



• **Isaiah predicts that Babylon will become a persecuting power after the Assyrians**

The Day of the Lord will come to Babylon¹. Isaiah is predicting that Babylon will become a persecuting power when the Assyrians have finished their work as the 'rod of God's anger'. But after God's anger has in this way fallen on Israel, then Babylon also will fall beneath the anger of God. The Medes will be the first destroyers of Babylon². But God's people will continue³ and Babylon will face ridicule and scorn in the realm of the dead⁴. It is this last theme that is continuing in Isaiah 14:11-21. It gives us an Old Testament foretaste of what is involved in the punishment of sin.

- ☞1 13:1-16
- ☞2 13:7-22
- ☞3 14:1-2
- ☞4 14:3-10

• **Later, Babylon will face ridicule and scorn**

Divine punishment will involve humiliation.

11All your pomp has been brought down to Sheol along with the noise of your harps; maggots are spread out beneath you and worms cover you.

Divine punishment will involve humiliation

God's way of punishing sin brings disgust and repulsion in the eyes of others.

• **Punishment brings others' disgust and repulsion**

12How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been thrown down to the earth, you who once brought down the nations!

• **Refers to king of Babylon or maybe to Satan**

It is sometimes thought that this is a description of Satan. Although strictly it refers to the king of Babylon, perhaps (it is thought) it is a shadow of Satan himself. Some very fine theologians and expositors have taken it this way.^a

- ☞1 Genesis 19:27-28

Divine punishment overthrows proud ambition

Divine punishment overthrows proud ambition.

13You 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 mountain where the gods meet, on the utmost height of Zaphon, the sacred mountain.

• **Isaiah likens the king of Babylon to one of the gods in a Canaanite story – after rebelling, he had to be brought down**

14I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like El Elyon.'

There was a Canaanite story about one of the gods in Zaphon (the legendary sacred mountain-home of the gods) who rebelled against the lord of the gods. Isaiah is using the Canaanite story here as a picture of what the king of Babylon was like. He had such privileges that he was like a god, but since he rebelled against Yahweh, he had to be brought down.

• **The king who aimed at the highest heights is brought to the deepest depths**

15But you are brought down to Sheol, to the depths of the pit.

The king who aimed at the highest heights is brought to the deepest depths.

Divine punishment involves shameful ridicule

Divine punishment involves shameful ridicule.

16Those who see you stare at you, they ponder your fate: 'Is this the man who shook the earth

• All past glories are lost – those seeking glory instead receive eternal disgrace

*and made the kingdoms tremble,
17the man who made the world a desert,
who overthrew its cities
and would not let his captives go home?'*

All the glories of the past are lost. The first becomes last in the eyes of those who stare. The one who wanted a glorious tomb that would be admired for ever, receives instead disgrace that will be remembered for ever.

*18All the kings of the nations lie in state,
each in his own mausoleum.
19But you are cast out of your tomb,
like a detested branch;
you are covered with the slain,
with those pierced by the sword,
those who descend to the rock bottom of the pit.
Like a corpse trampled underfoot,
20you will not be united with them in burial.*

Divine punishment publicly itemizes the reasons for the disgrace

Divine punishment publicly itemizes the reasons for the disgrace.

No one is punished by God without good reasons. The judge of all the earth does what is right. An account of the matter will be given by God and no one will have any complaints that can stand examination. The kings of Babylon will be charged with destruction and murder.

*For you have destroyed your land
and killed your people.*

Divine punishment will be eternally irreversible

Divine punishment will be eternally irreversible.

No kind of recovery or restoration ever comes to the wicked who die without repentance.

*The offspring of the wicked
will never be mentioned again
21Prepare a place to slaughter his sons
for the sins of their forefathers; they are
not to rise again to inherit the land and
cover the earth with their cities.*

• God endures wickedness for a long time, but when He ends it no recovery is possible

God endures wickedness for a long time but when he brings the matter to an end, it truly is an end and no recovery will ever take place.

*22'I will rise up against them,'
declares Yahweh Almighty.
'I will cut off from Babylon her name and survivors,
her offspring and descendants' – it is an oracle of Yahweh.
23'I will turn her into a place for owls
and into swampland;
I will sweep her with the broom of destruction,'
declares Yahweh Almighty.*

• Eventually every last bit of wickedness will disappear

Eventually every last remainder of wickedness will disappear. God's broom will sweep wickedness away altogether.

God's plan is certain, and glimpses of its fulfilment are given as history moves forward

God's plan is certain, and glimpses of its fulfilment are given as history moves forward. At the time when Isaiah writes it is not the Babylonians that are troubling Judah but their neighbours, the Assyrians. God's words about the Babylonians are sure.

*24Yahweh Almighty has sworn,
'Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will stand.'*

The Assyrians are the forerunners of the Babylonians. A sample of what God will do with the Babylonians will be seen in the very near future, says Isaiah.

• Isaiah predicts that the Babylonians will attack after the Assyrians

²⁵I 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. ²⁶This is the plan determined for the whole world; this is the hand stretched out over the whole world. ²⁷For Yahweh Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? It is his hand that is stretched out, and who can turn it back?

• The entire world lies under God's judgement and needs someone who will bear the sins of many

We must keep our eye on the total movement of Isaiah's book as this unit comes to a close. A Saviour is needed for the pagan nations because they are doomed to wrathful judgement eventually and are likely to experience a foretaste of it at any moment. Babylon is one example, but there are others. The fact is: the entire world lies under God's judgement and needs Someone who will bear the sins of many.

13:1-14:27

Note

a. The preacher and theologian Martyn Lloyd-Jones accepted this view of the matter. See Westminster Record (Westminster Chapel, London), June 1962, pp. 73, 39.

Dr Michael Eaton (1942-2017) was highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. Born in the UK, he lived for many years in Kenya where he became a citizen. He was one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship in Nairobi. His Preaching through the Bible books are highly popular worldwide, written in a clear and down-to-earth style but underpinned by rigorous scholarship. Some of these books have been reformatted as individual sheets for personal and group study and preaching. The New Testament volumes have been re-edited and combined in the Branch Commentary. The Old Testament, including previously unpublished material will follow. More details: www.slices.org.uk.