

Isaiah 14:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations.

Analysis

'Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations.' The scene shifts to Sheol (Hebrew: hell/grave/underworld)—the realm of the dead. As the Babylonian king descends to death, Sheol itself is 'moved' (stirred, agitated, excited) to receive such a distinguished arrival. The dead, particularly dead rulers ('chief ones,' 'kings'), rise from their thrones in Sheol to greet him. This is bitter irony: he who sat on earth's highest throne now joins the assembly of dead kings. The reception committee consists of those he resembles—fallen rulers, deposed tyrants, dead kings.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern concepts of the afterlife varied, but generally viewed Sheol/underworld as a shadowy existence where the dead—both righteous and wicked in Old Testament theology before Christ's revelation—continued in diminished form. Kings were buried with honor, supposedly ruling in the afterlife. Isaiah subverts this: in Sheol, all distinctions blur; all are equally dead and powerless. The grand reception is mockery, not honor. Church fathers saw in verses 9-11 description of the realm of the dead before Christ's resurrection broke its power (Ephesians 4:8-10; 1 Peter 3:19).

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does the mockery of the king's reception in Sheol warn against pride in earthly status and achievement?
2. What does the gathering of dead kings in Sheol teach about the leveling effect of death and judgment?

Interlinear Text

לִקְבַּד אֶת	לִקְבַּד	מִתְחַנֵּת הַ	מִתְחַנֵּת	מִתְחַנֵּת שָׁא וְלַ
Hell	H8478	from beneath is moved	H7264	for thee to meet
H7585				H7125
בָּאָזְבֵּן	לְבָנָה	עָוֹנָה רְ	לְבָנָה	כָּל רְפָאִים
thee at thy coming	it stirreth up	H0	the dead	H3605
H935	H5782		H7496	
מִכְסָאֹת מִ	מִכְסָאֹת מִ	הַקִּים	עַתְּ וְדַי	מִכְסָאֹת מִ
for thee even all the chief ones	of the earth	it hath raised up	from their thrones	
H6260	H776	H6965	H3678	
מֶלֶךְ כָּל גָּדוֹם				
all the kings	of the nations			
H3605	H4428	H1471		

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