

SON OF THE MORNING

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Isaiah chapter 14 contains a detailed prophecy against the kingdom of Babylon and her king, specifically her last king. It is known from Daniel chapter 5 that this king was named Belshazzar. He is the one who received the famous “handwriting on the wall. The prophecy in Isaiah 14 is also famous, as it contains the single Bible reference with the term “Lucifer, son of the morning” in it (Isa 14:12). It is a strong religious tradition that Lucifer is a name for Satan, but Satan is not the subject of the prophecy in Isaiah 14. Isaiah 14:4 clearly establishes the context of the prophecy, with God’s instructions to the prophet Isaiah to “take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased!” Belshazzar is the king of Babylon who would earn God’s wrath and be subject to the fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 14.

The fall of Babylon

By the time King Nebuchadnezzar’s grandson Belshazzar acceded to the throne of the great empire, Babylon had been an oppressor, and had smitten “the people in wrath with a continual stroke,” and “ruled the nations in anger” (Isa 14:4-6). Therefore, God was going to break the staff of the wicked and the scepter of the rulers (Isa 14:5), and make the oppression to cease, and Babylon itself (“the golden city”) to cease (Isa 14:4). Babylon would be persecuted and none would hinder it (Isa 14:6). According to Isaiah’s prophecy, Babylon’s king would die when the empire fell. God said that the whole earth would be at rest and break into singing when the king of Babylon died (Isa 14:7). “Yea, the fir trees rejoice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, Since thou art laid down, no feller is come up against us. Hell (*Sheol*, or *Hades*, Psa 16:10 + Acts 2:27) from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirs up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us? Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee” (Isa 14:8-11). This was fulfilled when the kingdom of Babylon was overthrown by the Medes and Persians and king Belshazzar was killed in Daniel 5:24-31.

Belshazzar is Lucifer, son of the morning

Isaiah 14:12-15 is widely misunderstood as being about Satan, particularly his origin as the arch-enemy of all righteousness. These verses say, “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above

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(continued)

the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.” There is a very widely held tradition, rooted in these verses (and in Ezekiel 28:11-19), that Satan was once a righteous and faithful angel of God who then led a rebellion in heaven, desiring to overthrow God, and was consequently expelled from heaven along with his followers, and they have been fighting against God ever since. Isaiah 14:12 is the source of Satan’s traditional “title” of *Lucifer*. But Isaiah 14:12-15 is not about Satan at all (and neither is Ezekiel 28:11-19, which is about the king of Tyre). Isaiah 14:4 introduces these verses as a “proverb against the king of Babylon.” The king of Babylon, not Satan, is the “day-star” that was going to fall from “heaven” (i.e. the *sky*). He had weakened the nations and lifted himself up in pride to the point that he imagined himself to be like God (the king of Tyre did the same thing, Ezek 28:1-10). Now, God was going to bring him down. Babylon was going to fall. The Bible makes absolutely no mention of where Satan came from. Therefore, since God says nothing in His word about Satan’s origins, we must not make up our own doctrine from our own imagination (Deut 29:29; Prov 3:5, 1 Peter 4:11). What we believe should be in God’s word (Rom 10:17). God obviously did not deem it important or necessary for us to know where Satan came from.

The end of Belshazzar

As for *Lucifer*, the word in Hebrew (*heylei*) means *day-star*. Belshazzar as king of mighty Babylon, was indeed a bright star in the sky. But he was going to fall. After the king of Babylon died, his body would be cast out of his grave to be trodden under foot. God said, “All the kings of the nations, even all of them, lie in glory, every one in his own house. But thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch, and as the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword, that go down to the stones of the pit; as a carcass trodden under feet. Thou shalt not be joined with them in burial” (Isa 14:18-20). God was going to do this to him because Babylon had destroyed the land and people of Israel, and God said that “the seed of evildoers shall never be renowned” (Isa 14:20). Belshazzar was the one that had “made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms, that made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof, that opened not the house of his prisoners” (Isa 14:16-17). All of this was fulfilled upon king Belshazzar, the last king of Babylon (Dan 5:1-6,17-31)