

The Proud King
Isaiah 14:12-21

October 18, 2009

A. Introduction – outline of Isaiah 14

B. The Proud King of Babylon

1. His proud title (v 12)

2. His proud intentions (vv 13, 14)

3. His proud acts (vv 12, 16-17, 20)

4. His downfall (v 12)

5. His inglorious end (vv 16, 18-20)

C. The Proud Power Behind the King

1. alluded to in this passage

2. his names (or title) – assumed, actual, descriptive

3. his intentions

4. his acts

5. his past downfall

6. his final end

D. Application – this is important for me, because ...

A. Introduction

1. Shelley happened to read an account of the fragments of a giant statue being found in the Egyptian desert with the inscription intact, and wrote this poem, 'Ozymandias'—{2}.

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed;
And on the pedestal these words appear:
'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings;
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!'
Nothing besides remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

- a. this records the words of a proud king; a king who like his statue had long ago fallen into decay
 - b. « our Scripture reading today is Isaiah 14 and in it we find the words of another proud king, likewise doomed to decay. »
2. This 14th chapter of Isaiah consists of several sections
 - a. verses 1-23 deal with Israel's redemption and salvation from their exile in the land of Babylon
 - (A) an exile which they suffered on account of their sin
 - (B) an exile of which God had forewarned and foretold them: 'Since the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have sent you all My servants the prophets, daily rising early and sending them. "Yet they did not listen to Me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck; they

did more evil than their fathers.’ (Jeremiah 7:25-26)

- b. verses 24-27 prophecy judgement upon Assyria, and,
- c. verses 28-32 of judgement upon Philistia
- d. let's survey that first section on Babylon for a moment
 - (A) it begins with a promise of restoration of Israel to the promised land from out of Babylon, verses 1-3
 - (B) then follows a taunt, a parable, a proverb, or song of triumph that Israel will sing against Babylon's king, when that restoration takes place, verses 4-21
 - (C) and the section closes with a statement of judgement on Babylon, verses 22-23

3. our text is Isaiah 14:12-21

- a. which is the closing part of that taunt or proverb
- b. it contains a description of the proud king of Babylon
- c. but that description also reflects the proud power behind that King
- d. and these we shall examine this morning

B. The Proud King of Babylon

1. His title was proud

- a. look at how he is addressed in verse 12b – ‘... O star of the morning, son of dawn ...’
- b. the two parts of this title both have the same meaning
- c. in Hebrew, that title is, Heylel Ben-Shacher, or, literally, ‘shining one, son of dawn’
- d. now the Babylonians along with the Assyrians and Persians were strong believers in astrology, and the king was taking his title – or one of them – from the stars and planets
- e. one such name was this descriptive term for the planet we call ‘Venus,’ the morning (or evening) star
- f. when this was translated into Greek, the name given was ‘Heosphoros,’ meaning, ‘bringer of morn, morning star,’ a companion to the alternate name, ‘Phosphorus’ meaning ‘bringer of light’
- g. when Jerome translated the Bible into Latin, he used the Latin name for Venus, Lucifer, or ‘light bearer,’
- h. this may help you to understand whatever title you have for this king in your translation – but what a proud title!

2. His intentions were proud
 - a. we can find these intentions in verses 13 and 14
 - b. he sought the exaltation of his own person
 - (A) 13a – ‘But you said in your heart, “I will ascend to heaven; ...”, and
 - (B) 14a – ‘I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;’
 - (C) with these words, the speaker is the king himself
 - (D) under the prophetic inspiration of Isaiah, the taunt delves to the very heart, innermost being of the king
 - (E) revealing his proud intentions
 - c. he sought also the exaltation of his rule
 - (A) 13b – ‘I will raise my throne above the stars of God.’
 - (B) since the stars were objects of worship, this was, in effect the desire to
 - d. participate in the rule of the gods
 - (A) 13c – ‘And I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north.’
 - (B) Job chapter one, recounts how the angels, called there ‘the sons of God,’ came to present themselves before the Lord, and that Satan was among them
 - (C) this truth, in corrupted form was found in paganism where the gods would assemble, usually in a mountain and usually in the north, to hold counsel – probably the best known example to us is of Mount Olympus
 - (D) the king of Babylon desired to be part of that counsel
 - e. and, so he sought to make himself like God Himself
 - (A) 14b – ‘I will make myself like the Most High’
 - (B) and here the language switches from paganism to one of the names of the one true God
 - f. how proud were the intentions of this king of Babylon!
3. His acts were proud for in pursuing his intentions
 - a. He caused the nations to fall
 - (A) 12d – ‘You who have weakened the nations’

- (B) like many a dictator since
 - (C) the surrounding nations were but a stepping stone to accomplishing his purpose, to gaining himself glory
 - b. He spread fear of himself throughout the world
 - (A) 16b – ‘Is this the man who made the earth to tremble, Who shook kingdoms?’
 - (B) a spirit that we have seen in our own times in men such as Idi Amin, Saddam Hussein and Osama ben Laden
 - c. He did this by wasting the inhabited lands
 - (A) 17a – ‘Who made the world a wilderness And overthrew its cities’
 - (B) anything in this king’s way was a target for terror
 - d. He held his prisoners without mercy or release
 - (A) 17b – ‘Who did not allow his prisoners to go home?’
 - (B) the best of the conquered nations, such as Daniel and his 3 friends, were trained to be civil servants
 - (C) the poorest were distributed as slaves
 - e. And even his own land and his own people were but tools
 - (A) 20b – ‘Because you have ruined your country, You have slain your people.’
 - (B) many a conqueror has left behind him a ruined nation, in the pursuit of his aspirations
 - (C) Emperor Showa (Hirohito) of Japan, considered until 1945 officially as divine, descendant of the sun god; Stalin, the man of Steel of Russia; Adolph Hitler; the list goes on
 - f. the proud acts of the proud king lead to destruction
4. But the proud king is headed to a downfall
- a. the prophet’s first picture is addressed to
 - (A) the proud king seeking a place in the stars
 - (B) like a falling star he will plummet to earth
 - (C) 12a – ‘How you have fallen from heaven’
 - (D) a group of us were at a CBMC corn-roast north-west of Newmarket on afternoon, when a shooting star passed overhead, burning brightly, but, in a matter of seconds burned out, a mile or two away, with smoking embers falling to the ground – that is how this king will fall

- b. the prophet's second picture is addressed
 - (A) to the proud king who weakened, cut down nations
 - (B) 12c – 'You who have been cut down to earth'
 - (C) Nebuchadnezzar, before his 7-year humiliation, had a dream of a great tree, which in Daniel's interpretation was the king himself, cut down to just a stump
 - (D) this king's downfall will be like the cutting down of a great tree – in these verses Isaiah is speaking in the prophetic perfect – God said so; it is as good as done

5. His inglorious end

- a. it does not seem that in these verses that Isaiah is speaking a prophecy of any one king, but rather of the dynasty of kings ruling Babylon and of the privileges they took to themselves as rulers; but in the inglorious end, they describe Belshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar's grandson, who was partying while the Medes and Persians broke into the city and slew him and his people
- b. The proud king's inglorious end will be seen by all – 'Those who see you will gaze at you, They will ponder over you, saying, "Is this the man who made the earth tremble, Who shook kingdoms?"'
- c. The proud kings inglorious end is in sharp contrast to his glorious aspirations
 - (A) 18-20a – 'All the kings of the nations lie in glory, Each in his own tomb. But you have been cast out of your tomb Like a rejected branch, Clothed with the slain who are pierced with a sword, Who go down to the stones of the pit Like a trampled corpse. You will not be united with them in burial, ...'
 - (B) most people have some concern over their final resting place – which memorial garden and so on – but none more than the kings of the east; the Egyptians paid more attention to the dwellings of the dead than living
 - (C) but, in contrast to the normal practice for rulers, this king (and it certainly seems to be so in Belshazzar's case) will not have a place of burial of his own
 - (D) his memorial will bear neither honour or respect – any desecration of a cemetery today is taken seriously on account of showing respect – but none to this king
 - (E) he is like a rejected and despised tree – either as one prunes off a diseased limb and burns it to prevent the disease from spreading, or, the suggestion has been made of the casting away of a

branch as accursed if a man has been executed by hanging from it
d. the proud king, seeking glory has an inglorious end

C. The Proud Power Behind the King

1. in this descriptions – apt and fitting to the king of Babylon, to the rulers of that world kingdom – but yet
 - a. as seen for millennia, it also has allusions to
 - b. the proud power behind the proud king of world empires

2. in God’s word we can find his names
 - a. there are his assumed names – people use assumed names to deceive – he is a liar, and father of lies (John 8:44)
 - (A) in this passage we find an assumed name that he has been given: Lucifer, light bearer, or morning star
 - (1) but his is not rightfully his
 - (2) he is not a bearer of light, but of darkness
 - (3) he has stolen this name from the only One who rightfully deserves it – ‘I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.’ (Revelation 22:16)
 - (B) he is an angel of light – but that is only a masquerade – ‘No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.’ (2 Corinthians 11:14)
 - b. but the Bible informs us of his actual names
 - (A) in Hebrew he is Satan, the adversary of God’s people
 - (B) in Greek he is the Devil, the slanderer of God’s people
 - c. as well as telling us his descriptive names
 - (A) he is old serpent, who first deceived Eve and Adam: ‘And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.’ (Revelation 12:9)
 - (B) the next verse gives another description: ‘Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come,

for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night.'" (Revelation 12:10)

(C) he is the tempter, attaching Jesus in the wilderness

(D) 'in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.'(Ephesians 2:2), and closely related,

(E) 'In whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.'(2 Corinthians 4:4)

d. so, this proud power actively opposes Christ in the world

3. and we find His presumed intentions

a. as given in this passage, and in a similar passage in Ezekiel 28: in short, making himself like God

b. as is also revealed by his temptation of Adam & Eve – you shall be as gods

4. the Bible describes His cruel acts – this sums it up: 'Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour' (1 Peter 5:8)

5. The NT tells us of His past downfall

a. there are Jesus words when the 70 disciples came back from preaching the gospel: 'I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.' (Luke 10:18)

b. and as Jesus approached the cross he said, 'Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.' (John 12:31)

c. thus the believer in Jesus Christ can say, 'For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son' (Colossians 1:13 NAS95)

6. And we read of His final end in Revelation 20:10, 'And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.'

D. Conclusion

1. why talk about this proud king and the power behind him in a Christian church?
 - a. because he is the enemy of God, the originator of sin
 - b. his purpose is to keep every one of his subjects ignorant of the salvation from sin, and subvert them from the truth
 - c. we teach this, as Paul says, '[so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes.](#)' (2 Corinthians 2:11)
 - d. but also so that you may '[Put on the full armour of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.](#)' (Ephesians 6:11)
2. We face a defeated foe; lay hold of Christ & enjoy the victory.

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2. *Ozymandias*, by Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822), source, ‘English Writers’ revised edition, © 1951 by Ginn and Company