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Sermon Notes

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The King of Babylon Thrown Down

Isaiah 14:1-23

I. The Power Above Every Evil Throne

“The last of the horsemen disappeared into the smoke and the thudding of their hooves receded into the grey distance.

The smoke hung on the land. It drifted across the setting sun, which lay like an open wound across the western sky.

In the ringing silence that followed the battle, very, very few, pitifully few cries could be heard from the bloody, mangled wreckage on the fields.

Ghostlike figures, stunned with horror, emerged from the woods, stumbled and then ran forward crying - women, searching for their husbands, brothers, fathers, lovers first amongst the dying and then amongst the dead. The flickering light by which they searched was that of their burning village, which had that afternoon officially become part of the Mongol Empire.

The Mongols.

From out of the wastes of central Asia they had swept, a savage force for which the world was utterly unprepared. They swept like a wildly wielded scythe, hacking, slashing, obliterating all that lay in their path, and calling it conquest.

And throughout the lands that feared them now or would come to fear them, no name inspired more terror than that of their leader, Genghis Khan.”

That is how one writer described the aftermath of an attack by Genghis Khan and his dreaded Mongol horsemen...

There has never been a leader like Genghis Khan since that time... but many arrogant, murderous, slaughtering tyrants have ridden with bloody hooves across the prostrate bodies of their victims since then

The story of human history is at least in part a story of arrogant, blood-thirsty tyrants whose irresistible power made victims of one defenseless village after another

It is the spirit of Babylon the Great, mentioned in Revelation 17-18... the spirit of the conquering kings whose lust for blood, power, money, and pleasure spurred them on to plunder and pillage

It is a spirit driven by a deeper, more wicked power behind their bloody thrones... the power of Satan in his hatred of God and of His people

Last week, we spoke of the Fall of Babylon... the great city and empire which crushed the world and destroyed the Promised Land

This week, we look at Isaiah 14, which speaks of the fall of the Tyrant King of Babylon... and while it may refer to a specific man in history, I believe it refers to all tyrants of history

Some theologians think it may speak of nothing more than a human king—the King of Babylon... they think it may refer specifically to Nebuchadnezzar

Others think it doesn't refer to a human king at all, but to Satan

They point to the soaring language of Isaiah 14:12-15

Isaiah 14:12-15 How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn!

The KJV translation of “Morning Star” is Lucifer... many ancient scholars believed these verses spoke of the fall of Satan before the world began

For myself, I believe it speaks to both human tyrants and Satan—not just ONE “king of Babylon”, but to any and every wicked human tyrant who has ever lived, who has built an empire based on military conquest and oppression... as well as to the true power behind the throne... the wickedness of Satan’s influence over every human tyrant

Two weeks on these verses

- 1) this week: discussing the human tyrants that carry on the spirit of the King of Babylon... I will assert that this taunt refers not simply to one man, the “King of Babylon”, but to every vicious human tyrant that has ever lived to crush and oppress God’s people
- 2) next week: I will discuss the power behind every evil throne, behind every vicious world conquering tyrant, behind every “King of Babylon”... the power of Satan... and I will discuss the soaring ambition of Satan, and his final end... I will reveal the spiritual link between Satan and every evil tyrant, and the final ruler, Antichrist, in whom the link will be the strongest

But far more significant than the **power of every evil throne**... every human “King of Babylon” and the **power behind every evil throne**... Satan... is the **power ABOVE every evil throne**—Almighty God, who throws down the human tyrant and Satan as well

For this chapter speaks of these tyrants being cast down to the depths

II. God's Purpose: the Eternal Joy of His Chosen People

A. Despite Israel's Sin, Chosen Still

Romans 11:29 God's gifts and his call are irrevocable.

1. Israel would be sold to Gentile powers... Assyria and Babylon
2. but Isaiah promises God will have compassion on His people again... and He will choose them again

Isaiah 14:1 once again he will choose Israel and will settle them in their own land.

3. more than mere restoration is promised here
 - a. when the Jews came back from exile under Cyrus the Great of Persia, they still were under Gentile domination...they had to ask permission for everything
 - b. Ezra and Nehemiah both stood in the presence of the kings of Persia and asked for favors
 - c. So it has continued through the centuries... one Gentile power after another has controlled portions if not all of the Promised Land
 - d. Isaiah is here promising a complete reversal in which the chosen people will dwell in a position of authority over their former captors

Vs. 2 the house of Israel will possess the nations as menservants and maidservants in the LORD's land. They will make captives of their captors and rule over their oppressors.

This will receive its ultimate fulfillment only at the end of the age... in the millennial kingdom of Christ and even more in the Eternal State of the New Heaven and New Earth

Isaiah 14:1 once again he will choose Israel and will settle them in their own land.

“Their own land” will be an eternal possession!! They will inherit the new earth...

B. Aliens Joining Israel

Isaiah 14:1 Aliens will join them and unite with the house of Jacob.

1. even better for us, Isaiah predicts the joining of aliens to the house of Israel

2. this in direct fulfillment of the purpose of God's original call to Abraham

Genesis 12:2-3 "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

3. repeatedly predicted in Isaiah... the fact that the nations will join Israel in worshiping the One true God
4. fulfilled ultimately in the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the nations and the fact that Romans 11 says Gentiles have been grafted into the olive tree

This is God's central purpose in history... and the crushing of the Babylonian tyrants, and of Satan, the true power behind the throne, is only to accomplish this glorious end

C. God's Purpose: Bringing Joy to His People in Every Land

1. Look at the joy, peace, and relief that flow through this passage

Isaiah 14:3 On the day the LORD gives you relief from suffering and turmoil and cruel bondage

Isaiah 14:7 All the lands are at rest and at peace; they break into singing.

2. God throws down the King of Babylon to bring joy, relief and security to His chosen people all over the world

Ultimate fulfillment of this: the casting down of the final King of Babylon—the Antichrist—and of Satan, the ultimate tyrant at the end of the world

III. The "King of Babylon" Thrown Down

A. A Taunt Song Over the Fallen Tyrant

Isaiah 14:3-4 On the day the LORD gives you relief from suffering and turmoil and cruel bondage, ⁴ you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon

1. no one king of Babylon intended here
2. perhaps could have referred to Nebuchadnezzar... but I think that the Lord worked an amazing transformation in his heart and I hope saved him
3. furthermore, there is no record of Nebuchadnezzar being thrown down and crushed like this... as far as we know, he died peacefully and passed his kingdom over to his successor, Amil-Marduk, who then passed it on to his son, Belshazzar

4. now of course Belshazzar was toppled from his throne the night of the feast recorded in Daniel 5... the night the handwriting was on the walls
 - a. Belshazzar was no world-conquering tyrant... he accomplished none of the vicious and powerful things described in this chapter
 - b. He was a soft man who delighted in feasts and comfort and leisure
5. it's best to see the human side of this prophecy as referring to "the King of Babylon" as representative of all the tyrant kings who have ever lived and have ever advanced their godless regime with tyranny
6. it is the spirit of the anti-Christ, including all the great tyrants of history who have used military oppression and power to crush defenseless people, and especially the people of God
7. thus the people break out in a taunt song against the fallen tyrant
 - a. celebrating the end of his tyranny
 - b. celebrating his judgment by the wrath of God
 - c. celebrating the freedom all the world now feels in his defeat

victims of tyrants are noteworthy in the powerlessness and helplessness they feel against his power

they can commit suicide by openly resisting... or they can play the role of the quiet coward and say/do nothing against his power

when the victims are alone, they cry out to God for deliverance

Psalm 94:2 Rise up, O Judge of the earth; pay back to the proud what they deserve.

even when they are dead, they plead with God for justice:

Revelation 6:10 They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?"

The powerless victims look to God for deliverance... and at the right time He will deliver

In the flow of history, death or conquest by another nation ends the tyrant's domination... but so often it's "Meet the new tyrant, same as the old tyrant."

But there will come a time when all tyranny will end, and even Satan himself thrown down forever!!

B. The Vicious Oppression is Over

Isaiah 14:4-6 How the oppressor has come to an end! How his fury has ended! ⁵ The LORD has broken the rod of the wicked, the scepter of the rulers, ⁶ which in anger struck down peoples with unceasing blows, and in fury subdued nations with relentless aggression.

1. the viciousness of the reign of tyranny is described here
2. the rage of the tyrant is described as finally ended

tyrants frequently characterized by insane rage strongly connected to their soaring pride

Daniel 3:19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual

Eyewitness of Hitler: "[He] could fly into an indignant rage, whereby the vein on his forehead from the top of his nose to his hairline swelled and grew blue in almost terrifying way, and his voice cracked, so it seemed that he would fear for his life-and for our own as well....The attacks however were infrequent and Hitler himself was afraid of them-particularly since afterwards he always collapsed and had to have medication to calm himself..." <http://kimel.net/hitman.html>

One account of Josef Stalin ascribes his death in March of 1953 to a fit of apoplectic rage as he was plotting a mass slaughter of Jews that would have rivaled that of the Nazis... as his rage reached a crescendo, he collapsed on the floor and suffered a massive stroke... died later that day

The rage of a tyrant is one of the many bullying techniques he uses to dominate all opposition... but that rage is over at last

3. the tyrant uses his overwhelming power to crush all opposition

Isaiah 14:5-6 The LORD has broken the rod of the wicked, the scepter of the rulers, ⁶ which in anger struck down peoples with unceasing blows, and in fury subdued nations with relentless aggression.

- it is the sound of Caesar's tramping legions... marching through the streets of Jewish towns and villages in Palestine, or searching the catacombs of Rome for hiding Christians to bring them to trial and death
- it is the sound of Attila the Hun's thundering cavalry, sweeping in from the steppes with shocking rapidity to crush Europe and whatever is growing from the church of Christ
- it is the terrifying sound of Viking raiders extending their bloodthirsty reign from the mists of the north... silently appearing on the rocky shores of Britain to plunder monasteries with unimaginable savagery... sparing

no one, not defenseless monks, not pleading women, not screaming children

- it is the rhythmic march of hobnailed boots as the undefeated troops of the Nazi Third Reich extend Hitler's demonic reign over Europe; it is the shattering terror of the pounding of fists on locked doors in the middle of the night as Jews and Christians alike are dragged away by the Gestapo and gassed in the concentration camps
- it is the mindless savagery of the Soviet Union's anti-Christian crusade... 20 million Christians interred in gulags and systematically tortured and executed under Stalin
- it is the sound of an enraged mob in China during the Cultural Revolution, screaming insults at house church pastors who are being paraded through the streets to their death; the frenzy whipped up by fear of Mao Zedong and his secret police who will arrest any who don't join in
- it is the stench of yet another car bomb set off by Muslim terrorist extremists in Iraq
- and at the end of time, it will be the brutal terror of the anti-Christ's final regime of terror, forcing people to submit to the mark of the beast or face execution by beheading

4. the terror of the powerful tyrant will be broken

- a. until the end of time, generally one tyrant is replaced by another
- b. "what goes around comes around"
- c. But someday, when Christ reigns on the earth, all of this vicious oppression will end, and all the terror it caused

C. Peace Results All Over the Earth

Isaiah 14:7 All the lands are at rest and at peace; they break into singing.

1. the peace brings indescribable joy...
2. the victims have been helpless... but now they sing and dance and rejoice with great joy

VE Day: Hitler was dead, having killed himself in his Berlin bunker; the Germans surrendered on May 7, 1945... As news hit Britain on May 7 the wild celebrations began. Up and down the country pubs sold out of beer, and all other forms of alcohol. Dancing in the streets began and carried on into the night; people improvised celebratory foods with what little they had available.

May 8, however, was officially declared VE-Day. Over a million people gathered in London, thronging the Mall, lining the main routes through the capital, filling Trafalgar Square. Churchill and the Royal family appeared on the balcony of Buckingham Palace, and down below singing and dancing continued. The late lamented Humphrey Littleton, a Guards Officer, played his jazz trumpet at the gates of Buckingham Palace full of the joy of survival and life. Complete strangers kissed and hugged each other, fireworks were launched into the night sky, and effigies of the loathed Hitler were burned on makeshift bonfires built by small boys and old men around the country.

3. Fall of the Berlin Wall

When the 97 mile Berlin wall that had separated East and West Berlin—free vs. communist—fell on November 9, 1987, there were wild and spontaneous celebrations

4. what a joyful celebration there will be when at last Satan is thrown down forever

D. Destruction of the Earth Has Ended

Isaiah 14:8 Even the pine trees and the cedars of Lebanon exult over you and say, "Now that you have been laid low, no woodsman comes to cut us down."

1. selfish tyrants also look at the resources of the earth as theirs for the plundering
 - a. the gold, the silver, the iron... all to be strip-mined from the supine earth
 - b. the trees are especially to be used for building siege ramps for conquering walled cities
 - c. in the Law of Moses, God gave specific rules about felling trees for a siege

Deuteronomy 20:19 When you lay siege to a city for a long time, fighting against it to capture it, do not destroy its trees by putting an ax to them, because you can eat their fruit. Do not cut them down. Are the trees of the field people, that you should besiege them?

2. the earth was given to us as a stewardship to care for and protect and nurture

Genesis 2:15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

i.e. “to serve and protect”

3. tyrants use the earth’s resources for their selfish pleasures

Between May 2000 and August 2005, Brazil lost more than 51,000 square miles of forest—an area larger than Greece—and since 1970, over 232,000 square miles of Amazon rainforest have been destroyed... almost the size of Texas

Most of that destruction is tied to speculative efforts by some to make money... plundering the earth for profit

4. in the end, God will judge those who plunder the earth, since it was created to be beautiful for His own pleasure

Revelation 11:18 The time has come ... for destroying those who destroy the earth."

IV. No Tyrant Stronger Than Death

A. Powerful Tyrant Weak in the Face of Death

Isaiah 14:9-11 he grave below is all astir to meet you at your coming; it rouses the spirits of the departed to greet you-- all those who were leaders in the world; it makes them rise from their thrones-- all those who were kings over the nations.¹⁰ They will all respond, they will say to you, "You also have become weak, as we are; you have become like us." ¹¹ All your pomp has been brought down to the grave, along with the noise of your harps; maggots are spread out beneath you and worms cover you.

1. amazing section of prophecy... a picture of dead kings who greet the departed tyrant with amazement
2. the grave is personified here... like the trees that spoke in verse 7... this is all poetical and we should not rely on it to give an accurate picture of departed dead kings
 - a. sheol is the Hebrew word for grave
 - b. the realm of the departed pictures kings who also were humbled by death
 - c. they seem astonished that this most powerful of all kings has also become weak as they are
3. this mighty potentate's power is stripped forever
 - a. picture a Babylonian King, drunk and sluggish in his purple-covered bed as Median warriors storm in to kill him while he sleeps
 - b. picture a Roman Caesar whose word made nations tremble and convulse being assassinated with a dagger between his ribs by one of the Praetorian Guards as he leaves the Coliseum
 - c. picture a Russian Tsar wheezing and gasping as he chokes out his last few breaths and dies of consumption

- d. picture a Chinese communist dictator, lying helpless in his bed, stricken with a heart attack and trying to speak but unable to make anything but a hoarse whisper
 - e. none of these world-conquerors can defeat the final enemy, death
4. his pompous luxury has been stripped as well
- a. tyrants love to surround themselves with evidence of their conquests
 - b. their palaces are made luxurious with their plunder
 - c. they loved the silk robes, the richly embroidered clothes, the gold brocade
 - d. but now their mask of luxury is removed and nothing is left but the maggots that will eat their mortal remains as they lay in the grave

B. The Final Fate of the King of Babylon... Moldering, Dead in the Street (vs. 18-21)

Isaiah 14:18-21 All the kings of the nations lie in state, each in his own tomb. ¹⁹ But you are cast out of your tomb like a rejected branch; you are covered with the slain, with those pierced by the sword, those who descend to the stones of the pit. Like a corpse trampled underfoot, ²⁰ you will not join them in burial, for you have destroyed your land and killed your people. The offspring of the wicked will never be mentioned again. ²¹ Prepare a place to slaughter his sons for the sins of their forefathers; they are not to rise to inherit the land and cover the earth with their cities.

1. Ordinarily Kings Honored at Death
 - a. Presidents lie in state in the nation's capital
 - b. There are dramatic parades steeped in tradition
 - c. The burial is done in a lavish tomb with great honor
2. but this King is cast out of his tomb, "like a rejected branch" with no honor
 - a. covered with slain, as though buried in a mass grave
 - b. his body is trampled underfoot... the picture of
 - c. like Ahaz, whose blood dogs licked up
 - d. like his wife Jezebel, whose corpse dogs ate so there was nothing recognizable left
 - e. like Hitler's body, which was probably doused with gasoline and burned so the Russians wouldn't desecrate it

3. even worse... this king would have no legacy... his offspring would be cut off entirely... all memory of his name effaced forever
4. the empire has ended forever!!! The king's lust for a lasting kingdom is gone forever
5. why?

Vs. 20 for you have destroyed your land and killed your people

- a. a wicked tyrant always brings destruction on his own people
- b. in effect, they are ultimately to blame for permitting such a tyrant to rule them
- c. political maxim: a people gets the leadership it deserves
- d. yet... this king is still judged for having destroyed his own nation

C. The Final Fall of Babylon (vs. 22-23)

Isaiah 14:22-23 "I will rise up against them," declares the LORD Almighty. "I will cut off from Babylon her name and survivors, her offspring and descendants," declares the LORD. ²³ "I will turn her into a place for owls and into swampland; I will sweep her with the broom of destruction," declares the LORD Almighty.

V. The Reason for Judgment: Pride

1. as always, God opposes the proud and is strongly motivated to throw down such a tyrant
2. Soaring language for a soaring ambition

Isaiah 14:12-15 How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! ¹³ You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. ¹⁴ I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." ¹⁵ But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit.

Human rulers are willing to scale the heights in their own estimation... to be worshiped like gods

3. next week... the demonic source of their power and pride

4. the root of all the trouble for both Satan and humanity is pride leading to discontent... God assigns boundaries, the neither Satan nor human beings have been content to stay within our boundaries... we wanted more!!
5. Next week: more on that discontent!!

VI. Application

A. Come to Christ

B. Understand the Future Fate of all Godless Dictators

1. Isaiah 14 stands over them all
2. www.parade.com website listing the world's worst dictators

#1: Omar al-Bashir of the Sudan... the worst dictator because of his ongoing deadly human-rights abuses in the Darfur region of Sudan. Over the last four years, at least 200,000 people there have been killed by pro-Bashir forces. Nationwide, 5.3 million have been driven from their homes, and more than 700,000 have fled the country.

#2: Kim Jong-il of North Korea: recently attracted attention by testing a nuclear bomb, but it is his domestic human-rights abuses that make him stand out. His citizens are more shut off from the world than those of any other nation.

#3: Sayyid Ali KhamEnei Iran. Although it is Iran's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who has alarmed the world with threatening gestures, it is actually the Ayatollah Khamenei and the 12-man Guardian Council who control all decisions regarding Iran's relations, its nuclear program and domestic freedoms. This regime has increasingly suppressed freedom of expression

#7: Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe: once was hailed as a symbol of the new Africa, but under his rule the health and well-being of his people have dropped dramatically, which is as much an abuse of human rights as arbitrary arrest and torture. According to the World Health Organization, Zimbabwe has the world's shortest life expectancy—37 years for men and 34 for women. It also has the greatest percentage of orphans (about 25%, says UNICEF) and the worst annual inflation rate (1,281% as of last month). He allowed an election in 2002 but “won” only after having his leading opponent arrested for treason... the same pattern happened again this time, as his leading opponent quit the race right before the election

3. all of these dictators will suffer the same fate: death under the wrath of God... if they don't repent of their sins and trust Christ

C. Pray for Rulers to be Saved

1. on that note, the fact that even a tyrant as evil as Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, could perhaps be brought to submission, repentance and faith shows that God can do anything
 - a. Nebuchadnezzar was evil... a vicious tyrant willing to kill hundreds of people—his counselors—simply because they couldn't tell him what his dream was
 - b. He threw Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego into the fiery furnace because they wouldn't bow down and worship the golden idol he set up
 - c. He was ruthless to the poor and oppressed people of his empire
 - d. God could have struck him dead for his prideful arrogance
 - e. Yet instead he dealt graciously with him and perhaps converted him
 - f. Thus he stands like the apostle Paul as an amazing example of God's power to save anyone

1 Timothy 1:15-16 Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners-- of whom I am the worst. ¹⁶ But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

1 Timothy 2:1-4 I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone-- ² for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. ³ This is good, and pleases God our Savior, ⁴ who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

Have you prayed for a tyrant recently? Or a politician whose policies you abhor?

D. Hate Pride and Humble Yourself

E. Seek Godly Ambitions... not Satanic Ones

Matthew 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Romans 15:20 It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation.

2 Corinthians 5:9 Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.

F. Worship God for His Power Over Satan and Human Tyrants

G. Anticipate Shouting for Joy when Satan is Thrown Down Forever