

# My attempt at exegeting Isaiah 14:3-23

Finally, this is *another* passage that follows up proclamations of judgment with promises of Israel's restoration (Isaiah 14:1-3). Speaking of which, it's only right to consider the minor train of thought following this passage, which we'll quickly see *can't* be fulfilled yet (and even includes another mention of "a Day of YHWH", *if* you're willing to ignore the verb in the middle of the Hebrew phrase--a situation that also occurs in Isaiah 34:8, so we might as well count Isaiah 14:3 as a "hidden" example...):

3 And it will be **in the day when the LORD gives you rest from your pain and turmoil and harsh service** in which you have been enslaved, [literally, "And so it will come to pass (**waw-consecutive perfect, picking up sequentially from "and so they will have dominion among their taskmasters"**), in a day of YHWH causing rest (infinitive construct) for you (feminine singular, apparently referring to **Israel on the collective level**), from your (singular) pain and from your (singular) agitation and from the work, the severe *work*, which he will have worked (Pual **perfect 3rd-person masculine singular**) by you (2<sup>nd</sup>-person feminine singular; Great Isaiah Scroll has "by her", 3<sup>rd</sup>-person feminine singular),] 4 that you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon, and say,

"How the oppressor has ceased,

*And how* fury has ceased!

[literally, "And so **you will raise** (properly, "lift"; **waw-consecutive perfect**), **the byword** (or "proverb"), **the this one, over a king of Babylon, and so will say** (**waw-consecutive perfect**),

'How the oppressing one (active participle) has ceased (**perfect** tense of the verb שָׁבַת, the root of the noun for "Sabbath")!]

Goldmaking has ceased (**perfect**)! (Assuming the Masoretic reading מְדַבֵּר was the original; if the Daleth was originally a Resh, so the word read מְדַבֵּר -- as seen in the Great Isaiah Scroll, by the way! -- this line would read "**Boisterous behavior has ceased!**")]

5 "The LORD has broken the staff of the wicked,

The scepter of rulers

[literally, "YHWH has broken (**perfect**) a staff of wicked ones,

A rod (properly, "stick"; the Hebrew word, H7626, has a wide range of meanings) of ones ruling (active participle),"]

6 Which used to strike the peoples in fury with unceasing strokes,

Which subdued the nations in anger with unrestrained persecution.

[literally, "Smiting (active participle) peoples (properly, "congregated units"; the same word I brought out when dealing with the Joel passages) in overflowing rage, a slaughter of non-withdrawal;

Subjugating (active participle) in the anger (properly, "nostril") nations of persecution without having held back (**perfect**)."]

7 "The whole earth is at rest *and* is quiet;

They break forth into shouts of joy.

[literally, "All the earth/land has settled down (**perfect**), it has become at peace (properly, "quiet"; **perfect**),

They broke forth (**perfect**) with a ringing cry."]

8 "Even the cypress trees rejoice over you, *and* the cedars of Lebanon, *saying*,

‘Since you were laid low, no *tree* cutter comes up against us.’

[literally, “Additionally, fir trees rejoiced (**perfect**) for you (masculine singular, referring back to “a king of Babylon”), *and* cedars of Lebanon:

**“From that time you laid down (perfect), never comes up (imperfect) the cutter (active participle) upon us.””]**

9 “Sheol from beneath is excited over you to meet you when you come;

It arouses for you the spirits of the dead, all the leaders of the earth;

It raises all the kings of the nations from their thrones.

[literally, “Sheol (**the realm of the dead**) from beneath has quivered (**perfect** feminine singular) for (or “at”, or “**concerning**”) you (singular), to meet (infinitive construct) your (singular) coming (infinitive construct);

**It roused (perfect masculine singular) for you feeble spirits, all rams (figurative for leaders) of Earth** (LXX “Roused together [aorist passive indicative 3<sup>rd</sup>-person plural] for you were **all the mighty ones** [γίγαντες, *gigantes*; the plural form of γίγας, which is used of Nimrod in Genesis 10:8-9 LXX and shows up as “mighty” in most English translations (“giant” in BLXX)], **the ones who ruled** [aorist active participle] **the earth/land**”; Sharp’s Second Rule tells us “the mighty ones” *were* “the ones who ruled the Earth/land”);

**It raised up (perfect masculine singular) from their thrones all kings of nations.”]**

10 “They will all respond and say to you,

‘Even you have been made weak as we,

You have become like us.

[literally, “All them respond (**imperfect**) and say (waw-conjunctive **imperfect**) toward you,

‘Indeed, you (singular and emphatic) have been made weak (**perfect**), just like (pleonastic form of the preposition for “like”, hence emphatic) us, toward us you have been likened (**perfect**).”]

11 ‘Your pomp *and* the music of your harps

Have been brought down to Sheol;

Maggots are spread out *as your bed* beneath you

And worms are your covering.’

[literally, “Your majesty (or “exaltation”) has been brought down (**perfect** masculine singular) to Sheol, *and the* sound of your lutes (plural in MT, singular in Great Isaiah Scroll);

Beneath you is spread out (**imperfect**) a maggot (**singular**), and your covering *is* a worm (**singular**).””]

12 “How you have fallen from heaven,

O star of the morning, son of the dawn!

You have been cut down to the earth,

You who have weakened the nations!

[literally, “**How you have fallen (perfect) from heaven, Morning Star**, son of dawn!

**You were hewn off to the earth/land**, weakener (active participle) down on (i.e., “**overthrower of**”) **nations** (MT; Great Isaiah Scroll has “a nation”)!”]

13 “But you said in your heart,

‘I will ascend to heaven;

I will raise my throne above the stars of God,

And I will sit on the mount of assembly

In the recesses of the north.

[literally, “**And you (emphatic) said (perfect) in your heart, ‘The heavens I will ascend**

(imperfect),

Above *the* upper part for (or “**Away above to *the*”**) stars of God I will lift up (imperfect) my throne,

**And I will sit** (waw-conjunctive imperfect) in *the* Mount of Assembly (properly, “of An Appointed Meeting”), in extreme parts of *the* north.”]

14 ‘I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;

I will make myself like the Most High.’

[literally, “**I will ascend (imperfect) above heights of darkness** (i.e., outer space);

**I will make myself like (imperfect) unto *the* Highest.”]**

15 “Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol,

To the recesses of the pit.

[literally, “**Yet toward Sheol you are/will be brought down (imperfect),**

**Toward extreme parts** (same word from verse 13) **of a pit.”]**

16 “Those who see you will gaze at you,

They will ponder over you, *saying*,

‘Is this the man who made the earth tremble,

He who shook kingdoms,

[literally, “Ones looking (active participle) at you (masculine singular), toward you (singular) they stare (imperfect),

toward you they show themselves attentive (imperfect):

‘Is this **the man** (*iysh*, the normal Hebrew word for “man”--as opposed to *ishshah*, “woman”) who **disturbed** (active participle) **the earth/land**,

**Who caused kingdoms to quake** (active participle),”]

17 Who made the world like a wilderness

And overthrew its cities,

Who did not allow his prisoners to *go* home?’

[literally, “He *who* made (perfect) *the* inhabited Earth/land (*tebel*, not *eretz*; Vulgate *orbem*--the entire globe!) like the wilderness,

And his (masculine singular pronominal suffix) cities he tore down (perfect),

His prisoners he never opened (i.e., “freed”; perfect) homeward (the word for “house” with a Directional He)?”]

18 “All the kings of the nations lie in glory,

Each in his own tomb.

[literally, “All kings of nations, each of them, have laid (perfect) in glory,

A man in his house.”]

19 “But you have been cast out of your tomb

Like a rejected branch,

Clothed with the slain who are pierced with a sword,

Who go down to the stones of the pit

Like a trampled corpse.

[literally, “And you (waw-disjunctive; emphatic) have been cast (perfect) outside of your sepulcher,

Like an abhorred (active participle) sprout,

A garment of slain ones (plural passive participle), ones pierced (plural passive participle) *by* a sword,

Ones going down (plural active participle) toward **stones of a pit**,

Like a corpse trodden down (passive participle).”]

20 “You will not be united with them in burial,

Because you have ruined your country,

You have slain your people.

May the offspring of evildoers not be mentioned forever.

[literally, “You aren’t united (**imperfect**) with them in burial,

For your land you have spoiled (**perfect**),

Your people (singular form of the word in verse 6) you have killed (**perfect**),

Never will offspring of mischiefs (plural active participle) be named (**imperfect**) unto the age.”]

21 “Prepare for his sons a place of slaughter

Because of the iniquity of their fathers.

They must not arise and take possession of the earth

And fill the face of the world with cities.”

[literally, “**Arrange** (imperative 2<sup>nd</sup>-person **plural**) for his sons a slaughter;

With iniquity of their fathers

They will fail to arise (plural **imperfect**; or “**Lest they arise**”), and then they take possession of (or “impoverish”; **waw-consecutive perfect**) land/Earth,

And then *the* face of the inhabited Earth will be full (**waw-consecutive perfect**; the gender this time is *common* like “face”, rather than *masculine* like “his sons”) *with cities (or “anguishes”--see Jeremiah 15:8, or “anger”--see Hosea 11:9).]*

22 “I will rise up against them,” declares the LORD of hosts, “and will cut off from

Babylon name and survivors, offspring and posterity,” declares the LORD. [literally, “And so I

will arise (**waw-consecutive perfect**) against them’ an utterance of YHWH of Hosts/Armies,

‘and so I will cut off (**waw-consecutive perfect**) to Babylon name, and remnant, and posterity,

and progeny’ an utterance of YHWH.”] 23 “I will also make it a possession for the hedgehog and

swamps of water, and I will sweep it with the broom of destruction,” declares the LORD of hosts.

[literally, “And so I will transform (**waw-consecutive perfect**) it (feminine) into a possession of hedgehog, and marshes of waters, and so I will sweep away (**waw-consecutive perfect**; *this*

*Hebrew word occurs only here, but primarily refers to sweeping away clay from a potter’s floor)*

with a broom to exterminate (absolute infinitive)’, an utterance of YHWH of Hosts/Armies.”]

(Isaiah 14:3-23 1995 NASB)

Verse 3 makes it clear that *most if not all* of the verb tenses in this train of thought **are relative to when the Millennium is just beginning**. But another overarching factor we should consider that would make the rest of this discussion a lot easier is *who’s being talked about in each verse* of this minor train of thought. Commentators are pretty much unanimous that verses 4-11 are talking about a certain king of Babylon; as for whether this refers to (a) the king of Babylon *at the time Isaiah gave the prophecy*, (b) Nebuchadnezzar (the Babylonian King who took the Jews into captivity), (c) Nabonidus (the *true* last king of Babylon), or (d) Belshazzar (whom Nabonidus had left in charge of Babylon at the time it fell to the Medes & Persians<sup>i</sup>), we’ll investigate this below.

Verse 4 tells us this king of Babylon was oppressive and boisterous, lining up with Nebuchadnezzar or Nabonidus better than Belshazzar. Verse 5 says that by the time of fulfillment, God will have “broken a staff of wicked ones” (plural, implying this king was the last of *a series of* wicked rulers)--this narrows it down to Nabonidus or Belshazzar. ...Or it would, if verse 6 didn’t mention God “smiting peoples in overflowing rage, a slaughter of non-withdrawal; subjugating in the anger

nations of persecution without having held back”, obviously referring to the Day of the Lord in light of the greater context (13:6,9; 14:3); since the subject of these sentences is “YHWH”, which was stated in verse 5, verses 5 & 6 must be combined to get the full sentence--hence, verse 5, like verse 6, is talking about *oppressive rulers who were reigning just before Jesus returned*, not kings of Babylon specifically. Verse 7 mentions peace and rejoicing across the earth/land, consistent with the Kingdom having been ushered in by this point.

Verse 8 mentions that (at the time of the prophecy of this taunt’s proclamation being fulfilled) the trees of Lebanon are no longer being felled, and haven’t been “from the time you [this king of Babylon] laid down”. This is an especially important detail because [cedar trees have been extensively deforested from Lebanon since the 19<sup>th</sup> century A.D.](#) {scroll to “Who Cut Down The Cedar Trees In Lebanon?”}—this rules out any Babylonian (or, in modern terms, Iraqi) ruler before Iraq’s current prime minister ([in present-day Iraq, the prime minister holds the executive power](#), and so would be a “king” by Biblical reckoning), Mohammed Shia’ al-Sudani (and if he dies or otherwise loses his position before Jesus returns, he’ll *also* be ruled out); hence, the king of Babylon being referred to here must *actually* be the not-yet-considered option (e): **a wicked ruler of modern-day Iraq who dies on the Day of the Lord!** This would imply that we can expect the last ruler of Iraq before Jesus returns to be directly involved in deforesting Lebanon.

Verses 9 & 10 are also insightful, but not in the way you might think at first glance. “**Sheol** from beneath has quivered concerning you, to meet **your coming; It roused for you feeble spirits** (or “**mighty ones**”, depending on whether you go with the Hebrew or LXX), **all rams (i.e., rulers) of Earth; It raised up from their thrones all kings of nations. All them respond and say toward you, ‘Indeed you have been made weak, just like us, toward us you have been likened.’”** *Dead kings in Sheol talking about another dead person?* That would blatantly contradict [the consistent Biblical teaching that death is a state of total lack of consciousness](#) (Psalm 6:5, 30:9, 88:11-12, 115:17, 146:3-4; Ecclesiastes 9:5-6,10; Isaiah 38:18; 1 Corinthians 15:16-18). So the Biblically-consistent interpretation of verses 9 & 10 is that the kings speaking in verse 10 are *more specifically righteous kings throughout history who were resurrected to participate in the rapture*, and they’re essentially saying, “*we were* dead and buried; now it’s *your* turn”.

Indeed, verse 11 tells us this end-times ruler of Iraq would go down to Sheol with his majesty and the sounds of the instruments that had been played for him; moreover, that a singular maggot is his bed (although [the singular form of the word for “maggot” was commonly used collectively for an entire colony of them](#) {scroll to “Gesenius’ Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon”}) and a singular worm is his covering suggests that his body has been reduced to a size where that would be possible--a very humiliating fate indeed. And what makes this *even more* humiliating is that [the Hebrew word for “worm” here](#) refers to *a specific type of worm* that produced a crimson fluid at the end of its life cycle. The ancients would often extract this fluid to make scarlet dyes. So, this ruler is going from sleeping under a scarlet blanket (a luxury in the ancient world) to sleeping under a living specimen of the very type of worm the scarlet was made from!

But then verse 12 starts talking about Satan. I’ve heard a pastor claim “this was [metaphorically] referring to the king of Babylon, *and not* Satan”. But he overlooks the fact that there’s Biblical precedent for statements being directed to *Satan*, *immediately after* statements directed to *someone Satan had possessed*: Genesis 3:14 was spoken to the Serpent, but the very next verse was directed to Satan himself. Hence, the mention of the Morning Star, Son of Dawn, who “had fallen from heaven”, “[was] hewn off to the earth [and was an] overthrower of nations” (by the time indicated in

Isaiah 14:3, not necessarily the present time; note the implication of Job 1 & 2 that Satan is still allowed in heaven *until* stated otherwise--and it *is* stated otherwise in Revelation 12:3-4,7-9, which verse 14 places 42 months before the end of the Tribulation), *does indeed* refer to Satan. That the title “Morning Star” is used of both Satan (Isaiah 14:12) and Jesus (2 Peter 1:19, Revelation 2:28, 22:16) would explain the *plural* phrase “stars of morning” (כּוֹכְבֵי בֹקֶר) early on in God’s rhetorical questions to Job:

Where were you **when I laid the foundation of the earth?**

Tell *Me*, if you have understanding,

Who set its measurements? Since you know.

Or who stretched the line on it?

“On what were its bases sunk?

Or who laid its cornerstone,

**When the morning stars [כּוֹכְבֵי בֹקֶר] sang together**

And all the sons [LXX “angels”] of God shouted for joy? (Job 38:4-7 1995 NASB, boldface added)

In the same regard, Jesus’ remark that “I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star” (Revelation 22:16c ASV) would essentially be Jesus’ way of calling Satan a poser. To be fair, though, the Septuagint version of verse 7 (which carries a fair amount of weight here, since Hebrews 1:5’s denial of any messenger *other than Jesus*--Genesis 22:11,15, Exodus 3:2, Judges 13:21-22, etc.--to be God’s son implies that the LXX use of “angels” instead of “sons” in the second half of the verse is correct--and [Origen’s inclusion of the word “angels” in a quotation of Job 1, with no mention of “sons” as a variant reading, when telling Julius Africanus about textual variants he’s noticed while compiling his Hexapla](#), implies that by the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century, even *Hebrew* manuscripts still said “angels”! {scroll to section 3}) doesn’t include the phrase “morning stars”: “When stars were brought into being, all angels of Mine praised Me with a great sound.” (my word-for-word translation) If the LXX preserves the correct wording for the first half of Job 38:7 as well, then this would be a moot point.

We’re then told the following about Satan in verses 13 & 14:

you said in your heart, ‘The heavens I will ascend, Away above to *the* stars of God I will lift up my throne, And I will sit in *the* Mount of Assembly, in extreme parts of *the* north. I will ascend above heights of darkness, I will make myself like unto *the* Highest.’

Within this two-verse record of one of Satan’s inner monologues, we find **two** allusions to ancient pagan knowledge of God & Satan, both of which wound up being preserved (albeit in a corrupted form) in ancient Babylonian mythology (quite an appropriate reference to make when speaking to ancient Israelites about a king of Babylonia who will have been possessed by Satan, wouldn’t you say?). First, the mention at the end of verse 13 about Satan’s ambition to sit “in *the* Mount of Assembly, in extreme parts of *the* north” reflects ancient pagan beliefs that the gods lived in mountains to the north (e.g., [the Hindus of Ancient India with the Himalayas](#), [the early Greeks with Mount Olympus](#), and [the Mesopotamians \(Sumerians, Babylonians, etc.\) with the Armenian Highlands](#)). Note that the Armenian Highlands in particular are extremely close to the Ararat range--in fact, the mountain that today is officially called “Mount Ararat” is very near the region where the borders of modern-day Türkiye, Iran, Armenia, and Azerbaijan all meet. So, this belief about the Gods living on a mountain to the north might be explained by the fact that the Ark landed in the Ararat mountain range, which was *north of Babel*, no matter which Babel candidate you prefer! (And

the fact that ancient Armenia was often called “the land of sunrise” or “the land of the east” {scroll to p. 2 of the paper at that last hyperlink} may explain why Genesis 11:2 says Babel was founded after the early post-Flood people “journeyed **from the east**” (KJV), despite *most* candidates for ancient Babel being east and/or south of the Ararat range, and thus requiring the travel to have been **from west to east (yet mostly south!)**--clashing with what a literal reading of the text would suggest. To be clear, I don’t presently have a dog in the fight of which site is the “real deal”--I’m just pointing out that this is a possibility for what was meant by the text of Genesis 11:2.)

The second connection becomes clear when we think through the kind of mindset that would lead an angelic being like Satan to have “I will make myself like unto *the* Highest” as a serious ambition. As ICR founder [Henry Morris explained in a study note](#):

Lucifer desired not only to rule over the angels but to be like God Himself, no doubt ultimately aspiring to displace God. This absurd ambition on the part of a created being—thinking himself capable of defeating His own Creator—can only be rationally understood if Satan did not really believe God had created him. That is, **since his earliest awareness would be in the watery cosmos of the primeval deep (Genesis 1:2), and his only knowledge that he had been created was God’s word for it, he could have chosen to doubt God’s word and to believe instead that both he and God had somehow “evolved” out of the primeval waters. This, in fact, is exactly what is implied in the cosmogonies of the Sumerians, Egyptians, and other ancient nations.** Thus, Satan (or Lucifer) was the first “evolutionist,” and the root of all subsequent sin is in doubting God’s revealed word concerning His creation. {Boldface added.}

Indeed, Babylonia was no exception: [they believed that the universe was created through the god Marduk \(champion of order\) and the goddess Tiamat \(embodying chaos\) fighting each other, and Marduk then making the material universe out of Tiamat’s body.](#) Despite the claim of that article I just linked to that this account “influenced other ancient Near Eastern mythologies, including the creation stories found in the Hebrew Bible”, and that “The parallels between these narratives reveal a shared cultural heritage and thematic concerns”, it’s more likely that the Babylonian creation myth is a corrupted echo of the primeval situation that gave Satan the gall to think rebelling against God could *possibly* end well!

“Yet toward Sheol you are brought down, Toward extreme parts of a pit.” Note the imperfect-tense “you are brought down”, implying an *ongoing* state of affairs at the time this taunt is to be proclaimed. This lines up perfectly with Revelation 20:1-3, which dates its events to the beginning of the Millennium:

1 And I observed a messenger descending from the sky, **having the key to the deep**, and a great chain in his hand. 2 And he seized the dragon, the ancient serpent, who is the Slanderer [the literal meaning of the Greek word Διάβολος (Diabolos)] and the Adversary [the literal meaning of Σατανᾶς (Satanas)], and he bound him for a thousand years. 3 And **he threw him into the deep and closed and sealed it over him, so that he could no longer deceive the nations until the thousand years were expired.** After these things he must be released for a short time. ([LGV](#), boldface added {scroll to p. 42 in the PDF})

Remember, Sheol is a place where *nobody is conscious*. This implies that Satan won’t be conscious during those thousand years (which would certainly explain why he’ll be unable to deceive anybody while he’s there!), and will become conscious again once released (just like dead humans become conscious again once resuscitated or resurrected). This means that, contrary to the claims of the

growing Satan's Little Season Theory movement, *Satan won't have all that time to think* (because not being conscious means you can't think!) about how he'll execute a perfect plan to deceive the world *to the point that nobody remembers Jesus' Kingdom having happened!*

Next comes verses 16-17, the opening verse of which decisively indicates that the subject has again shifted to someone else:

Ones looking at you, toward you they stare, toward you they show themselves attentive: 'Is this **the man** [disqualifying this from referring to Satan] who **disturbed the earth/land, Who caused kingdoms to quake**, He *who* made *the* inhabited Earth like the wilderness, And his cities he tore down, His prisoners he never opened homeward?'

This also makes sense because humans can't see Sheol, and thus won't be able to see Satan in its depths. But is this referring again to the ruler of Iraq just before Jesus returns? Well, it's significant that a mid-3<sup>rd</sup>-century Patristic writer interpreted Isaiah 14:16-17 as applying to the Antichrist, albeit believing him to be Nero resuscitated:

**Isaiah said: This is the man who moveth the world and so many kings, and under whom the land shall become desert. [Quoting Isaiah 14:16c-17a, apparently from an Old Latin translation (Commodianus wrote in Latin) of the Septuagint, which says "kings" instead of "kingdoms" (as the Masoretic Text, Great Isaiah Scroll, & Vulgate do)] Hear ye how the prophet foretold concerning him.** I have said nothing elaborately, but negligently. Then, doubtless, the world shall be finished when he shall appear. He himself shall divide the globe into three ruling powers, **when, moreover, Nero shall be raised up from hell, Elias shall first come to seal the beloved ones;** at which things the region of Africa and the northern nation, **the whole earth on all sides, for seven years shall tremble. But Elias shall occupy the half of the time, Nero shall occupy half. Then the whore Babylon, being reduced to ashes, its embers shall thence advance to Jerusalem; and the Latin conqueror shall then say, I am Christ, whom ye always pray to; and, indeed, the original ones who were deceived combine to praise him.** He does many wonders, since his is the false prophet. Especially that they may believe him, his image shall speak. The Almighty has given it power to appear such. The Jews, recapitulating Scriptures from him, exclaim at the same time to the Highest that they have been deceived.

{[Commodianus. "Instructions". XLI—Of the Time of Antichrist.](#) Boldface and content in brackets added.}

In fact, *the Antichrist very well could be ruling Iraq* by the time Jesus returns, in light of what we read in Daniel 11:40-42.

40 And **at the end time** the king of the South will wage war with him, and **the king of the North will storm against him** with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships; and [then; waw-consecutive perfect] he will enter countries [literally, "enter into lands"], overflow [literally, "and then will rinse off"; waw-consecutive perfect] *them*, and [then will; waw-consecutive perfect] pass through. 41 He will also enter [literally, "**And then he will enter** (waw-consecutive perfect) **into**"] **the Beautiful Land, and many countries will** fall [or "**stumble**"]; but [literally, "and"] these will be rescued [or "will slip away"] out of his hand: Edom, Moab, and the foremost of the sons of Ammon. 42 Then [literally, "**And**"; waw-conjunctive perfect] **he will** reach [or "**stretch**"] **out** with ["with" not in the Hebrew text] **his hand** against *other* countries

[literally, “**in(to) lands**”], and the land of Egypt will not escape [literally, “will not become a deliverance”]. (2020 NASB, boldface added)

Next, note that verse 19 opens with a waw-disjunctive construction, here functioning to present a contrast with verse 18:

“All kings of nations, each of them, have laid in glory, A man in his house. And [or “But”] you have been cast outside of your sepulcher, Like an abhorred sprout, A garment of slain ones, ones pierced *by* a sword, Ones going down toward **stones of a pit**, Like a corpse trodden down. You aren’t united with them in burial, For your land you have spoiled, Your people you have killed, Never will offspring of mischiefs be named unto the age.” (verses 18-20, my right-to-left translation)

So, the king being referred to here won’t be buried like the kings speaking here had been (note that the verbs for “laid” and “cast” are *both* in the perfect tense--already-completed actions), as punishment for spoiling his land and killing his people. Moreover, note that he’s likened to “Ones going down toward **stones of a pit**”, rather than “toward a pit”. The inclusion of the word for “stone” is actually very important: Sheol is a place that nobody inside will be conscious of, and that nobody outside can see into--*what would be the point* of stones being there? Hence, this is referring to *a different pit* than the one in verse 15! Indeed, it’s telling that [the Valley of Hinnom, which has been developed into a park in modern Jerusalem, still has plenty of stones in it!](#) Hence, this could be referring to the body of this ruler of Iraq at Jesus’ return having been thrown into Gehenna, and thus burning out in the open (as we’ll see when discussing the next “Day of the Lord” passage) rather than being buried.

Now, in the spirit of considering alternative possibilities, verse 20 *also* lines up with [the Cyrus Cylinder’s description of Nabonidus’ tyranny](#), with the caveat that most historians consider the Cyrus Cylinder to be propaganda. So if verses 19-20 are actually referring to Nabonidus, then verse 21 would be referring to Belshazzar and any siblings he may have had being executed by the Medes & Persians when Babylon was conquered in early 464 B.C. I must admit, while it *would* be feasible for [Antiochus Epiphanes](#) to sire children during the Tribulation (not to mention, fathering children with multiple women would be in-character with what a depraved man he was; remember, he’ll be *resuscitated*, not *resurrected*!), such children would only be up to 33 months old when Jesus returns, making it problematic for freshly-resurrected kings to *demand* a slaughter for them (unless, of course, spending time with their depraved parents--why would any woman who *isn’t* depraved *want* to be with Antiochus Epiphanes?--twisted their moral development to the point that they were already willfully committing wrong)! Moreover, Antiochus Epiphanes’ own heir in the days of the Maccabees, Antiochus V Eupator, *was murdered* in 162 B.C. *when only 10 or 11 years old*, so *only one* son of his born during the apocalypse would have to become evil to justify “sons” being plural in Isaiah 14:21. Overall, these verses seem consistent with *either* possibility; but in light of the waw-consecutive at the start of verse 3, Nabonidus would best be considered *a type of* this end-times ruler of Iraq.

Indeed, Nabonidus being a type of the prophecy’s *eventual* fulfillment lines up with other details earlier in the passage. Several Babylonian kings cut down cedars from Lebanon to produce military equipment, and that suddenly stopped when Persia took over--[“the trees of Lebanon and the other mountain ranges would be spared, since, while both the Assyrian and Babylonian kings cut timber in the Syrian forests for building purposes, the Persians had no such practice”](#) {scroll to “Pulpit

Commentary”}--meaning the sentiment in verse 8 *would've been true at that time*). Unfortunately, I'm not aware of any historical or archaeological records of how Nabonidus met his end (we know from Daniel 5:30-31 that Belshazzar was slain the night Babylon was conquered by the Medes & Persians, but [Nabonidus was off in Tayma at the time](#) {scroll to “Column ii”}) or what happened to his body afterward, so I can't offer any support for him fitting the details of verses 19-20a.

Then again, God makes it clear in verses 22 & 23 that the site on which the city of Babylon sits (remember, [Iraq is trying to rebuild it and develop it into a tourist attraction!](#)) will never be inhabited again, and will instead become a swamp, home for hedgehogs. Commentators have noted that [“the hedgehog or porcupine is found on the shores of the Euphrates... the common interpretation is to be preferred, that Babylon itself should become filled with pools of water. This was done by Cyrus' directing the waters of the Euphrates from their channel when the city was taken, and by the fact that the waters never returned again to their natural bed, so that the region was overflowed with water”](#) {scroll to “Isaiah 14:23”} (the Euphrates river ran directly through ancient Babylon), and [“The swampy character of the country about the ruins of Babylon is generally noticed by travelers. It arises from neglect of the dams along the course of the Euphrates.”](#) {Scroll to “Isaiah 14:23”} So, in light of the waw-consecutive perfect verbs throughout these two verses demanding that they *sequentially follow (or at earliest, coincide with)* the slaughter of verse 21, which in turn is commanded by resurrected kings “in a day of YHWH causing rest for you [feminine singular, apparently referring to **Israel on the collective level**], from your pain and from your agitation and from the work, the severe *work*, which he will have worked by you” (verse 3), we must conclude that the state of affairs in Babylon noted by these commentators would be reversed by the end of the apocalypse, and then come back after Jesus returns.

In summary: verses 4-8 are talking about the Antichrist, who would also be the end-times ruler of Iraq (of whom Nabonidus was a type), verses 9-11 are speaking *figuratively* about other kings who were still dead (similar to how Jonah figuratively claimed that “Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, And You heard my voice.”--Jonah 2:2c NKJV), verses 12-15 are talking about Satan, verses 16-20 are talking about the Antichrist as the end-times ruler of Iraq again (typified again by Nabonidus), verse 21 is about [Antiochus Epiphanes' /the Antichrist's](#) children, both in the past (Antiochus V Eupator) and any born to him during the Tribulation (typified by Nabonidus' children, including his firstborn son, Belshazzar), and verses 22-23 speak of what will become of the land on which the city of Babylon sits. I must admit, this makes it far more sensible for Isaiah to discuss the Antichrist in the major train of thought immediately after this one (verses 24-27)!

I only see 2 sticking points in the explanation I've presented. First, how can Isaiah 14:11 be referring to someone who dies on the Day of the Lord if he goes down to Sheol? Wouldn't this force a contradiction between 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10 & Revelation 20:13 by implying that he'll be judged twice and/or not experience permanent annihilation when Jesus returns?

and to [repay] you – the ones being afflicted – [with] rest along with us at the revealing of the Master Jesus from the sky with His mighty messengers, in blazing fire, delivering vengeance to those who have not perceived God, also to those who disobey the Good Message of our Master, Jesus Anointed. **These shall incur the judgment of permanent annihilation** from the presence of the Master and from the glory of His power **when He should come to be esteemed**

**among His holy ones**, and to be marveled at among all the trusting ones in that Day, because our witness to you was believed. (LGV)

And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, and death and **the grave {Hades, Greek equivalent of the Hebrew Sheol}** gave up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each according to their works. (LGV)

Second, how *does* Jonah's statement in Jonah 2:2 not contradict the dead being conscious of nothing, in light of the rest of Jonah's prayer being spoken in such literal terms?

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<sup>i</sup> Note that part of Belshazzar's reward for interpreting the writing on the wall was to proclaim whoever could do it "the third ruler in the kingdom" (Daniel 5:7,29 KJV). As the Amplified Bible explains in a Footnote on verse 7: "Nabonidus was first, Belshazzar, his son, was second." See my upcoming book {HIDMF, p. 700 Fn 1206.} for a fuller explanation of the archaeological evidence for this view.