

used of many of the Assyrian kings, but it is hardly typical of the kings of Babylon in the time of the Israelite oppression. Nebuchadnezzar, the greatest of the kings of the neo-Babylonian empire, lumps his great military exploits together in his inscriptions and says comparatively little about them. It would appear as if he regarded them as a necessary chore, of which he might boast in a general way, but which did not interest him nearly as much as his great building achievements. He liked to think of himself as a builder rather than as a destroyer. In his inscriptions he devotes a great deal of space to describing the buildings he erected and dwells at length on his renovation of temples in cities all over Mesopotamia. The book of Daniel describes Nebuchadnezzar as looking out over the city and saying: "Is not this great Babylon that I have built?" (Dan. 4:30). Daniel's portrayal of Nebuchadnezzar fits the picture of him in the cuneiform inscriptions, but the description of the king of Babylon in Isaiah 14 does not.

Another element of the picture in Isaiah 14 is stressed particularly in verses 12-14: "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 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." This portrayal of one who aspired to "be like the most High" hardly fits any king of Babylon or even of Assyria. All of these give credit for their victories to their various gods. We read of Beishazzar, the last king of Babylon, in Daniel 5:4, that he and his family "drank wine and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood and of stone." Certainly such a description would not fit Nebuchadnezzar, the greatest of the neo-Babylonian kings, for we read in Daniel 4 that God punished him for his pride in his great building exploits and that he thereupon issued a proclamation declaring the glory of "the high God," "the King of heaven" (Dan. 4, esp. vv. 1-3, 37; note also 2:46-47; 3:26-29). Surely Isaiah's picture of a king who had designs on God's throne and desired to ascend into heaven and to exalt his throne above the stars of God would seem to refer