



Isaiah 14:1-11

Restoration of Judah ~ Downfall of the King of Babylon ~ The Underworld

Sometimes restoration comes as we align ourselves with the Author and Perfecter of our faith. This is a beautiful thing! At other times, our restoration comes when our adversaries are “taken out” at the hands of a Benevolent Benefactor. This was the case with Israel. Even though their Lord had led them into captivity in Babylon as discipline for their rebellion, He was not going to abandon them.

This is very good news for us in America. Knowing the character of God, it’s in conceivable that the God of the Universe will simply excuse our rebellion as a nation. Chapter 14 gives hope to those who fear the Lord might abandon them completely. He is the one who fights for his people, Israel, and he will fight for us as well.

Who is the king of Babylon! We will find a couple different options as we look to the commentaries. Some say the king is Satan himself. Some say the king is Sennacherib. This is not a problem for us. Our King is well known and believed. We trust His leadership and have placed our future in His hands. Why? Because He is a Good God!

English Standard (ESV)	Passion Notes	Passion Translation (TPT)
<p>Isaiah 14:1 For the LORD will have compassion on Jacob and will again choose Israel, and will set them in their own land, and sojourners will join them and will attach themselves to the house of Jacob. ² And the peoples will take them and bring them to their place, and the house of Israel will possess them in the LORD’s land as male and female slaves. They will take captive those who were their captors, and rule over those who oppressed them.</p>	<p>a 14:1 Or “to Jacob.” See Rom. 9–11. b 14:1 See 1 Kings 8:56; Isa. 32:18. c 14:1 Or “house of Jacob.” “Foreigners” (gentiles) and Jews make up “the one new race of humanity.” See Eph. 2:11–22. d 14:2 See Isa. 49:22; 60:9; 66:20. They will bring them to their own place; that is, into the body of Christ (John 14:1–3; 1 Cor. 12:18; Eph. 4:16). e 14:2 Or “house of Israel.” f 14:2 Or “possess them as menservants and maidservants.” g 14:2 See Ps. 126. h 14:2 See Isa. 60:14. The oppressors today are Satan (Rom. 16:20) and the mind of man (2 Cor. 10:3–5).</p>	<p>Isaiah 14:1 The Lord Yahweh will most certainly show tender mercy to the Israelites. a He will choose them again and settle them in their own land. b Even foreigners will accompany them and join with the Jewish people. c ² Nations will take them back to their own place, d and the Jews e will own their enemies f as their inheritance in the land Yahweh gave them. They will take their captors captive g and rule over those who once oppressed them. h</p>

English Standard (ESV)	Passion Translation (TPT)	Passion Translation (TPT)
<p>³ When the LORD has given you rest from your pain and turmoil and the hard service with which you were made to serve, ⁴ you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon: “How the oppressor has ceased, the insolent fury ceased! ⁵ The LORD has broken the staff of the wicked, the scepter of rulers, ⁶ that struck the peoples in wrath with unceasing blows, that ruled the nations in anger with unrelenting persecution. ⁷ The whole earth is at rest and quiet; they break forth into singing. ⁸ The cypresses rejoice at you, the cedars of Lebanon, saying, ‘Since you were laid low, no woodcutter comes up against us.’</p> <p>⁹ Sheol beneath is stirred up to meet you when you come; it rouses the shades to greet you, all who were leaders of the earth; it raises from their thrones all who were kings of the nations. ¹⁰ All of them will answer and say to you: ‘You too have become as weak as we! You have become like us!’ ¹¹ Your pomp is brought down to Sheol, the sound of your harps; maggots are laid as a bed beneath you, and worms are your covers.</p>	<p>i 14:3 See Matt. 11:28–30; Rom. 6:1–14; Heb. 3–4.</p> <p>j 14:4 “Proverb” is the Hebrew word <i>mashal</i>, a homonym for both “proverb” (Prov.1:1) and “to rule (as king),” “to triumph,” or “to take dominion.” The life and power of “Babylon” (confusion) is conquered by the indwelling life of Christ.</p> <p>k 14:4 Or “The golden city has ceased.”</p> <p>l 14:5 A “brutal rod,” a metonymy, represents the authority of wicked rulers.</p> <p>m 14:7 With the oppressive tyranny of the systems of Babylon destroyed, the prophet now sees the people break out with rejoicing and singing. See Isa. 44:23; 49:13; 52:9; 54:1; 55:12.</p> <p>n 14:8 In the Christian tradition, the cypress is a symbol of death, life, and resurrection. The cypress supplied boards and timber for doors (1 Kings 6:15–23) and beams for roofing the temple (2 Chron. 3:5). The towering cedars of Lebanon speak of God’s anointed servants standing tall and upright, bringing favor to the world (Ps. 92:12).</p> <p>o 14:9 Or “Sheol,” which represents both the underworld and the personification of the evil it represents.</p> <p>p 14:9 Or “great goats,” a likely symbol of tyrants, or “It roused all the giants that ruled the earth” (LXX).</p> <p>q 14:9 Or “kings.” These former rulers are depicted in the underworld (Sheol) as sitting on thrones of darkness.</p> <p>r 14:11 Or “the sound of your harps.” The Hebrew word for “harp” can also be translated “jars” and “pitchers,” with an implication of the noise of clashing jars being broken.</p>	<p>³ In that day, when the Lord Yahweh has given you rest from your pain, trouble, and cruel bondage, i ⁴ you will jeer at the king of Babylon and recite this proverb: j “Your oppressor has been stilled and your onslaught is over! k ⁵ The Lord Yahweh has shattered the staff of the wicked, the brutal rod l of the rulers. ⁶ With their unceasing blows they used it cruelly to strike down nations. They subdued nations in anger with unrelenting persecution. ⁷ But now the whole earth rests and is at peace. It bursts out with singing; m ⁸ even the cypresses and cedars n of Lebanon join in, rejoicing over your demise, saying, ‘Now that you were laid low, no woodsman comes to cut us down.’”</p> <p>⁹ The underworld o is all astir in preparation, ready to meet you when you show up. It rouses the spirits of the dead to greet you! All the former tyrants p and despots q rise from their thrones! ¹⁰ One and all will say to you: “Look at you! You’ve become as weak as we are. Now you’re just like us! ¹¹ Your pompous pride brought you down to the underworld with the hum of harps. r But you will lie on a bed of maggots, and a blanket of worms will cover you!</p>

BIBLE KNOWLEDGE COMMENTARY ~ John A. Martin

- God's compassion on Israel (14:1-2)

- **14:1-2.** The fall of Babylon (and of other nations, 14:24-21:17; 23) would assure God’s people that He would work on their behalf. In spite of the destruction to come on the nation Israel, God will again have compassion. This contrasts with 9:17, where Isaiah said God in punishing His nation would not have compassion (“pity” translates the same word as “compassion” in 14:1). Once again He will choose the nation to be His people, as He had done at Mount Sinai. Jacob and Israel here probably refer to all 12 tribes, as they do in Exodus 19:3. God’s choosing of Israel (and of Judah, Jerusalem, David, and Solomon) is an important Old Testament theme (cf. Deut. 7:6), [Vol. 1, p. 1061] especially in 1 and 2 Chronicles and the Psalms (1 Chron. 16:13; 28:4-5, 10; 29:1; 2 Chron. 6:6, 34, 38; 7:12; 12:13; 33:7; Pss. 33:12; 47:4; 78:68, 70; 89:3; 105:6, 43; 106:5; 132:13; 135:4). The fact that non-Israelites (aliens) will join

Israel is also a recurring theme in Scripture (Isa. 56:6; 60:10; 61:5). Israel's role will be reversed (14:2): rather than Israel being exiled as captives in other nations, other nations will serve Israel. Israel will be prominent.

- **A taunt against Babylon** (14:3-21)

• (1) **The defeat of the tyrant** (14:3-8).

- **14:3-4a.** Verses 3-21 record a song or a taunt that will be sung by people freed from the fear of the king of Babylon. The song's overall message is that people will be amazed that this great king is cast down like the monarchs of other cities. People will rejoice in his demise for they had lived in fear of him.

• Who is this king of Babylon? Many expositors hold the view that he is Satan, the ultimate personification of pride. Tertullian (ca. A.D. 160-230) and Gregory the Great (ca. 540-604) were the first to present this view, now widely accepted. Though verses 12-14 seem to support the view, little else in the chapter does. Though many hold that verses 12-14 refer to the entrance of sin into the cosmos by Satan's fall, that subject seems a bit forced in this chapter. (However, Ezek. 28:12-19 does refer to Satan's fall; see comments there.)

• It seems more natural to view this proud tyrant as Sennacherib (705-681). There are interesting parallels between the description of the tyrant in Isaiah 14 and the curse against Sennacherib in 37:21-29. But wasn't Sennacherib king of Assyria rather than Babylon? He was king of both because Babylon was a vassal of Assyria from the end of the 10th century B.C. Occasionally the vassal ruler over Babylon revolted against Assyria, but in 728 Tiglath-Pileser III, Assyria's aggressive ruler from 745 to 727, was crowned king of Babylon. Nineveh was Assyria's capital, but Babylon became the center of its cultural life. Because of this assimilation, the worship of Babylon's god Marduk gained popularity in Assyria. Sargon II (722-705) and Sennacherib (705-681), later Assyrian monarchs, also called themselves kings of Babylon. After Sargon II died in 705 there was much rebellion in the Assyrian Empire. The Elamites put Mushezib-Marduk over Babylon (692-689); he made an alliance with several nations including the Medes. To subdue the rebellion in Babylon, Sennacherib marched there in 689 and destroyed it. He even released over the city's ruins huge volumes of water to attempt to devastate the city (Erlandsson, *The Burden of Babylon*, p. 91). However, a few years later the city was rebuilt by Sennacherib's son and successor Esarhaddon.

• Sennacherib's death by assassination (2 Kings 19:37) eight years after he destroyed Babylon would give great joy and comfort to the surrounding nations, especially Judah. (Sennacherib was the king who had failed in his attempt 12 years earlier, 701 B.C., to capture Jerusalem, Isa. 37; 2 Kings 18:13-19:36.)

- **14:4b-8.** The one whose fury (v. 4; cf. v. 6) would end is the oppressor who had struck down peoples and aggressively subdued nations. His death would bring rest ... peace and joy (singing) to the entire region. This rest is pictured symbolically by the great cedar trees of Lebanon saying that they were then safe. No longer would they be in danger of being cut ... down to provide tribute to Sennacherib.

• (2) **The Death of the Tyrant.**

- **14:9-11.** The grave is pictured as a great throne room where the leaders and kings of the earth go when they die. Spirits of the departed translates which is rendered "departed spirits" in 26:14 and "dead" in 26:19; Job 26:5 (see comments on Job 26:5). This tyrant (Sennacherib) is envisioned as having died and as being met by the kings already in the grave. Amazed at the fate of this glorious king, whose splendor had surpassed theirs, they were all astir. His

coming would even make them rise from their thrones (as if they sat on thrones in the grave) to greet him. They would act amazed that he had become weak and dead like them. Though he had lived in pomp with music (harps) he would now lie in corruption. Maggots and worms would decompose his body in the grave.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. When the Lord says he will have “compassion” on Israel, what is he giving them as a result? What will they receive because of his compassion?
2. God has compassion on you and I as well. Name 3 things we receive from the Father as a result of his compassion for us.
3. Are today’s Jesus followers a captive people? If yes, what is holding us captive? How might the Lord be preparing to set us free? If you think we are free now, how might he use us to free others?
4. Who is fighting for you? Who are the people in your life who will contend for you well-being, watch over you and speak into your life. Why do you think these people are willing to invest into your life the way they do? Who are you fighting for? How is the battle going?