

And the people shall take them, and bring them to their place: and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the LORD for servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captives, whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors."

These verses say that those who have taken the Israelites captive and held them in subjection are to be taken captive by the Israelites and that the Israelites will rule over them and will possess them for servants and for handmaids. No such political reversal followed the actual overthrow of Babylon. When Cyrus conquered Babylon he gave the Jews permission to return to their own land and ordered that they receive help from the royal treasury in this undertaking; yet the Jews who returned were a comparatively small group, and in Jerusalem they were constantly troubled by enemies. At one time they were told to stop their work of rebuilding and it was only after a long period of time had elapsed that they received permission from the Persian government to continue it (Ezra 4:4-24). Their position was a rather precarious one. It was a great joy to them to be back in Jerusalem again, but no one could possibly consider the condition of the Jews when they returned from Babylonian captivity as fulfilling the wonderful statements of Isaiah 14:1-3. Surely this casts considerable doubt upon the idea of relating the whole of this section to the actual literal Babylon.

7. The character of the king of Babylon

In 14:4-20 a vivid picture is given of the pride of the fallen king of Babylon. He is described as one who is constantly boasting of his great power and of the destruction he causes. He is the oppressor (v. 4), the one "who smote the people in wrath with a continual stroke" (v. 6), "which didst weaken the nations" (v. 12), that "made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms" (v. 16) who "made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof" (v. 17). His own people regard him, not as a builder but as a destroyer, for it is said of him in verse 20 "because thou hast destroyed thy land, and slain thy people." The picture seems to describe a man whose pride is in military conquest and destruction. It could fit Hitler or Napoleon, and it could be appropriately