

Text: Isaiah 14:1-23

Title: "The Lord's lopsided victory over Babylon

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Introduction: In baseball, a series sweep happens when one team wins all the games of a set of consecutive games against the same opponent. The championship series in Major League Baseball is the World Series, which is a best-of-seven-games competition.

There have been 21 series sweeps of the World Series, where one team won the first four games to earn the championship. The last time that happened was in 2012, when the San Francisco Giants dominated the Detroit Tigers. Our own Red Sox team has managed to sweep the World Series twice, once in 2007 against the Colorado Rockies, and once in 2004 against the St. Louis Cardinals. In addition, the Boston Braves managed to sweep the Philadelphia Athletics in 1914. Each one of these 21 World Series sweeps may be described as a dominate, lopsided victory.

I refer to that metaphor because a similar metaphor is used at the end of our passage this morning. Our passage is about the battle of the ages between the Lord and Babylon. Isaiah is writing at a time before Babylon becomes the world's superpower that ultimately destroys Judah and Jerusalem according to God's judgment on His people. But Isaiah's text not only sees Babylon as that nation, but also as a type of the spirit of antichrist that has set the whole world in rebellion against God since the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11).

Isaiah speaks of Babylon here the way John speaks of Babylon in the Book of Revelation. In chapter 17, the apostle sees a great harlot riding on a scarlet beast, "and upon her forehead was a name written, 'Mystery, Babylon the Great,

the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth" (v. 5). Babylon's fall was pronounced in chapter 14. John wrote: "And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication" (v. 8).

That fall is what Isaiah refers to as a sweep (v. 23). In other words, Isaiah tells us that all that is opposed to our holy, righteous, sovereign, creator God of the Bible shall ultimately go down in defeat. It will be like the Lord taking a broom to sweep clean the dirty floor of His opposition.

Our passage is about the Lord's dominate, lopsided victory over Babylon - the victory of truth over lies, the victory of right over wrong, the victory of the beautiful over the ugly, the victory of Christ over Satan. As Isaiah describes this wonderful victory, he explains that three major factors are used by God to bring it about - Israel plays a role, Sheol plays a role (in Scripture, the place of the departed dead), and the Lord's declarations play a role in this victory.

#### I. The role of Israel in the Lord's lopsided victory over Babylon (vv. 1-8).

Illustration: I viewed last week the movie "Return to the Hiding Place." It is about college students in the Netherlands, whom Corrie ten Boom named her "Teenage Army," because they chose not to join the Nazi party and instead risked their lives in resistance of the Nazi occupation of their country. In addition to the many Jews who were saved by the ten Boom's "Hiding Place," these young resistance fighters also found refuge in her home.

It is estimated that 800 Jewish lives were saved from the Nazis by this Hiding Place. That is a wonderful number, until we learn that an estimated 102,000 Jews, roughly 75% of the

Jewish population in the Netherlands, were sent to Nazi death camps and murdered. Yet in spite of our memory of this holocaust, antisemitism is still a force of evil in our world today, including in the Netherlands.

“According to a 2023 report by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), Dutch Jews report some of the highest levels of fear in Europe regarding verbal abuse, social exclusion, and discrimination, especially in professional environments. The report found that nearly 35% of Dutch Jews avoid wearing symbols of their identity in public” (<https://www.algemeiner.com/2025/06/13/75-of-dutch-jews-were-killed-in-the-holocaust-those-left-now-face-increasing-threats-and-discrimination/>).

**Application:** Although Isaiah foresees the Lord’s lopsided victory over Babylon as a great day for Israel, he is clear that it is a victory that would not come easily. He says that victorious Israel shall remember what the violence of Babylon against her was like before the victory (vv. 4-6).

Throughout history, the Babylonian spirit of antichrist has been Israel’s oppressor (v. 4), wicked, politically powerful (v. 5), and relentless in their persecution of God’s chosen people and other nations (v. 6; note ESV translation: “[He] that struck the peoples in wrath with unceasing blows, that ruled the nations in anger with unrelenting persecution”).

This painful history notwithstanding, Israel has a role in the Lord’s final lopsided victory over Babylon. In spite of their sin, the Lord has mercy on them (v. 1). That word *mercy*, often translated *compassion*, is described by a commentator as “the highly-charged devotion of a mother” (Motyer, 141).

**Illustration:** After basketball practice on Wednesday, a 9-year-old player was exiting the school in a rush when his mother called out to him and told him to watch out for cars

in the parking lot. Embarrassed, the 9-year-old rolled his eyes in response as though he were too old to be given a warning like that from his mom. I tried to comfort the mother by commenting that a good mom cannot help but be concerned in this way, no matter the response she receives. This is a mother's devotion to the well-being of her child. The mom seemed to appreciate the encouragement.

The Lord has a motherly devotion for the well-being of Israel. Even in spite of their sin, He has yet chosen them. He will give them rest in their own land, and many non-Jews will join them in that blessing. Instead of trying to exterminate them, these will cleave to the house of Jacob (v. 1b).

This will be a day when the peoples of the world bring Israel to their Promised Land. God promised Abraham' descendant the land from the Nile to the Euphrates (Gen. 15:18). Israel will possess not only their land, but also the peoples of the world as their servants. Those who took them captive and ruled over them shall they take captive and rule (v. 2). They will be at rest, not sorrowful and fearful, and they will not be enslaved at labor camps anymore (v. 3).

And in that day, what is good for Israel will be good for the whole world (v. 7). Even nature itself will rejoice in the blessing of an ecological redemption (v. 8). Paul spoke of this time in Rom. 8:18-25.

And so the role of Israel in the Lord's lopsided victory over Babylon is to be redeemed like the rest of creation as the sons of God, to be saved by hope. This hope is Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:17). Jesus is the redeemer of the Israel Isaiah saw, of all of creation, and of you and I if we place our hope in Him.

Today's Israel had not yet been saved by this hope. To date, they have rejected their Messiah, Jesus Christ. But someday

that will change, and that change will give Israel this amazing role in the Lord's lopsided victory over Babylon. We can share in their role if their Messiah is our Savior too.

## II. The role of Sheol in the Lord's lopsided victory over Babylon (vv. 9-21).

Illustration: The country of El Salvador has imprisoned many violent gang members sent there by the United States. These prisoners are incarcerated in a massive facility called CECOT, which El Salvador built specifically to house gang members. The facility has 8 huge pavilions and can house up to 40,000 prisoners. Each cell can fit 65 or more prisoners. CECOT prisoners are not allowed visitors, are never allowed outside, and are not provided with rehabilitation workshops or educational programs. The prison plays an important role in the battle of these nations against gang violence. They use the prison in their quest for this victory.

Application: In the Lord's lopsided victory over Babylon, Sheol fills the role of an even more effective prison than the one in El Salvador. Translated *hell* in the KJV, the Hebrew word *Sheol* refers to the place of the departed dead. Babylon meets all her allies in this place of death, worms, and suffering (vv. 9-11).

Babylon's gang is led by a king, whom the KJV calls *Lucifer* (v. 12). The Hebrew word means *shining one*. In parallel with the description of the king of Tyre in Ezekiel 28, what we have here, I believe, is a description of Satan himself, who has ruled over Babylon's opposition to the Lord. Satan's fall from heaven described here was seen by the Lord Jesus Christ: "And [Jesus] said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of

the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you" (Luke 10:18-19).

Ultimately, this fall from heaven to earth becomes a fall to the lowest part of the pit of Sheol (v. 15). Lacking a corporeal existence, Satan will not even have a grave memorializing his demise (vv. 18-20).

Our passage teaches us as dying men and women some important truths about this place of the departed dead:

1. The dead are alive in Sheol. When the king of Babylon gets there, others of the dead are there to welcome him and speak with him (vv. 9-10a).
2. The dead are recognizable in Sheol. They maintain their personal continuity and mutual recognition. The chief ones of the earth and its kings are still identified that way in Sheol (v. 9b). The power they had on earth does them little good now, however.
3. The dead are weak and without influence in Sheol, unable either to help or to hurt the living (vv. 10-11). The necromancy industry that claims to speak to the dead does not receive its revelations from the dead. To the degree that practice enjoys accurate results, they come from some other dark force impersonating the departed dead. Saul went to a necromancer, whom Scripture explains had an evil spirit, not an avenue to the departed. When God allowed the dead Samuel to appear, she was as shocked as Saul by the exceptional appearance. Beware of people claiming the ability to channel those who have died.
4. The dead are humbled in Sheol. They have come there with the king of Babylon for the same reason he is there – their prideful desire to be their own Most High (vv. 13-14).

By definition it is not possible to be equal to the Most High, because He is the Most High. *Most High* is singular, not plural. Yet from the very beginning, this pride of Satan was the temptation that caused man to fall with him. Satan promised, “Ye shall be like God, knowing [i.e., deciding for yourself] good and evil” (Gen. 3:5). Satan called this prideful self-exaltation having your eyes opened. The opposite was true. It is given other equally deceptive positive names today, like “believing in science” or “being true to yourself.” Such is science falsely so-called and the destruction of oneself.

The pride that sets the Most High aside in favor of self shall end with the justice of being humbled in Sheol. This is the role of Sheol in the Lord’s lopsided victory over Babylon. We must not claim to be our own Most High.

### III. The role of the Lord’s sovereign declarations in the Lord’s lopsided victory over Babylon (vv. 22-23).

Application: Note that we are told three times that *the Lord declares* His lopsided victory over Babylon. One commentator noted: “The use of the phrase three times is like a triple seal of authenticity and validation” (Motyer, 146).

In summary, the Lord declares that He will rise up unlike Satan’s fall (v. 22). Satan shall have an unmarked grave on which people trample (v. 19), but the Lord shall rise up from His grave (Isa. 53:9-12, “And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; [although] he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear

their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors").

Conclusion: It was this mighty work of Christ, dying for sinners, being buried in Sheol, and rising again from the dead, which won the Lord's lopsided victory over Babylon. Some day, that victory will be Israel's victory and the victory of many non-Jews with her, all those who trust Him as their own Savior. Do you believe that Jesus Christ, God's righteous servant, bore your iniquities on the cross of Calvary, died your death as a sinner, and then rose again to give you eternal life and to win a lopsided victory for you over Satan's Babylon? All who believe win that victory in Him.

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*