

Isaiah 14

Isaiah 14:1-23

¹ For the LORD will have mercy on Jacob, and will still choose Israel, and settle them in their own land. The strangers will be joined with them, and they will cling to the house of Jacob. ² Then people will take them and bring them to their place, and the house of Israel will possess them for servants and maids in the land of the LORD; they will take them captive whose captives they were, and rule over their oppressors. ³ It shall come to pass in the day the LORD gives you rest from your sorrow, and from your fear and the hard bondage in which you were made to serve, ⁴ that you will take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say:

(From this point to the end is a song)

"How the oppressor has ceased, The golden city ceased! ⁵ The LORD has broken the staff of the wicked, The scepter of the rulers; ⁶ He who struck the people in wrath with a continual stroke, He who ruled the nations in anger, Is persecuted *and* no one hinders. ⁷ The whole earth is at rest *and* quiet; They break forth into singing. ⁸ Indeed the cypress trees rejoice over you, *And* the cedars of Lebanon, *Saying*, 'Since you were cut down, No woodsman has come up against us.'

⁹ "Hell from beneath is excited about you, To meet *you* at your coming; It stirs up the dead for you, All the chief ones of the earth; It has raised up from their thrones All the kings of the nations. ¹⁰ They all shall speak and say to you: 'Have you also become as weak as we? Have you become like us? ¹¹ Your pomp is brought down to Sheol, *And* the sound of your stringed instruments; The maggot is spread under you, *And* worms cover you.' ¹² "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! *How* you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! ¹³ For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; ¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.' ¹⁵ Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit. ¹⁶ "Those who see you will gaze at you, *And* consider you, *saying*: 'Is this the man who made the earth tremble, Who shook kingdoms, ¹⁷ Who made the world as a wilderness *And* destroyed its cities, *Who* did not open the house of his prisoners?' ¹⁸ "All the kings of the nations, All of them, sleep in glory, Everyone in his own house; ¹⁹ But you are cast out of your grave Like an abominable branch, *Like* the garment of those who are slain, Thrust through with a sword, Who go down to the stones of the pit, Like a corpse trodden underfoot. ²⁰ You will not be joined with them in burial, Because you have destroyed your land *And* slain your people. The brood of evildoers shall never be named. ²¹ Prepare slaughter for

his children Because of the iniquity of their fathers, Lest they rise up and possess the land, And fill the face of the world with cities." ²² "For I will rise up against them," says the LORD of hosts, "And cut off from Babylon the name and remnant, And offspring and posterity," says the LORD. ²³ "I will also make it a possession for the porcupine, And marshes of muddy water; I will sweep it with the broom of destruction," says the LORD of hosts.

As we read chapter 13 through chapter 20 of Isaiah it is as if God, from a position of a satellite, gives us a running narrative on how He is going to judge the nations in what historians call the fertile crescent. God put his people in the middle of it, and He is about to judge **it** along with His people.

Babylon in 13 and 14, Assyria in 14, Philistia in 14, Moab in 15 and 16, Damascus and Israel in 17 and 18 and finally Egypt in 19 and 20.

Have you ever heard Christianity referred to as if it is the religion of the white man or the western world? What we see in the pages of Isaiah is that really, our God is the God of the whole world. Who chooses to worship Him is **completely irrelevant** to who God is. We tend to view everything from a **human** perspective. So something only has credibility if we **give it** credibility. The people in the middle east during the time of Isaiah would have limited Yahweh to being the God of the Jews. And as such, they would have viewed this Jewish god as being overthrown when their country was overthrown. But Isaiah shows what it looks like from God's perspective. The God understood by some as being the Jewish God will never cease being God, even if no one at all chose to believe in Him. Such a thing will never be the case, but if it were to happen, it would not change anything. Our **verification** or **repudiation** of God does nothing to interfere with God's absolute power and authority.

Here was a very good quote.

The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is not a local deity, not a tribal god, not an American pet. He is the Lord of the nations, they are all accountable to him, their fates and fortunes are in his hands alone, he will have the final word, and he will vindicate the faith of his people. Individuals are judged in eternity, but nations are judged in time. And time is moving inexorably forward, through the tremors of present judgments to the final shaking of all things on the day of the Lord. That certainty helps us to live above the madness and to care for others in their distress.

Preaching the Word - Preaching the Word – Isaiah: God Saves Sinners.

So if people are ignorant of this reality and they find it comforting to cut up world's religions as if they all have the same merit, so be it. Maybe that will give them some comfort on their way to ultimate destruction. But it isn't true and it has never been true. Like the song says, **Our God reigns.**

Isaiah 14:1-32

¹ For the LORD will have mercy on Jacob, and will still choose Israel, and settle them in their own land. The strangers will be joined with them, and they will cling to the house of Jacob. ² Then people will take them and bring them to their place, and the house of Israel will possess them for servants and maids in the land of the LORD; they will take them captive whose captives they were, and rule over their oppressors. ³ It shall come to pass in the day the LORD gives you rest from your sorrow, and from your fear and the hard bondage in which you were made to serve, ⁴ that you will take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say:

Have you ever had a time in your life when you thought that **God had given up on you?** Like you were past any plan that God may have for your life? Maybe your rebellion or sinful habits had taken you to a place that you thought God could not return you from.

Well that is where the people of Judah were, if they even had enough sense to see it. They were about to be hauled off to a foreign country because they had been useless to God. They had run after idols, they had chosen self service over justice and kindness to the poor. They had chosen to trust human political alliances over God's strong arm that is mighty to save. This prophecy is actually written about these people **after** they were hauled off. Think about it. Of what use would these failures now serve. The idea of this Jewish God had been a laughing stock by these unfaithful people. Their neighbors would have looked at their country and thought, they don't have much of a God, much like our onlookers at some points in our lives might look on and say, I am not impressed by the God that person serves. He certainly doesn't seem to be depended upon for much.

At this point the Jewish people may have thought, as they sat in Babylon, that God had abandoned His covenant with His people. They may have thought, we have really done it this time. We have driven God away by our rebellion. He is gone, and that is what we deserve. We have been abandoned by our heavenly husband due to our unfaithfulness to Him.

But God saw fit for these Jewish captives to carry this promise of God with them. This promise was given by Isaiah well ahead of their captivity. There would be some who would be desperate to get back into fellowship with their God. They would be drawn by His Holy Spirit to Himself. And they may find themselves memorizing this scripture we are reading this morning as a way to get through their daily turmoil of soul.

Isn't it so good of God to give us the promises we need to overcome the seemingly dismal truths we experience in our lives?

Scholars tell us that the wording of this passage would remind the hearers of the Exodus of Moses and the people coming out of Egypt. It paints Exodus part 2. We need to understand that this is another one of those prophecies that some of it was literally fulfilled and the rest of it hasn't yet. That makes it difficult to know exactly which was which. This was true when Christ came bodily to the planet and it is true now. It takes discernment to apply these passages correctly.

But what we have are the people coming back from the land of their captivity.

The strangers will be joined with them, and they will cling to the house of Jacob.

When the Israelites came into Canaan this happened often. Rahab from Jericho would be a prime example. Isaiah is saying that the same thing will happen when they return again. They will tend to draw some foreigners inside their fold.

; they will take them captive whose captives they were, and rule over their oppressors.

Did this happen when Cyrus sent Nehemiah back to Jerusalem? Maybe so. They definitely had oppressors who they overcame? That would seem to be more fitting than some ultimate settling in Canaan for eternity. It is difficult for me, at least, to imagine saved people having other saved people as servants. So it would seem to me this would have to be fulfilled during the earthly return that happened in Nehemiah's time.

³ It shall come to pass in the day the LORD gives you rest from your sorrow, and from your fear and the hard bondage in which you were made to serve, ⁴ that you will take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say:

We see first the very encouraging fact that God has never totally abandoned His people. We see it in the history of the Jews and we see it in our own histories. Even as believers, when we understood that **the last thing we deserved** was God's favor, it was **then** that God provided it. When the time in the woodshed was over, we received what He had for us all along if we had just been wise enough to wait on Him for it.

Really, why do we run? Where does it get us? We can know for certain it will never bring us the good things that God has in store for us. We only get trinkets intended to entice us **away** from God and the guilt that is intended to keep us **from going back** to God.

Look what it gave to God's people in our passage. Sorrow, fear, hard bondage. Sound familiar? The farther we have gone into the devil's bondage, the more this would have described our lives. No peace. No love. No fulfillment.

Now, when God restores our fellowship with Him, He gives us a taunt to our enemy. And here is the taunt the Judeans were given.

Now the next passage is in the form of a funeral dirge. The people listening would have understood this immediately. But it wasn't really used at a funeral. Because it is referring to someone who **had no** funeral. The subject of the song is a tyrant

who won't have a proper funeral. So it isn't exactly going to be lofty in its praise. One commentator described it as a taunt in the guise of a lament.

It is interesting to see the creative expressions that are used in the Bible to stir up our minds and our imaginations. We are given powerful word pictures and colorful expressions to capture our attention and aid our understanding. If someone thinks the Bible is boring, it is because they haven't read it.

The first subject of this song is the king of Babylon, the oppressor (v.4);

"How the oppressor has ceased, The golden city ceased! ⁵ The LORD has broken the staff of the wicked, The scepter of the rulers; ⁶ He who struck the people in wrath with a continual stroke, He who ruled the nations in anger, Is persecuted *and* no one hinders.

There is an expression that says the "Mills of God grind slow but exceedingly fine." It's first form is attributed to a Greek skeptic, but there is a lot of truth in the statement.

God is going to get the job of judgment on sin done. Sometimes He will do it in this life, but always he will get it done in the next.

God is telling His people through Isaiah that His people will be able make this taunt about Nebuchadnezzar. Those who appear untouchable in their power and prestige will be brought down by the hand of God. It may seem like God does not care because He moves so slowly at times. But He will bring them all down.

People like Mr. Trump and Mr. Putin are in great danger spiritually. It is far too easy for them to believe what **they see and experience** rather than what God says. It is easy for them to think that they actually possess the power they have **apart** from the hand of God. It is easy for them to think that they can do whatever they want to do because they have the power to do it. It is easy for them to think that they can get away with it, that they are not responsible to answer to God. But they always will. They always will.

Nebuchadnezzar was actually taken to God's woodshed a few times while he lived. God gave him some insights that many worldly kings never got. But evidently it did not change who he was. But it may have brought some relief to His people.

We, as Christians, should never become overly impressed with political power. There is always a clock ticking. And at the end of it stands God.

⁷ The whole earth is at rest *and* quiet; They break forth into singing. ⁸ Indeed the cypress trees rejoice over you, *And* the cedars of Lebanon, *Saying*, 'Since you were cut down, No woodsman has come up against us.' ⁹ "Hell from beneath is excited about you, To meet *you* at your coming; It stirs up the dead for you, All the chief ones of the earth; It has raised up from their thrones All the kings of the nations. ¹⁰ They all shall speak and say to you: 'Have you also become as weak as we? Have you become like us? ¹¹ Your pomp is brought down to Sheol,

And the sound of your stringed instruments; The maggot is spread under you, And worms cover you.'

What we see here are the benefits of the death of a wicked ruler.

When the Hitlers and the Saddam Husseins and the Lennons and Stalins of the world die, there are celebrations. When good leaders die, there is mourning. Nebuchadnezzar's death resulted in celebration. The people see **the benefit of his passing** more than **the benefit of his leadership**. That is a sad state and an example we should try to avoid in all of our positions of leadership.

What a hideous picture Isaiah portrays to us. Here is Nebuchadnezzar showing up in hell. And what he finds is just the opposite of how he had things in his life. Everyone is mocking him. The onlookers bemoan the fact that they now have none of their prior power, and the King of Babylon is right there with them. They are all in this dismal state together. Notice too it says all the kings of the nations are there. While I am sure there are some exceptions, there probably aren't many. Those who are morally least qualified to lead are often those who pursue the job the most energetically.

I am not sure that this is all written to be understood literally. But we get the picture one way or the other. The position to best evaluate a person's **success or failure** in life is not **now**. It is after God has ended the project. It is **then** that the truth of what a person has really accomplished will be shown.

The kings in hell aren't going to look like much of a success on that day. But oh how the righteous will shine in that day. Men and women who believed God to the point that He made a difference in everything they did in life, those people will be shown to be the great successes in this life. They will be the heroes of faith, the ones who show us how life should have been lived.

And the ones the world now thinks are great? They will be surrounded by all the others the world considered great, and there will be no consolation for any of them. Keep that in mind when you see the tv shows and news broadcasts and magazine covers. The worms await if these individuals will not submit to the Lord Jesus Christ.

¹² **"How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! ¹³ For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; ¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'** ¹⁵ **Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit.**

Now we move from the king of Babylon to Satan himself, as if they are the same person.

There were a couple of quotes that brought out some truths worth considering.

When Satan works his malign will through rulers of this world, he reproduces his own wicked qualities in them, so that they become virtual shadows of which he is the substance.

Expositor's Bible Commentary, The - The Expositor's Bible Commentary – Volume 6: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel.

All rulers of international significance whose overweening pride and arrogance bring them to ruin under the hand of God's judgment illustrate both the satanic and the Antichrist principles, for these principles are really one.

Expositor's Bible Commentary, The - The Expositor's Bible Commentary – Volume 6: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel.

I don't know about you, but I am getting a dismal outlook on world leadership based on this passage.

This passage is often used as the one that gives us Satan's motivation for rebelling against God. And I think rightfully so.

We could have a whole month spent on this passage to teach us the foolishness of rebellion.

Ultimately, all rebellion is like the devil's rebellion. He was the perfect example. He had relationship with God. He was in the inside circle. He was likely the highest of the angels. But somehow that wasn't enough. One could wonder how such a thing could be. But there was never a prior example of rebellion. Lucifer was about to do a new thing. Ever since then, there hasn't been a **new** thing in terms of evil. Lucifer was going to try to replace God and take His seat. One would think he would not be so stupid. But somehow he thought he could win. He didn't. He never will.

Now Satan applies himself in inspiring foolish humans to follow his lead. And the better he does it, the more anti-Christ that person becomes. The final version portrayed in Revelation is as much like Satan as a person will ever be.

According to John there have been lots of anti-christs. In fact, every rebellion against God has some anti-christ spirit in it. But the anti-Christ spirit has been escalating over time. And soon it will reach its apex. Christians will be the target of this ruler. He will make it awful for those who love and follow Christ. Every world media will be used to target just how bad these Christians are for the world government's progression. And then boom. It all ends at the hand of a returning Christ.

Our text says that this is what was in both Satan's heart and Nebuchadnezzar's heart- , **I will be like the Most High.'**

Isn't that what our flesh always wants? We want everyone to serve us. We want everyone to bow down to us. We don't want to admit our faults. We don't want to take the time to consider if we have flaws that create the responses we get from our fellow humans. It is so very easy to think that everything is someone else's fault for not holding us in high enough regard. We want to think- I am right.

I am significant. I am amazing. Worship me. Give me what I want. Serve me. Adore me.

These are all from the seed of the same thought. "I will be like the Most High". But we aren't. Not at all. And that is the work of God in every true child of His. He shows us who **we really are**. And He weans us from the idea that we deserve anything good from Him, we especially are not fit to sit on His throne.

As I was considering this it dawned on me that there is one thing that the devil will never do. There is one thing that the spirit of the anti-christ will never produce in a person. It is to analyze ones words, thought and actions to consider their source. He will never inspire us to have truth in our inmost places. He will never have us look to find the lies we believe about ourselves so we can replace them with truth.

While we may not think we have any of this influence in us, consider this. When someone tells you something that might be wrong with you, how long do you take to consider what they say before you respond? Because it takes time to consider why you do what you do. If your response is normally immediate, if it normally designed to shut down the person who is confronting you, odds are that truth is not the goal. Maintaining your status is the goal. Shutting off the threat to our position is the goal. Truth takes time. Some questions take time to consider. If your response is immediate, it is probably not sincere. There are exceptions. There are things we know exactly why we did them. But the only way we know that is if we spent serious time and energy thinking about them. How many people have you dealt with that think they know exactly why they did something without any thought given? When you get a response from a person in that position, what you are probably getting is a theory, not a fact. And when a human gives you a theory about themselves, it is rarely going to be to the negative.

The opposite of the devil's mindset is humility. Humility strives to know the truth, no matter how bad that makes us look. Humility tells the truth, no matter how hard it is to get to. Humility refuses to believe our theories about ourselves. It looks at the facts to determine what the truth is. It is a very rare quality.

If you want to wean yourself from the devil's default mentality and from the position that flesh gravitates toward, have the courage to look at the truth and tell the truth to yourself and others. It takes time. It takes work. And it hurts. It sometimes surprises us with the evil we see. It is often unpleasant. But it avails you to the help you need from God and from others.

What we see in the rest of our passage seems to come back to the real king of Babylon. It talks about the horror he dished out.

But this king ended up not even being given a normal funeral. He lost his dignity even in death. He lost his power. He lost his kingdom. He lost his children. He lost his reputation. Everything he lived for he lost at death.

We learn that God killed this king's children so that his influence would not spread. He stopped them from making cities everywhere. God is never handicapped from stopping evil's influence. And what is the end result?

²² "For I will rise up against them," says the LORD of hosts, "And cut off from Babylon the name and remnant, And offspring and posterity," says the LORD.

²³ "I will also make it a possession for the porcupine, And marshes of muddy water; I will sweep it with the broom of destruction," says the LORD of hosts.

God was not going to allow the family tree of this wicked king to bear its wicked fruit. He was going to nip it in the bud. Now surely the devil will recreate this horrible influence through another blood line. But God wanted history to go long enough to fill his eternity with all the people that He wanted.

Everything that the king of Babylon prided himself with was lost in the end. They say that Babylon was an absolutely amazing city in its time. Nebuchadnezzar had one of the purist authority structures for a king. His word was law. He didn't need any permission. He didn't need to submit to written laws. King Nebuchadnezzar was the epitome of world power and world success. But His destruction at the hand of God was a certainty. A clock was ticking. And when the time arrived, it would be clear who really holds the ultimate power in this world. We need to keep that in mind as we think about the situation in the world. God says, I will sweep Babylon with the broom of destruction. Ladies, do you see sweeping as a violent, powerful, dramatic kind of action? I would guess not. You probably think of it more a mundane task that you may need to do from time to time. That is the word picture here.

When God gets out His broom, it isn't a big accomplishment to Him, but it will have devastating effects on this spinning globe.

I hope that this study in Isaiah is honing our view of God. I hope we are letting it sink in who this God is that we say we serve, that we say we believe. I hope we are grasping just how big the implications are in following a God like our God. He truly is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Are we submitting our time and energies and thoughts and actions and resources to Him as if He is? We only have so much time left to do so. His clock is ticking. He will get out his broom. Are we living preparing for that great and final day? Will we be pleased to present God with what we have done with the life he has given us?