THE RIVER FORMED BY THE “WATER OF LIFE” IS FOR THE “HEALING OF THE NATIONS”

The image of the water of life healing the nations does not imply that, in the New Jerusalem, “there remain diseased nations in need of healing.” Instead, it is “prophetic idiom” which illustrates what is then stated in Rev 22:3, that *“there will no longer be any curse”* (see also Rev 21:4).

*The New Jerusalem is the consummation of God’s eternal plan to dwell in a holy place with his holy people*

God’s goal throughout biblical history has been to fill every part of his creation with his presence. Beginning at the Garden of Eden, God desired to make the entire earth his dwelling place that he would share with his holy people. Because of sin, God’s glory could not dwell completely in the old creation. Although God had walked in the Garden with Adam and Eve (Gen 3:8), because of their sin he drove them out of the Garden (Gen 3:23–24). God then progressively revealed his special presence on the earth among his people in the tabernacle and in Solomon’s temple, which served as *“a copy and shadow of the heavenly things.”*

God then inaugurated the final stage of his presence in the person of Jesus Christ. Through the Holy Spirit’s indwelling the church, his presence is now spread over the entire world. The time of the “shadows” of man-made temples has been completed, and the time of the new, true temple—his actual presence in Christ and the church—has come. However, although the true spiritual reality to which the OT tabernacle and temple pointed has been inaugurated, it has not yet been consummated. That consummation will occur when Christ returns to the earth. When he does, all creation will be redeemed (Rom 8:15–25).

When sin is forever eliminated from creation, the entire world (i.e., the *“new heaven and new earth”*) will be an Eden-like garden/city/temple—the perfect container for God’s glorious presence. No longer will God’s presence be housed in a physical building. Instead, the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb will fill, not just a portion of creation, but all of it (Rev 21:22). That is why the center of the vision is the earth—heaven coming *to the earth*. In other words, “the ‘new

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heaven' and the 'new earth' will be a single reality, characterized by the full, immediate presence of God among his people."<sup>613</sup>

#### THE MEASURING OF THE CITY

The "measuring" of the city (Rev 21:15–17) contrasts with the measuring of the temple, altar, and worshippers, but leaving out the outer court, in Rev 11:1–2. As a result of that measuring, the church was spiritually protected but physically was subject to persecution and oppression. "Here the entire city is measured as another token of its complete safety from every enemy that formerly threatened its holiness and happiness."

#### NEW JERUSALEM AS A HOLY OF HOLIES

The perfect holiness of the New Jerusalem is seen by the fact that the New Jerusalem is a Holy of Holies:

- Just like the Holy of Holies (1 Kgs 6:16–20; 2 Chron 3:8), the city is a perfect cube (Rev 21:16).
- Just as the Holy of Holies was overlaid with pure gold (1 Kgs 6:16–20; 2 Chron 3:8), "*the city was pure gold, like clear glass*" (Rev 21:18).
- Just as the Holy of Holies was the special place of God's presence and glory, the city is now the place of God's presence and glory (Rev 21:22–23; 22:1, 3–5).
- Only the Holy of Holies, not other sections of Israel's temple (i.e., the holy place and the outer courtyard), is found in Revelation 21. Thus, God's special presence, which formerly was limited to the Holy of Holies, now encompasses all of his new creation.

On the other hand, the New Jerusalem consummates and surpasses the Holy of Holies with respect to our access to God.

- Only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies, and he had to offer sacrifices for his own sin and the sins of the nation (Lev 16:1–28). In the New Jerusalem, all of God's people are without sin and will serve the Lord and reign forever and ever (Rev 21:7–8, 27; 22:3–5).
- The high priest could only enter the Holy of Holies one day per year, on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:29–31). In the New Jerusalem, we not only will have direct access to God, but we will *always* be in his immediate presence (Rev 21:3–4, 22–23; 22:3–5).
- On the Day of Atonement the high priest had to offer incense which formed a thick cloud that covered the mercy seat so that he could not see God's glorious appearance, or he would die (Lev 16:13; see Exod 33:20). In the New Jerusalem, all of God's people will "*see his face*" (Rev 22:4).

#### Rev 22:6–21: epilogue

The epilogue of the book is consistent with the rest of the book and with prophecy in general. Prophets spoke oracles of judgment and oracles of salvation to warn the people and exhort them to change their ways and return or stay faithful to the Lord. Revelation specifically was written to inform, exhort, comfort, and encourage the churches. Beale therefore observes:

These final verses especially tie in to the introduction in 1:1–3: both identify the book as a consummation from God (using the same wording from Dan. 2:28–29, 45); both focus on John as a "witness" to the revelation that he has been given; and both speak of the revelation as a "prophecy" communicated to "hearers." ... This conclusion shows that the

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purpose of the whole book is to induce holy obedience among God's people so that they might receive the reward of salvation.... The repeated exhortations to holiness are the main point of the epilogue, since they are supported by the exclamations about Christ's coming. No fewer than eight of the final fifteen verses underscore the book's intention to encourage obedience either through exhortations to obedience, through promised blessings for holy living, and through warnings of judgment for unholy living.

#### **Revelation ties together and completes the entire Bible**

The new creation of Revelation links with the original creation of Genesis

The last two chapters of Revelation clearly are linked, often by contrast, with the first three chapters of Genesis as follows:

<i>Genesis</i>	<i>Revelation</i>
<i>"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"</i> (Gen 1:1)	<i>"I saw a new heaven and a new earth"</i> (Rev 21:1)
<i>"The darkness He called night"</i> (Gen 1:5)	<i>"There will be no night there"</i> (Rev 21:25; 22:5)
<i>"The gathering of the waters He called seas"</i> (Gen 1:10)	<i>"There is no longer any sea"</i> (Rev 21:1)
<i>"Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens ... to give light on the earth"</i> (Gen 1:14–15)	<i>"The city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it"</i> (Rev 21:23; 22:5)
<i>"In the day that you eat from it you will surely die"</i> (Gen 2:17)	<i>"There will no longer be any death"</i> (Rev 21:4)
<i>"The man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God"</i> (Gen 3:8)	<i>"God Himself will be among them ... they will see His face"</i> (Rev 21:3; 22:4)
<i>"I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth"</i> (Gen 3:16)	<i>"There will no longer be any ... pain"</i> (Rev 21:4)
<i>"Cursed is the ground because of you"</i> (Gen 3:17)	<i>"There will no longer be any curse"</i> (Rev 22:3)

Sam Hamstra comments on the contrasts between what was begun in Genesis and what is completed in Revelation:

In Genesis God created the heaven and the earth; in Revelation we read of a new heaven and earth (21:1). In Genesis the luminaries are called into being; in Revelation the glory of the Lord lights the city [21:23; 22:5]. In Genesis we read of the cunning power of Satan; in Revelation the devil is bound and hurled into the lake of fire (20:10). In Genesis we read of paradise lost; in Revelation paradise is restored. Genesis describes the divorce of humankind as Adam and Eve run from God; in Revelation the redeemed enjoy the intimate fellowship of marriage to the Lamb [19:7–9; 21:2–4; 22:4]. In Genesis nature threatens the security and hurts humanity; in Revelation nature sustains and comforts

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people [22:1–2]. In Genesis the tree of life is protected by an angel lest anyone eat its fruit; Revelation restores humanity's access to the fruit (22:14). This obvious correlation between the first and last books of the Bible illustrates the fulfillment of the first messianic prophecy (Gen. 3:15) and God's faithfulness to the covenant (Rev. 21:3).

#### The new creation of Revelation surpasses the original creation of Genesis

Douglas Moo concludes our survey of Revelation by discussing the potentialities of the pre-consummate creation, how those potentialities played out in history, and how God has brought the cosmos to an even greater glory than the original creation:

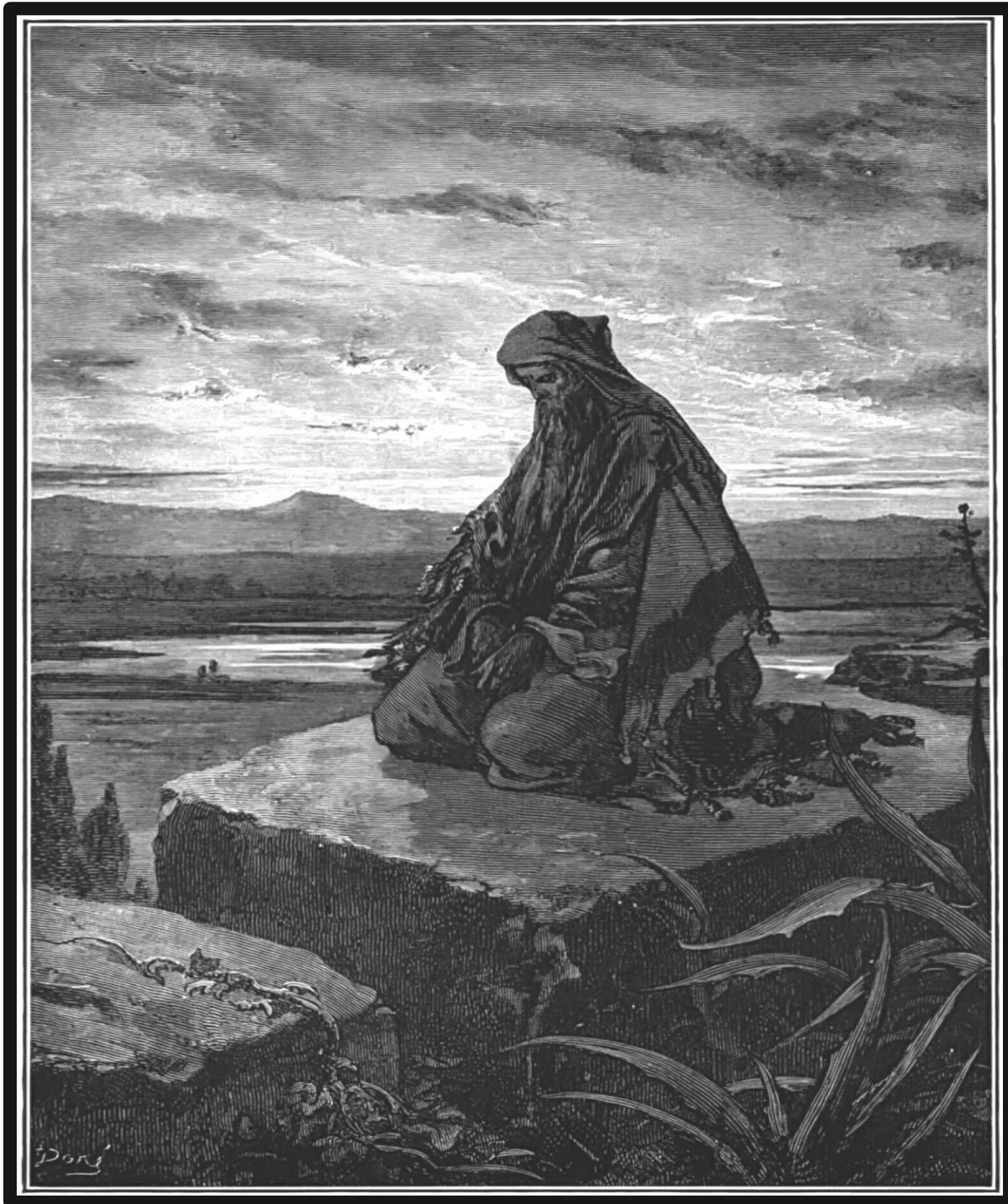
The fact that there is no more sea or night in the new heaven and new earth [Rev 21:1, 25] suggests an allusion to the first creation since in both instances these elements are in some way subjugated, divided or restrained.... It is as if the first creation, while good in itself, had had the potential to develop in two directions: if humankind fulfilled its role and lived in harmony with God and the rest of creation, the latent powers of chaos represented especially by the sea and darkness would be forever within the scope of human dominion and would become perhaps sources of creative energy and delight—just as they were for God, for whom even Leviathan could be a plaything. But if the covenant between God and his creatures was broken and human beings allied themselves with the serpent and its realm, the forces of chaos would be let loose and the sea become a thing of terror, an abode of evil and an instrument of judgement. Scripture may be largely a record of humankind opting for this latter path, but John's intent is to assure the churches that they have not therefore been abandoned to a world of sorrow, pain and mourning. Instead, the triumph of the "Lamb that was slain" means that the creator's fidelity to his creation—hinted at in the rainbow around the throne [Rev 4:3], sign of the Noahic covenant—is expressed finally through nothing less than the renewal of the cosmos, an event in which the world is brought beyond any threat of future rebellion or sin.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Menn, J. (2013). [\*Biblical Eschatology\*](#) (pp. 273–310). Resource Publications.



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<sup>1</sup> Aharoni, Y., Avi-Yonah, M., Rainey, A. F., Notley, R. S., & Safrai, Z., eds. (2011). [The Carta Bible Atlas](#) (Fifth Edition, pp. 113–120). Carta Jerusalem.