

THE SPEAKER OF THE FIVE “I WILLS”
ISAIAH 14:12-16

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Introduction

In the study of Satanology there is perhaps no passage that has received more attention among dispensational scholars than Isaiah 14:12-16. Dr. Chafer devotes six pages to the theme of Satan's five "I wills,"¹ and then repeatedly refers back to this section throughout the remaining sixty-two pages of his study on Satanology.² The vast majority of dispensational scholars reviewed by the author of this paper concur with Dr. Chafer that Isaiah 14:12-16 expresses the proud boast of Satan that brought about his fall from heaven. There is no doubt in this writer's mind that the egotistical, arrogant, independently-minded assertion of these verses expresses the very heart of the first of God's creatures to commit sin. However, it is the studied conclusion of this author that the primary reference in the passage under consideration is not to Satan, but rather to the eschatological ruler of Babylon, an exceedingly wicked man who will seek to dominate the political, religious and commercial control of the cosmos during the first half of the tribulation period. This nefarious individual, styled "the great harlot who sits on many waters" (Rev 17:1 NASB) and "Babylon the Great" (Rev 17:5 NASB)³ will be the primary persecutor of the saints during the first half of the tribulation. There is no doubt that this end-time Middle Eastern ruler will be inspired by none other than Satan, but it is this ruler of Babylon, not Satan himself, against whom Israel will take up this taunt during the millennial kingdom.⁴

¹ L. S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947) II:44-50.

² *Ibid*, 51-112.

³ Unless otherwise noted, English translations are taken from *New American Standard Bible*, 1995 update, and are designated, NASB.

⁴ It is the opinion of the author of this paper that the situation in Ezekiel 28:12-19 is somewhat different. In the Ezekiel passage this author's opinion is that there is a legitimate occurrence of double reference. Whereas verses

I. The Law of Double Reference

Isaiah's prophecy about Babylon begins in 13:1 where it clearly refers to the earthly king and his kingdom, as virtually all expositors agree. Those who see a reference to Satan in 14:12-16 must appeal to the hermeneutical principle of double reference. C. Fred Dickason, for example, explains:

Perhaps the view that best answers the biblical evidence is that there is a dual reference. Verses 4-11 seem to refer to a future "king of Babylon," or the coming Antichrist associated with Babylon, a politico-religious system existing just before the second coming of Christ. This one is pictured in Revelation 13, 17, and 18, and is described in 2 Thessalonians 2. There seems also to be an inclusion of Satan in verses 12-17 to retrace Satan's sin as analogous with Antichrist's character and actions in the future.⁵

There is no doubt that "double reference" is a legitimate feature in many prophecies; however, great care must be taken when appealing to double reference. Dr. Fruchtenbaum has both a very helpful discussion of this feature and a much needed note of caution. He is quoted here at some length:

The second law is called *The Law of Double Reference*. This law observes the fact that often a passage or a block of Scripture is speaking of two different persons or two different events that are separated by a long period of time. In the passage itself they are blended into one picture, and the time gap between the two persons or two events is not presented by the text itself. The fact that a gap of time exists is known because of other Scriptures, but in that particular text itself the gap of time is not seen. A good example of this law is some of the Old Testament prophecies regarding the First and Second Comings of Messiah. Often these two events are blended into one picture with no indication that there is a gap of time between the First and Second Comings. Zechariah 9:9-10 is a good example of *The Law of Double Reference*. Verse nine is speaking of the First Coming, but verse ten is speaking of the Second Coming. These two comings are blended into one picture with no indication that there is a separation of time between them. Another example is Isaiah 11:1-5. Verses 1-2 speak of the First Coming, while verses 3-5 speak of the Second Coming. Again, the two are blended into one picture with no indication of a gap of time between the two. Because many prophetic passages follow the principle of *The Law of Double Reference*, this is an important law to know.

1-11 describe the earthly ruler of Tyre, verses 12-19 speak of Satan's original fall. The being described in verses 12-19 is said to have been in Eden, and is described as "the anointed cherub that covers." These descriptions seem clearly to transcend the description of any earthly ruler of Tyre.

⁵ C. Fred Dickason, *Angels, Elect and Evil* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975), 131.

This law should not be confused with another law often called *double fulfillment*. This author does not accept the validity of the principle of double fulfillment. This law states that one passage may have a near and far view; hence, in a way, it may be fulfilled twice. Isaiah 7:14 is often used as an example of this view. The near view would be a reference to a child being born in Ahaz's day; but the far view is that of a virgin-born child, which is the birth of Messiah. This author, however, does not believe that there is such a thing as double fulfillment. A single passage can refer to one thing only, unless stated otherwise, and if it is prophecy, it can have only one fulfillment unless the text itself states that it can have many fulfillments. *The Law of Double Reference* differs from the law of double fulfillment in that the former states that while two events are blended into one picture, one part of the passage refers to one event and the other part of the passage to the second event. This is the case in Zechariah 9:9-10. Verse nine refers only to the First Coming, while verse ten refers only to the Second Coming; but there is no double fulfillment of both verses. There are not two fulfillments of verse nine and two fulfillments of verse ten. Isaiah 7:14 must either refer to a child in Ahaz's day or to the birth of the Messiah. It cannot refer to both. Isaiah 7:13-17 could be better explained if it is taken as following *The Law of Double Reference* rather than the principle of double fulfillment. Verses 13-14 refer to the virgin birth of the Messiah only. These verses are addressed to the House of David in general, as can be seen by the usage of plural pronouns in these two verses in the Hebrew text. Verses 15-17 refer to a child in Ahaz's day because the address is to Ahaz alone, as can be seen in the shift to singular pronouns in the Hebrew text. This child is probably Shear-Yashuv of verse three. Hence, the double reference speaks of two persons separated by a period of time. It avoids the pitfalls of double fulfillment. If the verse could refer to a non-virgin birth, then there is no real evidence or prophecy for a real virgin birth in the Old Testament.⁶

In view of Dr. Fruchtenbaum's caution, if one is to see a reference to Satan in Isaiah 14:12-16, then these verses cannot *also* be referring to a human king of Babylon. Also, it should be observed that if these are the words of Satan, they must be either his words spoken on the occasion of his first sin before man's fall (Ezek 28) or at his future fall during the Tribulation Period (Rev 12) but not on both occasions. This introduces at least two difficulties: (1) The individual in view in verses 12-16 is described in uniquely human terms; (2) the individual in view in verses 12-16 appears to be speaking at a time much later than his initial primeval sin against God.

⁶ A. G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah* rev. ed. (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2004), 4-6.

A. Uniquely Human Terminology

1. Entrance into *She'ol*. The speaker of the five “I wills” of verses 12-14 is told in verse 15 that he will be “brought to *she'ol* (לְשֵׁוֹל).” Of the sixty-five occurrences of *she'ol* in the Old Testament, not one describes any angelic creature as being present there, unless Isaiah 14:15 is the lone exception. *She'ol* appears to be the place where the souls of men go after physical death to await the resurrection.⁷ That the speaker of the five “I wills” is to be brought to *she'ol* argues strongly against his being Satan. Rather, the Scriptures portray Satan as being destined for a place referred to as the abyss (Rev 20:1-3), and eventually for the Lake of Fire (Mt 25:41; Rev 20:10). Apart from Isaiah 14:15 there is no Scriptural evidence of Satan ever coming to *she'ol*. Admittedly, this is an argument from silence. However, with the abundance of references to *she'ol* in the Old Testament, the burden of proof must rest with the one who would make Isaiah 14:15 the lone exception.⁸

One might argue that the reference to Satan ends with verse 14, and that the reference to the human king of Babylon is taken up again at verse 15. However, the structure of the passage argues against this. “You will be thrust down to sheol” of verse 15 is clearly the counterpart to “I will ascend above the heights of the clouds” of verse 14. In other words, the antecedent of “you” in verse 15 must be the “I” of verse 14. So it must be the speaker of the five “I wills” that is thrust down to *she'ol*.

⁷ Paul P Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1997), 374; Timothy J. Demy, “Sheol” in Tim LaHaye and Ed Hindson, gen. edd., *The Popular Encyclopedia of Bible Prophecy* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2004), 360-361; Donald Perkins and Russell L. Penney, “Hell” in Mal Couch gen. ed., *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1996), 141-142.

⁸ In *Footsteps of the Messiah*, p. 741, Dr. Fruchtenbaum offers the explanation that the Abyss is actually a “section of Sheol.” But this is simply asserted; there is no proof offered. The only proof is the circular reasoning that says, since Isa 14:15 places Satan in *she'ol*, and since Rev 20:1-3 has Satan being cast into the abyss, therefore the abyss must be a section of *she'ol*. This, of course, assumes the truth of what is trying to be proved. On this particular view, see also Herman A. Hoyt, *The End Times* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), 41.

One Old Testament reference to *she'ol* forms a strong parallel to our passage, and bolsters the argument that Isaiah 14:15 is referring to a human being, not an angelic being. The parallel passage is Ezekiel 31:15-18.

Isaiah 14:15 (NASB)	Ezekiel 31:15-18 (NASB)
Nevertheless <u>you will be thrust down to Sheol</u> , To <u>the recesses of the pit</u> .	‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “On the day when <u>it went down to Sheol</u> I caused lamentations; I closed the deep over it and held back its rivers. And its many waters were stopped up, and I made Lebanon mourn for it, and all the trees of the field wilted away on account of it. ¹⁶ “I made the nations quake at the sound of its fall when <u>I made it go down to Sheol</u> with those <u>who go down to the pit</u> ; and all the well-watered trees of Eden, the choicest and best of Lebanon, were comforted in the earth beneath. ¹⁷ “They also went <u>down with it to Sheol</u> to those who were slain by the sword; and those who were its strength lived under its shade among the nations. ¹⁸ “To which among the trees of Eden are you thus equal in glory and greatness? Yet you will be brought down with the trees of Eden to the earth beneath; you will lie in the midst of the uncircumcised, with those who were slain by the sword. So is Pharaoh and all his hordes!” declares the Lord GOD.”

That the passage in Ezekiel 31 is describing Pharaoh and his armies is clear from verse 18.

Furthermore, those going “down to sheol” and “down to the pit” are described as “the uncircumcised” and “those who were slain by the sword.” The description of these human beings who go down to sheol and down to the pit makes a remarkable parallel to the one who is thrust down to sheol to the sides of the pit in Isaiah 14:15.

2. Description as *'Ish*. In Isaiah 14:16, the inhabitants of *she'ol* see the speaker of the five “I wills” and ask about him, “Is this the man [שׂוֹן *'ish*] who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms...?” Thus, it appears that the speaker of the five “I wills” is a man, not an angel. Though the term שׂוֹן might in some contexts refer to an angel (e.g., Zech 2:1 [v.5 Heb]), it is

normally used in reference to humans. It does not appear that the inhabitants of *she'ol* recognized the object of their musing as anything other than a once powerful human being, who has now been brought down to their own level. Once again, it might be argued that the reference to Satan was concluded before verse 16, and that with verse 16 resumes the reference to the human king. However, lacking any clear contextual indicators of such a switch in reference, normal, literal interpretation would understand the antecedent of “you” in verse 16 to be the same as the antecedent of the “you” in verse 15. Thus, the speaker of the five “I wills” should be seen as a human being, not an angelic being.

B. The Time of the Speaker’s Boast

Those who see a reference to Satan in 14:12-16 are divided as to the time of the speaker’s boast. Some see the five “I wills” of verse 14-15 being uttered during Satan’s primeval fall before the fall of Adam, possibly identified with Ezekiel 28:11-19.⁹ Others see the utterance occurring at a later date, possibly during a mid-tribulational event to be associated with Revelation 12:3-4, 7-9.¹⁰ Those who equate the utterance of the five “I wills” with Satan’s primeval fall have some problems with the law of double reference as expressed by Dr. Fruchtenbaum. For example, Dr. Fruchtenbaum himself interprets the third “I will” (“I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north.”) as follows:

These are expressions used by the prophets elsewhere in describing the Millennial or the Messianic Kingdom. Satan knew quite well that God’s program for the Jewish people is for the Messiah to rule over the nation of Israel during the Kingdom. The third *I will* declared his desire to make himself the messianic ruler over Israel.¹¹

⁹ Fruchtenbaum, 550-551.

¹⁰ Dickason, 131; Ryrie appears to refer these words to a historic king of Babylon and agrees with Delitzsch that he serves both as “the antitype of the devil and the type of Antichrist,” Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 164.

¹¹ Fruchtenbaum, 551.

He is probably correct in concluding that the speaker “declared his desire to make himself the messianic ruler over Israel,” but what did Satan know of God’s plan for Israel before mankind was even created? The angels are great in wisdom and knowledge, but they are not omniscient. We know that angels do not possess complete knowledge of God’s soteriological plan, but rather learn about such things (1Pe 1:12; Gen 3:14-15). It is highly unlikely that Satan, in his primeval sin against God, would have expressed in specific terms as desire to rule over Israel as the messiah. If this utterance describes such a desire, it is more likely descriptive of a claim to be made at the mid-tribulational event described in Revelation 12. Such a claim might be made by Satan, but it might also be made by a powerful human ruler of that same time period.

II. Unique Language

The chief argument used to support the idea that this passage describes Satan, rather than a human king, is Isaiah’s use of language that transcends any legitimate description of a human being, and thus could only describe Satan. For example, Bob Deffinbaugh writes:

The taunt ... takes us beyond and behind the earthly king [to] Satan, who stands behind [that earthly king]... Some would dispute the claim that Satan is addressed ..., but the descriptions ... go beyond that of a man and fit no one other than Satan. Who but Satan:

- has fallen from heaven (Isaiah 14:12)?
- can be called the “**star of the morning**” and “**son of the dawn**” (Isaiah 14:12)?¹²

Deffinbaugh’s questions appear to be rhetorical, expecting an obvious answer of “no one.”

However, these are legitimate questions and deserve more than a cursory answer. What does it

¹² Bob Deffinbaugh, “Satan’s Part in God’s Perfect Plan,” <http://bible.org/seriespage/satan%E2%80%99s-part-god%E2%80%99s-perfect-plan> [accessed November 25, 2010].

mean to “fall from heaven”? And who might be described as a “star of the morning” and “son of the dawn”?

A. Fallen From Heaven

Isaiah 14:12 exclaims, “How you have fallen from heaven” (אֵיךְ נִפְלַת מִשָּׁמַיִם). Those who see a fall of Satan here typically cite Luke 10:18 as a New Testament parallel to buttress their position at this point. In the Luke passage, Jesus said, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.” In view of this New Testament parallel, there is no doubt that Isaiah’s language could be describing Satan’s fall. However, the proper exegetical question to ask here is not, *Could* Isaiah’s language describe Satan’s fall, but rather, *Must* Isaiah’s language justify seeing a switch from language descriptive of a human Babylonian ruler to language descriptive of Satan? Nearly all expositors agree that the context of Isaiah 13:1 – 14:11 has been describing a human ruler of Babylon. Hermeneutically, the question about the language of 14:12 is one of authorial intent. What did Isaiah mean by “you are fallen from heaven”? What did Isaiah’s initial audience understand by these words? Might Isaiah have been referring to the lofty aspirations of a human king? Does the language support such an idea? A separate issue is whether Jesus in Luke 10:18 was providing an interpretation of Isaiah 14:12. For a further discussion of Jesus’ statement, see below. In an effort to understand Isaiah’s language, let us examine the actual terminology used.

The English term “Heaven” readily brings to mind the notion of God’s dwelling place. However the Hebrew term שָׁמַיִם *shamayim* was used in the OT with a somewhat broader semantic range. For example: heaven is the visible sky, Gen 1:8 (= the expanse רָקִיעַ); 7:11; Dt 33:26; Josh 10:13; Job 38:37; Ps 78:23; there are the four winds of heaven Zech 2:10; 6:5 Dan 8:8; 11:4; heaven is God’s dwelling place Dt 3:24; 26:15; 1Ki 8:23, 30, 39; Ps 2:4; 11:4; 20:7; Ps 102:20; 115:3; Is 63:15; 66:1; Lam 3:41. The figurative use of שָׁמַיִם is widespread in the OT:

The heavens are frequently described in figurative language as having windows (Gen 7:11; II Kgs 7:2; Mal 3:10, though the word here is more likely sluice-gates such as are used in irrigation, see *ʾārbāʾ*), gates (Gen 28:7), doors (Ps 78:23), pillars (Job 26:11), and foundations (II Sam 22:8). They are stretched out and spread out like a tent or a curtain (Isa 40:22)... The imagery is often phenomenological, and is both convenient and vividly forceful. Thus a disobedient Israel would find the heavens to be like iron (Lev 26:19) or like bronze (Deut 28:23), not yielding the much-needed rain... The heavens tell of the glory of God (Ps 19:1 [H 2]), declare his righteousness (Ps 50:6), and praise him (Ps 69:34 [H 35]). As grand as they are, they merely point to the Creator and are not to be worshiped (Ex 20:4; Jer 44:17–25). Though the heavens are his throne, they will one day vanish like smoke (Isa 51:6) and be rolled up like a scroll (Isa 34:4).¹³

That which extends to heaven is figurative language to describe that which is exceedingly high or lofty. For example, the Israelites were reluctant to enter Canaan, because the Canaanites' cities were "large and fortified to heaven" (Dt 1:28; 9:1). Amos warns unruly Israel, "Though they dig into Sheol, from there will My hand take them; and though they ascend to heaven, from there will I bring them down" (Am 9:2). Babylon is similarly warned, "'Though Babylon should ascend to the heavens, and though she should fortify her lofty stronghold, from Me destroyers will come to her,' declares the LORD" (Jer 51:53); and using the synonymous expression "among the stars," Edom is told, "'Though you build high like the eagle, Though you set your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down,' declares the LORD" (Obad 4). The little horn of Daniel's fourth beast (the antichrist) is described in the following terms:

Out of one of them came forth a rather small horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Beautiful Land. It grew up to the host of heaven and caused some of the host and some of the stars to fall to the earth, and it trampled them down. It even magnified itself to be equal with the Commander of the host; and it removed the regular sacrifice from Him, and the place of His sanctuary was thrown down. And on account of transgression the host will be given over to the horn along with the regular sacrifice; and it will fling truth to the ground and perform its will and prosper. (Dan 8:9-12 NASB)

¹³ Hermann J. Austel, "שַׁמַּיָּה 2407," R. Laird Harris, Robert Laird Harris, Gleason Leonard Archer and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 935-36.

In all these expressions fallen human beings, in their pride and arrogance, are seen as engaging in activities that extend metaphorically “to heaven.” This does not necessarily place them physically in the location of God’s dwelling place, but speaks metaphorically of their opposition to God and His purposes.

The phrase “from heaven” (both מִשָּׁמַיִם and מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם) finds interesting usage in the OT.

1. מִשָּׁמַיִם Inseparable preposition (17x including Isa 14:12):
 - a. God hears from heaven, Neh 9:27, 28; 2Chron 6:21.
 - b. God speaks from heaven, Neh 9:13.
 - c. God looks down from heaven, Isa 63:15; Ps 14:2; 33:13; 53:3; 80:15; 85:12; 102:20; Lam 3:50.
 - d. God sends salvation from heaven, Ps 57:4.
 - e. God sends judgment from heaven, Ps 76:9.
 - f. God sends manna from heaven, Neh 9:15.
 - g. Israel’s glory is cast from heaven to earth, Lam 2:1.
2. מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם Stand alone preposition (29x)
 - a. God hears from heaven, 2Chr 6:21, 23, 25, 30, 33, 35, 39; 7:14.
 - b. God speaks from heaven, Gen 21:17; 22:11, 15; Ex 20:22; Dt 4:36.
 - c. God looks down from heaven, Dt 26:15.
 - d. Fire (and brimstone) comes down from heaven, Gen 19:24; 2Ki 1:10, 12, 14; Job 1:16; 1Chr 21:26.
 - e. God sends manna from heaven, Ex 16:4.
 - f. Rain comes down from heaven, Gen 8:2; Dt 28:24 (Josh 10:11 hailstones); 2Sa 21:10; Isa 55:10 (rain and snow).

g. God is to be praised from heaven, Ps 148:1.

Lamentations 2:1 (1.g above) is a very interesting parallel to Isaiah 14:12; Jeremiah laments, “How the Lord has covered the daughter of Zion With a cloud in His anger! He has cast from heaven to earth the glory of Israel, and has not remembered His footstool in the day of His anger.” As this parallel shows, the figure of falling from heaven is entirely suitable when speaking of a nation’s fall from great prominence, and does not necessarily describe an angelic being’s fall from the place of God’s dwelling. In discussing the figure as it relates to Jerusalem’s fall, David Reyburn writes:

He has cast down from heaven to earth expresses the same poetic imagery used in Isaiah 14:12 and Ezekiel 28:14–17, where the rulers are said to be thrown from great heights to the earth. *He* refers to the Lord. *From heaven to earth* gives a picture of extremes of distance, that is, from the very highest place to the very lowest. Although the imagery is of distance in space, the meaning is still the past of Jerusalem’s greatness compared to her present ruin.¹⁴

F. B. Huey explains it this way, “God’s wrath covered the nation like a storm cloud that had unleashed its fury on the helpless inhabitants below. Jerusalem is compared to a star that has fallen from heaven”¹⁵

Similarly, the judgment of Capernaum was described in these terms: “And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day” (Mt 11:23 NASB). To say that Capernaum descends from heaven to Hades does not suggest that “Capernaum” is a name for Satan. True, Capernaum’s sin in rejecting Jesus’ miracles was no

¹⁴ William David Reyburn, *A Handbook on Lamentations*, UBS helps for translators; UBS handbook series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 45.

¹⁵ F.B. Huey, “Jeremiah, Lamentations,” *The New American Commentary, Vol. 16*, electronic ed., Logos Library System; (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 460.

doubt inspired by Satan, but Capernaum's descent from heaven to Hades was her own descent, not Satan's.

The preceding study has shown that Old Testament language describing both ascent to heaven and descent from heaven is frequently used of rebellious human beings. Perhaps such language is especially apropos in describing a *Babylonian* king, for the very first rebellion recorded of Babylon is described as man's effort to construct "a tower whose top will reach into heaven,¹⁶ and let us make for ourselves a name" (Gen 11:4 NASB). The poetic parallelism in this verse suggests that for man to attempt to ascend to heaven is tantamount to his prideful and arrogant attempt to exalt his name to a status that should be reserved solely for that Name that is above every name. Such is the sin of the Babylonian king in Isaiah 14:12-14. And the concluding prophecy about eschatological Babylon describes her sins as having "piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities" Revelation 18:5 (NASB).

B. Star of the Morning, Son of the Dawn

O star of the morning, son of the dawn!

הַיְלֵל בֶּן־אֶשְׁמֹרֶת (LXX ὁ ἑσπέρου ὁ πρωὶ ἀνατέλλων; Vulgate, lucifer qui mane oriebaris)

The King James' "Lucifer" (from the Lat. Vulgate) is potentially misleading. Certainly, it has biased the opinion of many who rely on this translation. Native English speakers readily recognize that "Lucifer" is a name for the devil. This identification was first made by Origen, Tertullian, and Augustine.¹⁷ The Hebrew הַיְלֵל, however, most likely refers to the "morning star"

¹⁶ Lit., "and its head *will be* in heaven" or "and *let* its head *be* in heaven" וְרִאשׁוֹ בְּשָׁמַיִם.

¹⁷ Marvin E. Tate, "Satan in the Old Testament," *Review and Expositor Volume 89* (Louisville, KY: Review and Expositor, 1992), 467.

(prob. Venus) or the crescent moon¹⁸ (cf. the LXX ὁ ἑωσφόρος, “morning star,” Ugaritic *hll*, Arabic *hilāl*). These are glorious lights when viewed against the night sky, but their glory fails before the prevailing light of the intense sun. Thus, the fall of a nation or of a valiant ruler before the power and splendor of One much greater is aptly pictured by a reference to such a heavenly phenomenon.

One interesting explanation of הַיְלֵל sees it as a verb instead of a noun. Robert Alden, though rejecting this view, lays out the position thus:

The word *helel* appears in Zechariah 11:2 in parallel with a verb whose radical letters are *yll*. Both thus mean “howl” or “yell” and are apparently onomatopoeic. In Ezekiel 21:12 (v. 17 in Hebrew) we have a similar situation. There *helel* is parallel to *z’q* which means “cry.” Jeremiah 47:2 has a related form (*hiph’il*) and there the word is rendered “wail.” The Syriac version, among others, so understood the word in question. “How are you fallen from heaven! Howl in the morning:...”¹⁹

The expression “son of the dawn,” בֶּן־שָׁחַר occurs only here in the OT; however שָׁחַר “the early light of dawn” or “morning twilight” occurs frequently (23x). The expression “son of the dawn” is in apposition to “morning star,” further strengthening the understanding of this being a reference to the celestial body either of Venus or the Crescent Moon, rather than to an angelic being. Though the angels are sometimes referred to as “stars,” the proper Hebrew designation for this is כּוֹכַב, not הַיְלֵל (the “morning stars” of Job 38:7 are כּוֹכַבֵי בֹקֶר). For this boastful king to be described as “The morning star, the son of the dawn” is picturesque language suggesting that his once brilliant career is about to fade quickly with the rising of One much greater than he. Alden expressed it this way:

¹⁸ Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, M.E.J Richardson and Johann Jakob Stamm. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. electronic ed. Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1999., s.v. הַיְלֵל.

¹⁹ Robert L. Alden, “Lucifer, Who or What?” *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society Volume 11*, 1 (Lynchburg, VA: The Evangelical Theological Society, 1968), 33. The translation offered at the close of this quote is from George M. Lamsa, *The Holy Bible from Ancient Eastern Manuscripts* (Philadelphia: Holman, 1957).

The morning star is something beautiful to behold and has a most noble task in the heavens, that of announcing the new day. The king boasted that he was as great as God and Isaiah likened him to that star which is beautiful for a moment but quickly eclipsed by the glory of the sun itself.²⁰

III. New Testament Parallels

It has been argued that two New Testament passages that speak of the fall of Satan are references to Isaiah 14:12-16; these are Luke 10:18 and Revelation 12:3-4, 7-9 (esp. v. 9).²¹

A. Luke 10:18

In Luke 10:18, Jesus said, “I was watching Satan having fallen out of heaven like lightning” (ἐθεώρουν τὸν σατανᾶν ὡς ἀστραπὴν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ πεσόντα). This verse is often cited as a parallel to Isaiah 14:12 and as a proof that Isaiah was referring to Satan’s fall. There can be no doubt that Luke 10:18 is speaking about Satan, but is it also a reference to Isaiah 14:12? Some would say that it is not a direct reference but either an allusion or simply a use of Isaiah’s language.²² While the language certainly sounds reminiscent of Isaiah 14:12, there are problems with associating these two verses.

1. The fall from heaven. In both Luke 10:18 and Isaiah 14:12 there is a reference to a fall from heaven. Is this enough to justify the parallel? In the discussion above it was demonstrated that the language of falling from heaven is applied in various Scriptures to Israel, Babylon,

²⁰ Alden, 39.

²¹ Chafer, 45; Fruchtenbaum, 551. Fruchtenbaum also lists Rev 9:1 as a citation of Isa 14:12-14 (p. 795), but this seems doubtful.

²² Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1993) on Luke 10:18; I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Exeter, Eng.: Paternoster Press, 1978), 428-29; Trent C. Butler, *Luke*. Holman New Testament Commentary, Vol. 3 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 177; NET Bible.

Edom, Jerusalem, and Capernaum. Thus Luke 10:18 cannot be certainly identified as a reference to Isaiah 14:12. Jesus may in fact simply have been using a well-known Hebrew expression for a powerful ruler's fall from an exalted position. In this case it is, in fact, a reference to Satan, but not necessarily a reference to any specific OT verse. A further complication is seen in that Luke's verb for falling (*πίπτω*) is different from the verb found in the LXX of Isaiah 14:12 (*ἐκπίπτω*). While use of a different verb than the LXX is not a conclusive argument, it is at least suggestive that Luke may not have had Isaiah 14:12 in mind.

2. The immediate context. Luke 10:18 is spoken by Jesus in response to the seventy disciples' rejoicing over their preaching mission. They had reported to Jesus, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name" (verse 17). Jesus' reply about Satan falling is likely a description of the powerlessness of Satan when confronted with the powerful Name of Jesus. One chapter later, when accused by the Pharisees of casting out Satan by Beelzebul, Jesus replied:

Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and a house *divided* against itself falls (*πίπτω*).¹⁸ If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul.¹⁹ And if I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? So they will be your judges.²⁰ But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.²¹ When a strong *man*, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are undisturbed.²² But when someone stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied and distributes his plunder. (Luke 11:17–22 NASB)

By casting out demons by the Spirit of God, Satan's house was falling (*πίπτω*, same word as occurs in 10:18); it could not stand. One stronger than Satan was here. Satan's armor was being stripped away and his possessions plundered. To say that Satan's fall was somehow related to Christ's ministry at His first coming in no way suggests anything like Augustine's notion that the

binding of Satan (Rev 20:2)²³ took place at that time. Rather, as Jesus was offering the kingdom to Israel, one of the signs of His messiahship was the demonstration of His victory over Satan. John Martin comments, “Jesus was not speaking of Satan being cast out at that precise moment, but that his **power** had been broken and that he was subject to Jesus’ authority.”²⁴ The aorist participle *πεσόντα* (having fallen) in Luke 10:18 may be understood as an ingressive aorist,²⁵ “as he began to fall.” Had Israel responded to Jesus’ gracious offer of the kingdom, Satan’s house which had begun to fall would have collapsed completely. But instead, with the postponement of the kingdom, Satan’s binding still awaits a future day.

3. The imperfect tense. In support of the preceding interpretation it is to be noted that the verb “I saw” is in the imperfect tense (*ἑθεώρουν*, “I was watching”). This presents a difficulty if the verse is seen as a parallel to Isaiah 14:12. If this were a reference to the primeval fall of Satan, one would expect an aorist indicative verb.²⁶ If it were a reference to a future, eschatological fall (Rev 12) one might expect either a predictive future, a prophetic present or a futuristic use of the aorist, but not an imperfect tense. The imperfect tense is the least likely verb tense to describe either the primeval fall of Satan or his eschatological fall. This difficulty with the imperfect tense is reflected in the commentaries. Dr. Geldenhuys, for example, says, “The force of the imperfect tense here is a much disputed question.”²⁷ The imperfect is correctly

²³ See J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), 382, 548.

²⁴ John Martin, “Luke,” John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 233.

²⁵ Robert H. Stein, *Luke*. electronic ed. Logos Library System; The New American Commentary, Vol. 24, (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 309.

²⁶ Indeed, many versions translate this as a simple past “I saw” or “I watched,” HCSB, NET, RSV, ASV, Darby, KJV, ESV, NIV, NRSV, NKJV. One might possibly expect a perfect tense, but not an imperfect.

²⁷ Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), 305. See also comments by Keener.

translated by the NASB, “I was watching.”²⁸ I. Howard Marshall attempts to minimize the significance of the imperfect tense. His explanation is:

The imperfect has been thought to represent a continuous (Creed, 147) or repeated experience, but K. G. Kuhn (in TDNT V, 346 n. 161) observes that there is only one Aramaic past tense that can lie behind the verb here. It is more likely that the imperfect is used because the aorist of θεωρέω was not in common use; generally a form of θεάομαι was used instead (BD 101).²⁹

But the exegetical concern is not so much with what theoretical Aramaic verb Jesus may have originally spoken, but with the Greek verb form that has been preserved in the inspired text.

There was a reason why Luke used the imperfect tense to convey what was intended by Jesus.

The imperfect tense is entirely appropriate if Jesus was referring to the ongoing activities throughout the extended ministry of the seventy, as well stated by Dr. Geldenhuys, “... it probably means that during this mission and as a result of it Jesus was watching Satan fall from heaven.”³⁰

B. Revelation 12:3-4, 7-9

This passage describes “Satan [being] cast down out of his third abode in the atmospheric heavens to his fourth abode, the earth... In the middle of the Tribulation, while war breaks out between the Antichrist and the ten kings, war also breaks out in the atmospheric heavens...”³¹

The alleged parallel between Revelation 12 and Isaiah 14 is found at two points:

Revelation 12:4a	Isaiah 14:13
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²⁸ Young’s Literal Translation has “I was beholding,” so also Wuest.

²⁹ Marshall, 428. Dr. Marshall’s comment regarding θεωρέω vs. θεάομαι only begs the question as to why Luke did not employ the aorist of θεάομαι (ἔθεασάμην), if he had wanted to use an aorist to translate Jesus’ original Aramaic. As a matter of fact, the aorist of θεωρέω is not unknown in the NT, occurring 4x, one of which is in Luke (Mt 28:1; Lk 23:48; Jn 8:51; Rev 11:12).

³⁰ Geldenhuys, 305.

³¹ Fruchtenbaum, 242. See also Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8-22: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 128-29.

<p>And his tail swept away the third [part] of the stars of heaven (καὶ ἡ οὐρὰ αὐτοῦ σῦρει τὸ τρίτον τῶν ἀστέρων τοῦ οὐρανοῦ).</p>	<p>I will raise my throne above the stars of God (יִשָּׂא אֲנִי אֶת־כִּסְּאִי לְכֹכְבֵי־אֱלֹהִים; LXX ἐπάνω τῶν ἀστρῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ θήσω τὸν θρόνον μου).</p>
<p>Revelation 12:4b, 9</p> <p>^{4b} And he cast them to the earth (καὶ ἔβαλεν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὴν γῆν...)</p> <p>⁹ And the great dragon, the ancient serpent, the one who is called “Devil” and “Satan,” the one who deceives all the inhabited earth, was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (καὶ ἐβλήθη ὁ δράκων ὁ μέγας, ὁ ὄφις ὁ ἀρχαῖος, ὁ καλούμενος Διάβολος καὶ ὁ Σατανᾶς, ὁ πλανῶν τὴν οἰκουμένην ὅλην, ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν γῆν, καὶ οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ μετ’ αὐτοῦ ἐβλήθησαν.)</p>	<p>Isaiah 14:12</p> <p>מִיָּשָׁן הִלָּךְ יָאֵ (LXX) πῶς ἐξέπεσεν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ;</p>

1. The stars of heaven. The “parallel” here is not a particularly strong one. Whereas Revelation 12:4 has “stars of heaven,” Isaiah 14:13 has “stars of God.” The LXX substitutes τοῦ οὐρανοῦ for the Heb לָאֵ (“stars of heaven” for “stars of God”). This circumlocution makes the parallel seem stronger, but only when viewed from the LXX. Did John have the LXX in mind? The expression “stars of heaven” occurs a total of 10x in the Bible. Nearly all of these are used in the comparative expression “as the stars of heaven” to refer to a vast number (7x of the descendants of Abraham, Gen 26:4; Dt 1:10; 10:22; 29:62; 1Chr 27:23; Neh 9:23; Heb 11:12;

once of the numerous merchants in Nineveh, Nah 3:16). Once, the expression speaks of the heavenly bodies that will be dimmed in the Day of the Lord (Is 13:10). The use of the expression “stars of heaven” to refer to angelic beings is solely restricted to its occurrence in Revelation 12:4. “Stars of God” occurs only once, namely in Isaiah 14:11. Unless John had the LXX translation in mind, it is doubtful that he could have had Isaiah 14:11 in mind by reference to the “stars of heaven.” More likely, he used the expression to refer to the vast numbers of angels who will be associated with Satan at this midtribulational event. A more likely parallel to Revelation 12:4 is to be found in Daniel 8:10 and the reference to “the host of heaven.”³²

2. Cast to the earth. Here again, the “parallel” with Isaiah 14:12 is not particularly strong. Isaiah’s movement is “from heaven ... to sheol”; whereas Revelation’s movement is “to the earth” (“from heaven” may be implied, but it is not expressed). Also, the verb in Isaiah is “fallen” (הָרַץ, ἐξέπεσεν), while Revelation’s is “cast” (βάλλω).

The attempt to equate Isaiah 14:12-16 with the fall of Satan recorded in Revelation 12 by verbal parallel is weak at best. One would need other exegetical support to prove the point.

IV. Eschatological Context

Isaiah 14:12-16 is but a brief excerpt taken from a much larger context dealing with God’s judgment of Babylon. The entire prophecy begins in Isaiah 13:1 and extends to Isaiah 14:23. Many commentators have sought to identify the king of Babylon in this prophecy with some historical figure. E. J. Young, for instance understands Isaiah 13-14 as “an expanding

³² Thomas, 124.

continuation of 10:5-34.³³ In other words, Dr. Young believed that the prophecy about Babylon was given in order to explain how God would raise up Babylon as His instrument of judgment against Assyria. Though Dr. Young does not name the particular Babylonian king he envisions in Isaiah's prophecy, he appears to have Belshazzar in mind. According to Dr. John Martin, the judgment refers to the time "pertaining to the Assyrian attack on Babylon in 689."³⁴ Furthermore, Dr. Martin understands the king of Isaiah 14:12-16 to be the Assyrian king Sennacherib!³⁵ But the Babylon of Isaiah's prophecy is not the Babylon of the past; it is the Babylon of the future. Isaiah 13:6ff. places this prophecy firmly in the context of the eschatological Day of the Lord.³⁶

Wail, for the day of the LORD is near! It will come as destruction from the Almighty. ⁷ Therefore all hands will fall limp, And every man's heart will melt. ⁸ They will be terrified, Pains and anguish will take hold of *them*; They will writhe like a woman in labor, They will look at one another in astonishment, Their faces aflame. ⁹ Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, Cruel, with fury and burning anger, To make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners from it. ¹⁰ For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not flash forth their light; The sun will be dark when it rises And the moon will not shed its light. ¹¹ Thus I will punish the world for its evil And the wicked for their iniquity; I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud And abase the haughtiness of the ruthless. ¹² I will make mortal man scarcer than pure gold And mankind than the gold of Ophir. ¹³ Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, And the earth will be shaken from its place At the fury of the LORD of hosts In the day of His burning anger. Isaiah 13:6–13 (NASB)

As many expositors have noted, Isaiah 13-14 forms the foundation upon which Jeremiah 50-51 is based.³⁷ Jeremiah 50-51 describes a fall of Babylon after which it will never be rebuilt (Jer 51:26), and this is paralleled by Isaiah 14:22-23, "'I will rise up against them,' declares the

³³ E. J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), I:414.

³⁴ Martin, 1058.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 1061.

³⁶ Fruchtenbaum, 315.

³⁷ Fruchtenbaum, 316; Young, 411; Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 7:191.

LORD of hosts, ‘and will cut off from Babylon name and survivors, offspring and posterity,’ declares the LORD. ‘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.” This has never been the condition of Babylon at any time in its history, but refers to the future, eschatological destruction of Babylon.³⁸ Thus, it seems most in keeping with the context of this passage to see the boastful tyrant of Isaiah 14:12-16 as the ruler of this future, eschatological Babylon which will be destroyed by God shortly before Christ’s second coming.

V. Identifying the King of Babylon

Historically, many dispensational scholars have identified eschatological Babylon with the Antichrist. However, a careful study of Revelation reveals that Babylon is distinct from the Antichrist and represents its own satanically inspired, wicked force that opposes the saints of God, and even opposes the Antichrist and his coalition.

There has also been a tendency to make a distinction between “Religious Babylon” of Revelation 17 and “Commercial Babylon” of Revelation 18. Dr. Dyer has shown conclusively that such a distinction is not warranted.³⁹ There is, in fact, but one Babylon. She may have both a religious and a commercial (as well as political) significance, but it is one entity, one city, the literal city of Babylon, located in modern day Iraq. Dyer has also documented the facts that

³⁸ Charles Dyer, “The Biblical Argument for the Rebuilding of Babylon,” <http://www.pre-trib.org/articles/view/biblical-argument-for-rebuilding-of-babylon> [accessed November 26, 2010].

³⁹ Charles H. Dyer, “The Identity of Babylon in Revelation 17-18: Parts 1&2” *Bibliotheca Sacra Volume 144*, 575 (Dallas, TX: Dallas Theological Seminary, 1987), 304ff, 433ff.

ancient Babylon has never been destroyed and that modern Babylon underwent significant rebuilding during the era of Saddam Hussein.⁴⁰

Biblical passages descriptive of eschatological Babylon include Isaiah 13—14; 47:1-15; Jeremiah 50—51; Zechariah 5:5-11; and Revelation 14:6-10; 16:19; 17—18. These passages reveal eschatological Babylon to be a great political, religious and commercial power of great wickedness and opposition to the purposes of God. A study of the relevant passages in Revelation is most instructive as to how Babylon develops throughout the Tribulation Period.

The fifth seal (Rev 6:9-11) occurs shortly before the middle of the Tribulation Period.

This seal deals with the martyrs of the first half of the Tribulation. Of them, it is said:

When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained;¹⁰ and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”¹¹ And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until *the number of* their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.
(Revelation 6:9–11 NASB)

However, Antichrist does not begin his persecution until the midtribulation (Mt 24:15ff.; Dan 9:27; Rev 13:1-7). So who is this persecutor of the first half of the Tribulation? Revelation 17:6 reveals that the harlot (Babylon) is “drunk with the blood of the saints,” and Revelation 18:24 says, “And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth.” These verses are descriptive of Babylon’s activities of the first half of the

⁴⁰ Charles H. Dyer, “The Biblical Argument for the Rebuilding of Babylon.”

Tribulation.⁴¹ At this point, the harlot is in control of the beast (riding the beast, Rev 17:3), but the beast hates the harlot and will make war against her.⁴²

Not only is Babylon a persecutor of the saints, but she is revealed to be both a political, religious and commercial power. Politically, she maintains relations with the “kings of the earth” (Rev 18:3, 9). In this political capacity Jeremiah informs us, “Babylon has been a golden cup in the hand of the LORD, Intoxicating all the earth. The nations have drunk of her wine; therefore the nations are going mad” (Jer 51:7 NASB). Religiously, she leads her followers in harlotry (a common OT figure for idolatry), immorality and sorcery (Rev 14:6-10; 17:2, 4; 18:9; Isa 47:9-10, 12-13). Commercially, she brings great wealth to all the merchants of the world and displays within her all the luxuries and sophisticated culture the world has to offer (Rev 18:11-19; Zechariah 5:5-11). These three features – political, religious and commercial – are summed up in one verse:

For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality. (Rev 18:3 NASB)

Babylon’s prominence in all three of these areas is notable during the first half of the Tribulation. But at the midpoint of the Tribulation, things will alter significantly for Babylon. At that time, the Antichrist, who rises out of the revived Roman empire, will consolidate his worldwide political and religious system (Dan 2:40-43; 7:7-8, 11-12, 19-26; 9:27; Rev 13-14). Since the Antichrist’s systems are described as being world-wide, Babylon’s influence in both the political and religious realms will become greatly decreased, if not eliminated totally; however, her commercial influence will continue. It may be that the Antichrist will be dependent

⁴¹ Fruchtenbaum 218.

⁴² Paul N. Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy: A Comprehensive Approach* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 258.

on Babylon's commercial strength in order to finance his own political and religious machinery, and it is likely that this dependence is the source of his hatred of Babylon. Apparently, Babylon is able to exercise a fair amount of control over the Antichrist, for she is depicted as riding on the beast.

And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns. Revelation 17:3 (NAS)

The picture that emerges is one of intense rivalry between Babylon and Rome (the beast, or Antichrist and his coalition of nations). This theme receives amplified description in Revelation 17:7-13.

And the angel said to me, "Why do you wonder? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns." ⁸ "The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come." ⁹ "Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits, ¹⁰ and they are seven kings; five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while. ¹¹ "The beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth and is *one* of the seven, and he goes to destruction. ¹² "The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour. ¹³ "These have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast. (NASB)

The (commercial) influence Babylon continues to wield even in the second half of the Tribulation is expressed in Revelation 17:15, "And he said to me, 'The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues'" (NASB). The rivalry between the two powers eventually brings the Antichrist to the conclusion that Babylon must be finally destroyed, once and for all.⁴³

⁴³ Dr. Fruchtenbaum believes that Babylon's destroyers will be "Gentile believers of the Tribulation" based on Isaiah 13:3, "My consecrated ones" (לְמִקְדָּשֵׁי). However, the root שָׁדָק does not necessarily signify "believers." E.J. Young states, "The root here has no reference to moral character, but signifies merely 'to set apart.'" (p. 417,

“And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire.¹⁷ “For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God will be fulfilled.¹⁸ “The woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth.” (Revelation 17:16–18 NASB)

This final destruction of Babylon does not occur until the final days of the Tribulation as part of the seventh bowl judgment (Rev 16:19).

Revelation tends to depict the intensity of this rivalry from the perspective of the Antichrist and his allied kings. However, it may be that Isaiah 14:12-16 has given us a depiction of this rivalry from the perspective of Babylon’s ruler. For three and a half years, Babylon will have nearly universal control of the world’s political, religious and commercial realms. As he wages war against the saints of God, inspired by Satan, he becomes intoxicated with the thrill of his power. But when he sees power beginning to slip away into the hands of his rival, the beast, the intensity of Babylon’s desire only increases; he must have more; he desires the ultimate power, power over the entire cosmos:

I will ascend to heaven;

I will raise my throne above the stars of God,

I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north.

I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;

I will make myself like the Most High.

Isaiah 14:13–14 (NASB)

n.10). The same root, in fact, describes the Babylonians who destroyed Judah in Jer 22:7. The eschatological destroyers of Babylon are declared to be the beast and his kings who hate the harlot (Rev 17:16-17). They are “consecrated” (i.e. set apart by God) inasmuch as “God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose” (Rev 17:17). They are also specifically named in Jer 51:27-28 as “the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni and Ashkenaz ... the kings of the Medes ...” This would appear to include modern day Turkey, Northern Iraq (Kurds?), the region between the Black and Caspian Seas, and Iran.

We are now in a position to expound briefly these five “I will” statement in the light of the context of eschatological Babylon, vying for power against the Roman beast for control over the world in independence of God.

1. *I will ascend to heaven.* This statement was developed above under section II. A. There it was seen that numerous human rulers have been said either to have had their glory in heaven (Jerusalem, Lam 2:1; The Little Horn, Dan 8:10) or to have sought the glory of heaven (The Canaanites' cities, Dt 1:28; 9:1; Israel, Am 9:2; Babylon Jer 51:53; Edom Obad 4; and Capernaum in Mt 11:23). The eschatological ruler of Babylon will seek this glory, a glory that will exalt him above all the other nations of the earth. He will have gotten a taste of this glory during his heyday of the first three and a half years of the Tribulation, but as he sees his power slipping away into the hands of the Roman beast, his thirst for this position of prestige and power will become insatiable.

2. *I will raise my throne above the stars of God.* The “stars of God” (כּוֹכְבֵי־יְיָ) is an expression that occurs only here in the Old Testament. The closest Old Testament use of כּוֹכְבֵי is found in Obadiah 4, where it is said of Edom, “Though you set your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down, declares the LORD” (NASB). Nevertheless, its use here of eschatological Babylon should take into consideration Babylon’s involvement in astrology and sorcery. Note Isaiah’s description of eschatological Babylon in Isaiah 47:9-13,

These two things will come on you suddenly in one day: loss of children and widowhood. They will come on you in full measure in spite of your many sorceries, in spite of the great power of your spells. . . . ¹¹ But evil will come on you which you will not know how to charm away; and disaster will fall on you for which you cannot atone; and destruction about which you do not know will come on you suddenly. ¹² Stand *fast* now in your spells and in your many sorceries with which you have labored from your youth; perhaps you will be able to profit, perhaps you may cause trembling. ¹³ You are wearied with your many counsels; let now the astrologers, those who prophesy by the stars, those who predict by the new moons, stand up and save you from what will come upon you.

Babylon's desire to exalt his throne above the stars of God should be seen in light of his involvement with sorcery and astrology.

The nations around Israel worshiped the stars, both individually and in constellations. Astrologers and wise men carefully studied their movements to determine the will and the messages of these gods but to no avail (Isa 47:13). Such was their lot from Yahweh (Deut 4:19; cf. Amos 5:26), but Israel was strictly forbidden to worship them.⁴⁴

Thus, Babylon at the end of time is still pursuing what it sought at its foundation in Genesis 11:4.

3. *I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north.* Dr. Fruchtenbaum is correct when he says, "These are expressions used by the prophets elsewhere in describing the Millennial or the Messianic Kingdom."⁴⁵ As discussed above, Babylon and the beast are essentially vying against each other in an effort to rule as supreme over the whole earth. The "mount of assembly" (הַר-מוֹעֵד) is probably a reference to the temple mount in Jerusalem. Initially, the "tent of assembly" (אֹהֶל-מוֹעֵד) referred to the tabernacle, but after the temple was built in Jerusalem, the site on temple mount became known as "mount of assembly." Dr. Jack Lewis notes, "The Lord met with Moses at the 'tent of meeting' (*'ōhel mo'ēd*). He appeared in the cloud at the door of the tent and spoke to him as 'a man speaks to his friend' (Ex 33:7, 11; Num 12:8)... Jerusalem became the city of assemblies (Isa 33:20; cf. Ezk 36:38)."⁴⁶ Babylon's desire to "sit on *har mo'ed*" is essentially the desire to rule in Satan's counterfeit kingdom.

The expression *har mo'ed* introduces a fascinating line of speculative thought relative to a study of the end times. Dr. Meredith Kline suggested that *har mo'ed* is the Hebrew expression

⁴⁴ John E. Hartley, "942 כבב," R. Laird Harris, Robert Laird Harris, Gleason Leonard Archer and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 425.

⁴⁵ Fruchtenbaum, 551.

⁴⁶ Jack P. Lewis, "878b מועד," R. Laird Harris, Robert Laird Harris, Gleason Leonard Archer and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 389.

that stands behind the enigmatic “Armageddon” of Revelation 16:16,⁴⁷ “And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon” (NASB). The use of the Greek *gamma* (γ) for the Hebrew ‘ayin (ע) in transliteration is a well known phenomenon. Also, the use of the phoneme –ōn in Hebrew to indicate a place name is quite common (for example *zion*, *šāpôn*, *’ābaddôn*, and even the spelling of Megiddo as *mēgiddôn* in Zech 12:11).⁴⁸ Thus *Har-Mo’ed* easily becomes *Har-Magedon*. If Kline is correct about this identification, then it is possible that Babylon’s desire to be seated in *har mo’ed* may actually be his desire to be commander-in-chief of the forces assembled in Revelation 16:16 to wage the final battle against “the LORD and His anointed” (Ps 2:2).

The “recesses of the north” (רְכֵתֵי צָפוֹן) is also probably a reference to the temple mount⁴⁹ (OT Mt. Zion) as seen by Psalm 48:2 (Heb. v.3), “Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, Is Mount Zion *in* the far north, The city of the great King.” (NASB). The same expression רְכֵתֵי צָפוֹן occurs in both Isaiah 14:13 and in Psalm 48:3. In the Old Testament city of Jerusalem, Temple Mount (Mt. Zion) was situated directly north of and slightly above the City of David. It was the one place that was more prestigious and powerful than the location of the king’s palace. In the Tribulation, the temple in Jerusalem will become a focal point of Antichrist’s rule as he “takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God” (2Th 2:4 NASB).

⁴⁷ Meredith G. Kline, “Har Magedon: The End Of The Millennium,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society Volume 39*, (The Evangelical Theological Society, 1996), 206-222. Kline erroneously places this event at the end of the “millennium” as he attempts to support his Amillennialism. His theological reasoning in this article is seriously flawed; however, his linguistic explanations for the source of “*har magedon*” are sound.

⁴⁸ Kline, 208.

⁴⁹ For the view that רְכֵתֵי צָפוֹן is a reference to the Ugaritic myth that Ba’al had his throne on Mt. *Zaphon*, see Keener on Isaiah 14:13. This view only makes sense if Isaiah was referring to some historic king of Babylon. Since, as we have shown, Isaiah is referring to the *eschatological* Babylon, the Ugaritic myth is irrelevant, unless such ancient Ba’al worship becomes somehow resurrected in the end times.

Babylon, whose religious system will have been dismantled by Antichrist, will be envious of such a grand usurpation and will desire that exalted place for himself.

4. *I will ascend above the heights of the clouds.* It may be that the “clouds” here are a reference to God’s shekinah glory⁵⁰; however, the normal word for this would be אָנָן ‘*anan*, rather than אָב ‘*av*, as occurs here; although אָב may refer to the shekinah a few times (see 2Sa 22:12; Ps 18:12; Ex 19:9). Babylon’s desire to ascend above the heights of the shekinah glory may represent his megalomaniacal desire to surpass the beast’s usurpation of the temple.

5. *I will make myself like the Most High.* Just as the serpent tempted Eve with these words “... you will be like God” (Gen 3:5 NASB), so the king of Babylon will fall to the tempter’s seduction. What a dupe! He does not realize that his master will not share any glory with him. Just as Eve and her husband reaped nothing but misery, shame and toil by following the serpent’s temptation to “be like God,” so the king of Babylon will fall from his lofty aspirations, only to find himself “thrust down to sheol, to the recesses of the pit” (Is 14:15) to share that place of misery with those whom he had previously tyrannized!

Conclusion

It has been the aim of this paper to demonstrate that the identity of the speaker of the five “I wills” in Isaiah 14:12-16 has been misunderstood by some dispensational scholars to be Satan. This paper has attempted to show that the language of these verses does not necessarily transcend language that may appropriately describe a powerful human ruler; thus, there is lacking any exegetical indicator that a double reference has occurred. Furthermore, the context in

⁵⁰ Fruchtenbaum, 551; Chafer 49; J. Dwight Pentecost, *Thy Kingdom Come* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1990), 24.

which the five “I wills” occur makes these prideful boasts the words of a powerful ruler of eschatological Babylon. When the Old Testament descriptions of eschatological Babylon are compared with those of the Book of Revelation, a picture of an intense end times rivalry between the ruler of Babylon and the Antichrist emerges. It is this rivalry and struggle for world-wide dominance that motivates the Babylonian ruler to utter his egocentric and megalomaniacal five-fold “I will” statements as he desperately seeks control of the entire cosmos. This egotistical and tyrannical desire for power is no doubt inspired by Satan, and thus, the five “I wills” can legitimately be said to express the very heart and soul of Satan’s personality, but the speaker is not Satan. To make Satan the speaker violates the principles of literal, grammatical-historical hermeneutics, and deprives the field of eschatology of an important passage that expands our understanding of eschatological Babylon.

The faithful follower of Christ can take heart that such evil forces as will dominate the Tribulation period are ultimately under the control of a sovereign God who will bring such evil doers to judgment, but holds the believer’s soul safely in the palm of His hand (Jn 10:29). Such evil forces can never snatch us out of the Father’s hand. But let the believer in Christ also receive a word of caution and learn a lesson from Babylon’s arrogant, but futile, boast: “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (Ja 4:6; 1Pe 5:5).

Appendix

Comparison of Isaiah 14:9-21 with Revelation 17-18

Isaiah 14:9–21 (NASB)	Revelation 17–18 (NAS)
<p>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.</p>	<p>17² with whom the kings of the earth committed <i>acts of immorality</i>, and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality.”</p> <p>17¹⁸ “The woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth.”</p>
<p>¹⁰ “They will all respond and say to you, ‘Even you have been made weak as we, You have become like us.</p>	<p>18⁹ “And the kings of the earth, who committed <i>acts of immorality</i> and lived sensuously with her, will weep and lament over her when they see the smoke of her burning, ¹⁰ standing at a distance because of the fear of her torment, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour your judgment has come.’ ¹¹ “And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their cargoes any more—</p>
<p>¹¹ ‘Your pomp <i>and</i> the music of your harps Have been brought down to Sheol; Maggots are spread out <i>as your bed</i> beneath you And worms are your covering.’</p>	<p>17:4 The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls,</p> <p>18:22 “And the sound of harpists and musicians and flute-players and trumpeters will not be heard in you any longer;</p>
<p>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!</p>	<p>18:2 And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!</p> <p>18:5 for her sins have piled up as high as heaven,</p> <p>Isa 21:9–10 “Now behold, here comes a troop of riders, horsemen in pairs.” And one said, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon; And all the images of her gods are shattered on the ground.” ¹⁰ O my threshed <i>people</i>, and my afflicted of the threshing floor! What I have heard from the LORD of hosts, The God of Israel, I make known to you.</p>

<p>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.</p>	<p>18:7 “To the degree that she glorified herself and lived sensuously, ... for she says in her heart, ‘I SIT <i>as</i> A QUEEN AND I AM NOT A WIDOW, and will never see mourning.’</p>
<p>¹⁴ ‘I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’</p>	
<p>¹⁵ “Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, To the recesses of the pit.</p>	
<p>¹⁶ “Those who see you will gaze at you, They will ponder over you, <i>saying</i>, ‘Is this the man who made the earth tremble, Who shook kingdoms,</p>	
<p>¹⁷ Who made the world like a wilderness And overthrew its cities, Who did not allow his prisoners to <i>go</i> home?’</p>	
<p>¹⁸ “All the kings of the nations lie in glory, Each in his own tomb.</p>	
<p>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.</p>	<p>17¹⁶ “And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire. ¹⁷ “For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God will be fulfilled.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>18²¹ Then a strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, “So will Babylon, the great city, be thrown down with violence, and will not be found any longer.</p>
<p>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.”</p>	

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