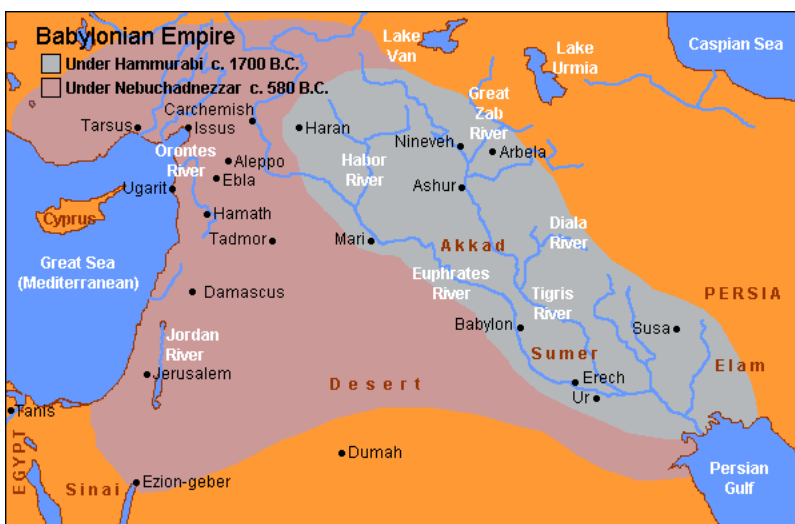


The Doctrine of Babylon

1. In the accounts of ancient history, the name "Babylon" occurs again and again, usually as a reference to a specific geographical location in Iraq.
2. Historical Babylon is situated approximately sixty miles south of Baghdad on the banks of the Euphrates River near the present town of Al Hillah. The city of Babylon was the ancient capital of the Babylonian Empire.



3. The word "Babylon," as found in Scripture, has several connotations.
4. Not only does it refer to a particular city but also to a religious system so abhorrent to God that He will eventually destroy it completely. (Revelation chapters 17, 18 and 19)
5. In the Old Testament, the term "Babylon" is given as "Babel," a derivation of the Hebrew root **Balal**, and means "to confound" or "to confuse."
6. God did not see fit to disclose their specific locations in Scripture; yet we are told that both had been built in the land of Shinar (Gen. 11:2), more commonly known as southern Babylonia.
7. The oldest extant tower has been excavated at Erech (Gen. 10:10) and dates from the latter part of the fourth millennium B.C. Although the Bible does not identify the original Tower of Babel as a temple tower, later such edifices have been discovered.
8. From archaeology and extant Babylonian cuneiform we know that the concept of religious Babylon has existed since the time of the great flood.
- 8.1 Temple towers were dedicated to the various guardian deities in an attempt to assure their protection or to placate hostile gods of the pantheon.

9. Throughout its long history, Babylon was the political center of many Gentile nations, and its prominence can be traced to approximately 2000 B.C.

9.1 As near as can be determined, the Sumerians were the first major inhabitants of Babylonia after the early descendants of Nimrod and Cush.

9.2. Dwight Pentecost in his book *Things to Come* quotes H. A. Ironside on this subject as he relates the Sumerian Myths to the Babylonian church of the Tribulation called Jezebel, the whore church--mystery Babylon etc. I want to give you a paraphrased version from Pentecost's book.

"The woman is a religious system who dominates the civil power, at least for a time. The name upon her forehead should easily enable us to identify her. But in order to do that we would do well to go back to our Old Testament, and see what is there revealed concerning literal Babylon, for the one will surely throw light upon the other ... we learn that the founder of Bab-el, or Babylon, was Nimrod ... Nimrod ... was grandson of Ham, the unworthy son of Noah ... Noah was brought through the flood the revelation of the true God ...

"Ham on the other hand seems to have been all too readily affected by the apostasy that brought the flood for he shows no evidence of self-judgment ... his name means ... darkened, or more literally, the sunburnt-one. And the name indicates the state of man's soul ... Ham begat a son named Cush, the black one, and he became the father of Nimrod, the apostate leader of his generation. Ancient lore now comes to our assistance, and tells us that the wife of Nimrod-bar-Cush was the infamous Semiramis the First. She is reputed to have been the foundress of the Babylonian mysteries and the first high priestess of idolatry. Thus Babylon became the fountainhead of idolatry, and the mother of every heathen and pagan system in the world. The mystery religion that was there originated spread in various forms throughout the whole earth ... and is with us in various forms today ... and shall have its fullest development when the Holy Spirit has departed and the Babylon of the Apocalypse holds sway.

"Building on the primeval promise of the woman's Seed who was to come, Semiramis bore a son whom she declared was miraculously conceived! ... and when she presented him to the people, he was hailed as the promised deliverer. This was Tammuz ... Thus was introduced the mystery of the mother and the child, a form of idolatry that is older than any other known to man. The rites of this worship were secret ... It was Satan's effort to delude mankind with an imitation so like the truth of God that they would not know the true Seed of the woman when He came in the fullness of time ...

"From Babylon this mystery religion spread to all the surrounding nations ... everywhere the symbols were the same, and everywhere the cult of the mother and the child became the popular system; their worship was celebrated with the most disgusting and immoral practices. The image of the queen of heaven with the babe in her arms was seen everywhere, though the names differ as languages differed. It became the mystery religion of Phoenicia, and by the Phoenicians was carried to the ends of the earth.

“Ashtoreth and Tammuz, the mother and child of these hardy adventurers, became Isis and Horus in Egypt, Aphrodite and Eros in Greece, Venus and Cupid in Italy, and bore many other names in more distant places. Within 1000 years ‘Babylonianism’ had become the religion of the world, which had rejected God’s divine revelation. Linked with this central mystery were countless lesser mysteries ...”

10. The most important ruler of the first dynasty of Babylon was the remarkable Hammurabi (1728-1686 B.C.). Prosperity, as well as advances in literature, astronomy, mathematics and architecture, characterized his reign.

11. To date, we have recovered the Creation and Flood Epics which were edited during his rule, and copies of these stories (dated about 640 B.C.) have been found in the ruins of Ashurbanipal's library at Nineveh.

12. Doubtless, Hammurabi's most notable contribution to history was his code of laws, uncovered at Susa (Shushan one of the capitals of the Persian Empire) by Jacques de Morgan in 1901.

13. This code set up a social order based on the rights of individuals and was backed by the authority of the state.

13.1 Although Hammurabi preceded Moses by several centuries, his code parallels many of the laws Moses recorded in the Pentateuch.

14. Babylon had its share of conquerors. Several generations after Hammurabi, Babylon fell under the rule of first the Hittites, then the Kassites, and later the Elamites.

15. In 745 B.C. the yoke of the Assyrian Empire was felt, and the city itself was sacked and looted by Sennacherib in 689 B.C. Esarhaddon, Sennacherib's son, rebuilt the city some eleven years later.

16. When the Chaldean Empire was united under Nabopolassar in 625 B.C., Babylon became its capital city.

16.1 Under his heir, Nebuchadnezzar, this oft fought-over piece of real estate reached the height of its glory and became the most glamorous city of the ancient world.

16.2 In his turn, Nebuchadnezzar contributed vast fortifications, wide streets, canals, stunning temples and palaces.

16.3 Not the least of his beautifications were the Ishtar Gate and the famous Hanging Gardens (considered by the ancient Greeks to be one of the seven wonders of the world).

17. Yet the future of this once magnificent city was far from secure; it would be conquered repeatedly.

18. In 539 B.C. Babylon fell to the army of Cyrus the Great of Persia. Later it was partially destroyed by Xerxes I of Persia (486-465 B.C.) in retribution for their continued rebellion. Xerxes I was Esthers's King.

19. Alexander the Great captured the city in 331 B.C. and began an extensive rebuilding program, soon halted, however, because of the prohibitive cost.

20. Babylon, the physical city, by about A.D. 200 was in a state ruin, never again to be revived. About twelve hundred years after the earthly ministry of our Lord, Arabs looted the ruins of that once proud city and used many of its bricks to build the present Al Hillah.

20.1 Thus the full circle was completed; Babylon had risen to a pinnacle of fame and had returned to dust!

21. With such a varied history is it any wonder that throughout the Scriptures God chose to use Babylon as a teaching aid for spiritual lessons?

22. While Sodom and Gomorrah represent absolute moral depravity and political degradation, Babylon is synonymous with abject apostasy and unbelief.

23. I have described for you briefly how the Medo-Persians conquered the "impregnable" city.

23.1 Before leaving our study of Babylon the Great let me provide a series of points from Merrill F. Unger's Bible Dictionary which will document much of that which I have earlier related.

24. All of this to answer the question "how could Babylon be taken without a shot being fired?" I shall quote from Unger's Dictionary:

“First to be considered was the geographical fact that the Euphrates River flowed through the center of Babylon. According to the Greek historian, Herodotus, a large bridge spanned that river and connected the eastern and western sections of the city. Another Greek writer, Diodorus Silucus, reveals that a tunnel had been laid under the river bed. Numerous canals which existed on the outskirts of the city were used for irrigation purposes and also constituted a part of the defense system.

“In fact, all of southern Babylonia was laced with these canals whereby water could be diverted at will for the needs of the people. Second, was the engineering feat which Herodotus records of the Persians rerouting the Euphrates by constructing a dam some distance from the city; thus the river was caused to flow around Babylon rather than through it. After this daring exploit, the Persian Army approached the fortifications by night. Because of the general state of lethargy which had lulled the population into a false sense of security, the army slipped past the sentries without difficulty.

“As you may recall from Daniel, chapter five, Belshazzar's notorious banquet culminated in the shocking events of the handwriting on the wall. The evening had been characterized by debauchery and drunkenness, a condition which had permeated every social milieu in Babylon. Thus because of a distracted citizenry and a relaxed military vigilance, it was a simple task to march by way of the riverbed into the city proper! Babylon had once more been conquered. A decadent national entity and its ruler had been judged and replaced by another. (Dan 2:21)”

25. Let me give you the biblical account of what Unger has described.

Daniel, Chapter Five - A Paraphrase

Dan 5:1 After the death of Nebuchadnezzar in 562 B.C., a series of insignificant kings ruled Babylon. In 556, Babylon was ruled by a co-regency of Belshazzar and his father, Nabonidus. While Nabonidus was away fighting a series of battles, his son Belshazzar was playing the part of king. Belshazzar had summoned a thousand of his nobles for a grand party; it soon turned into a drunken orgy.

Dan 5:2 Under the influence of the wine, Belshazzar commanded his wine steward to bring the sacred golden and silver vessels. Belshazzar's grandfather Nebuchadnezzar had taken the vessels out of Israel's Temple when he first defeated Jerusalem in 606. He wanted this done so that he, his princes, his wives and his concubines might drink from them.

Dan 5:3 The golden vessels from the Holy City were presented to him by his trusted wine steward. From these vessels, the king and his guests toasted the gods of Babylon.

Dan 5:4 After drinking from the sacred vessels, they praised the Babylonian gods. The gods of Babylon were extolled as superior to the God of Israel.

Dan 5:5 Suddenly, as the king watched, the fingers of a human hand crawled slowly up the wall and began to write. The writing was obvious to all because it appeared directly behind the king. The king turned and watched as the hand slowly recorded Babylon's final history.

Dan 5:6 Belshazzar's face turned pale. He was so terrified that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way; the king could no longer stand, he sank slowly to his pillowed couch.

Dan 5:7 The king called out in a loud voice for his top political advisor and his highest ranking religious advisor, "Whoever reads what has been written on the wall and tells me what it means, I will clothe him in royal garments of purple; he will take his place among the pantheon. I will also place a gold chain around his neck and he will be elevated to the third highest office in the land."

Dan 5:8 The king's wise men were hurried into the room. At first, they made quite a show of themselves, but after studying the writing they looked bewildered. The wise men huddled together before finally admitting, "We are sorry, O King, but we cannot read the writing."

Dan 5:9 Belshazzar became even more agitated. His face grew pallid because his greatest minds were baffled; no one could read the handwriting on the wall.

Dan 5:10 His mother, the queen, heard the commotion from her nearby apartment; she ran quickly to the banquet hall. Seeing the king's pallor and obvious consternation, she feared for his health. She exclaimed, "O King, live forever! Don't be alarmed, be calm!"

Dan 5:11 There is an old man who still resides here in Babylon. He has the spirit of Jehovah God in him. During your grandfather's reign he was found to have special insight, intelligence and wisdom. His wisdom was said to be like that of a god. King Nebuchadnezzar appointed him chief of the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners.

Dan 5:12 The man's name is Daniel, though Nebuchadnezzar called him Belteshazzar. He was found to have a keen mind. A man full of knowledge and understanding, he also had the ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles and solve difficult problems. I would urge you to call for him. I feel sure he will tell you what the writing means."

Dan 5:13 After the queen made her recommendation, Daniel was brought into the presence of Belshazzar. The king asked, "Are you Daniel, the Jewish exile, who Nebuchadnezzar brought from Judah?"

Dan 5:14 I have heard that the Spirit of God is in you, that you possess brilliant knowledge and extraordinary wisdom.

Dan 5:15 The wisest of my advisors were brought in to translate this writing, but none of them could read it, none could tell me what it means.

Dan 5:16 But I was told you can interpret dreams and solve difficult problems. If you are able to read the writing and tell me what it means, you shall be clothed in purple, wear a gold chain about your neck and be the third ruler in the government of Babylon."

Dan 5:17 Daniel answered the king, "You may keep your gifts, or give your presents to someone else, but the writing on the wall I will not only read, I will also tell you exactly what it means.

Dan 5:18 The Most High God gave your grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar, a great kingdom and international fame."

Dan 5:19 "Because God made him so great, the nations and peoples of every language dreaded and feared him. Nebuchadnezzar was made sovereign. He killed whom he wished and he promoted or demoted as he saw fit.

Dan 5:20 But when his heart became proud, and his spirit was hardened by arrogance, he was pulled down from his royal throne and deprived of his glory.

Dan 5:21 Suffering from a strange illness, he was cast out of the palace and was made insensate as a beast; he lived with the wild asses and ate grass like the oxen. His body was bathed with the dew of the earth and the rain from heaven, until he learned that Jehovah God rules the earth. He appoints even the most insignificant of men to positions of leadership. King Nebuchadnezzar learned from his trial and changed his ways."

Dan 5:22 "You, my King, neither humbled yourself in the manner of your grandfather nor have you learned anything from the queen mother.

Dan 5:23 “You have instead rebelled against the Lord of Heaven. You had the sacred vessels of His temple brought before you. You and your entourage even drank wine from them. You praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone, inanimate objects that neither see, nor hear, nor have intelligence. But the God in whose hand is your life breath, the One who controls everything, him you have refused to worship.

Dan 5:24 “This is why the Lord Jehovah sent the mysterious hand to write on your wall.

Dan 5:25 The words written are: Mene, Mene which means (numbered). Mene comes from the verb Menah and means (to number.) A Mene is literally 50 shekels, designating the small value of Belshazzar and his guests. The second Mene refers to the rest of the king’s subjects. Teqel means (weighed.) The value of the empire has been weighed and found wanting. Parsin means (divided.) Parsin is actually a paronomasia of Peres, the ancient name for the highest Persian class. The empire has been weighed found wanting and ripe for division.

Dan 5:26 The God of your grandfather has numbered the days of your kingdom; it will soon come to an end.

Dan 5:27 Tekel: you have been weighed on the scales and found wanting.

Dan 5:28 Parsin: your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and the Persians."

Dan 5:29 Then the king ordered they clothe Daniel in purple, with a gold chain around his neck, and that he be proclaimed the third ruler in the government, subordinate only to Belshazzar and Nabonidus.

Dan 5:30 That same night Belshazzar, the Chaldean king, was captured and slain by the Medo-Persian expeditionary force.

Dan 5:31 And Darius the Mede was made the ruler of Babylon by Cyrus the Great; Darius was sixty-two when he became the leader of what was once a vast and powerful empire.