

the Greeks to mean "book," and so led to the origin of our word "Bible."

### **Isaiah 13-14: The Burden of Babylon**

These chapters may be divided roughly into the following sections:

- 13:1 Title.
- 13:2-5 The Lord summons great hosts to battle.
- 13:6-18 A vivid description of upheaval and turmoil.
- 13:19-22 A picture of lasting desolation of the city of Babylon.
- 14:1-2 Blessing on Israel, including the supremacy of the Israelites over their previous oppressors.
- 14:3-20 A description of the fallen king of Babylon.
- 14:21-23 Summary of the destruction of Babylon.
- 14:24-28 Destruction in Israel of the Assyrian forces.

In these two chapters we have a vivid picture of disaster and destruction. A mighty city is overwhelmed and left as a permanent ruin. A haughty king tries to make himself equal with God, but fails and is cast into the pit, while his body lies unburied and dishonored. The section is entitled "The Burden of Babylon," and the name Babylon is used several times in the course of it. Should it be interpreted as a literal destruction of the city of Babylon which existed in the day of the prophet, and of the fate of its king? Or does the name "Babylon" here stand as a figure for something else?

It is a reasonable principle of Bible interpretation that in any passage the natural interpretation is to be accepted unless some other is clearly indicated. Occasionally someone says that he takes everything in the Bible literally. This statement merely proves that he knows very little about the Bible. Like all other literary works, the Bible contains many figures of speech. It is absurd to speak of taking everything in it literally. At the same time it is reasonable to say that we should try to take something as literal unless there is clear evidence that it is figurative. The great bulk of our material is bound to be literal but in the course of it there are scattered figures of speech. These figures of speech do