

feel that perhaps Isaiah is not describing Babylon at all, but speaking of the great world powers that oppose God. Perhaps it is not the actual king of Babylon who is described, but Satan, the leader of all that is wicked. In order to make a proper decision on this important matter we must examine the various statements and see their relation to what we know about the history of Babylon.

*A. Problems in the Predictions in Isaiah 13-14*

1. *Strangeness of such a reference to Babylon in Isaiah's day*

At the time of Isaiah, Assyria was the great world power. From their capital city of Ninevah, the Assyrian kings were continually extending their domain by force of arms. With planned brutality and calculated cruelty they conquered nation after nation. During the period of Isaiah's ministry both the Syrian kingdom with its capital at Damascus and the kingdom of northern Israel fell into the hand of the Assyrian conqueror. The city of Babylon was at this time far from being a world power. In fact it was usually subject to Assyria, although occasionally striving vigorously to regain its independence. When Isaiah wrote most Israelites never thought of Babylon as a possible menace to them. Consequently, it seems strange indeed that Isaiah should begin this section of discussion of various foreign nations with two chapters mainly devoted to Babylon. Surely one would expect that Assyria, rather than Babylon, would be the great world power under discussion.

The critical theory of the book of Isaiah, as first presented, was very simple. It supposed that Isaiah had written his book at about 700 B. C. and that a century and a half later, as the exile was approaching its close, someone had written a new book in the spirit and viewpoint of Isaiah. This second book was easily to be distinguished from the first because Babylon instead of Assyria was the great enemy. The exile was not predicted, but presupposed, and predictions were given of a mighty deliverance which God would soon bring to His people. In Isaiah 41-52, much stress is laid upon the coming downfall of Babylon, the great conquering nation.