

## BABYLON<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Importance.

- a. Several chapters of the Bible are devoted to the topic of Babylon.
  - (1) Genesis 10-11
  - (2) Isaiah 13-14, 21, 46-47
  - (3) Jeremiah 50-51
  - (4) Habakkuk
  - (5) Revelation 17-18
- b. The subject of Babylon is found at the beginning, middle, and end of the Bible.
  - (1) Genesis 10-11
  - (2) Revelation 17-18
- c. One can't understand the biblical story without understanding the topic of Babylon.

### 2. Origin.

- a. Nimrod, Ham's grandson, founded the first man-centered kingdom at Babel.
  - (1) **Ge 10:8-10** 8 Cush fathered Nimrod. He was the first on earth to be a mighty man. 9 He was a mighty hunter before Yahweh. Therefore it is said, Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before Yahweh. 10 The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.
  - (2) In Hebrew, "Babylon" is בָּבֶל.
- b. Babel was ground zero of man's first post-flood attempt to defeat God.
  - (1) **Ge 11:2-9** 2 As people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. 3 And they said to one another, Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. 4 Then they said, Come, let us build ourselves a city [Babel] and a tower with its top in the heavens [to avoid judgment by flood], and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth. 5 And Yahweh came down to see the city [Babel] and the tower, which the children of man had built. 6 And Yahweh said, Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing [evil] that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. 7 Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech. 8 So Yahweh dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. 9 Therefore its name was called Babel, because there Yahweh confused the language of all the earth. And from there Yahweh dispersed them over the face of all the earth.

### 3. Rise of the Neo-Babylonian Empire.

- a. From 626-539 bc, God used Babylon to inflict his wrath in the ancient near east.
  - (1) "The decline of the Assyrian empire enabled Nabopolassar, a Chaldean, to recover the city [Babylon] and found a new dynasty in 626 bc. His work of restoring the city was ably continued by his successors, especially his son, Nebuchadnezzar II,

---

<sup>1</sup> See *World System*.

king of Babylonia (2 Ki. 24:1), whose boast was of the great city he had rebuilt (Dn. 4:30).”<sup>2</sup>

- b. Babylon became the hammer of the whole earth.
  - (1) **Je 50:23-24** 23 How the hammer of the whole earth is cut down and broken! How Babylon has become a horror among the nations!
- c. In 586 bc, the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem, putting on hold the age of Israel.
  - (1) **2 Ch 36:15-21** 15 Yahweh, the God of [Israel’s] fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. 16 But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words, and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of Yahweh rose against his people [Israel], until there was no remedy. 17 Therefore he brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary and had no compassion on young man or virgin, old man or aged. He gave them all into his hand. 18 And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of Yahweh, and the treasures of the king and of his princes, all these he brought to Babylon (בָּבֶל). 19 And they burned the house of God, broke down the wall of Jerusalem, burned all its palaces with fire, and destroyed all its precious vessels. 20 He took into exile in Babylon (בָּבֶל) those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia, 21 to fulfill the word of Yahweh by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.
- d. The Babylonian army dashed Judean children against rocks.
  - (1) **Ps 137:8-9** 8 Daughter of Babylon, doomed to be destroyed, blessed shall he be who repays you with what you have done to us! 9 Blessed shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock!
- e. **Je 51:34-35** 34 Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon has devoured me [Zion]. He has crushed me. He has made me an empty vessel. He has swallowed me like a monster. He has filled his stomach with my delicacies. He has rinsed me out. 35 The violence done to me and to my kinsmen be upon Babylon, let the inhabitant of Zion say. My blood be upon the inhabitants of Chaldea, let Jerusalem say.

#### 4. Characteristics of the Neo-Babylonian Empire.

- a. **Is 47:1** 1 Come down and sit in the dust, virgin daughter of Babylon. Sit on the ground without a throne, daughter of the Chaldeans! For you will no more be called tender and delicate.
- b. **Is 47:5** 5 Sit in silence, and go into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans, for you shall no more be called the mistress of kingdoms.
- c. **Je 50:38** 38 [Babylon] is a land of images, and they are mad over idols.
- d. **Je 51:7** 7 Babylon was a golden cup in Yahweh’s hand, making all the earth drunken. The nations drank of her wine. Therefore the nations went mad.
- e. **Da 4:29-31** 29 At the end of twelve months [Nebuchadnezzar] was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon (בָּבֶל), 30 and the king answered and said, Is not this great Babylon (בָּבֶל), which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence

<sup>2</sup> D. J. Wiseman, “Babylon,” ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 110.

and for the glory of my majesty? 31 While the words were still in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you....

## 5. Fall of the Neo-Babylonian Empire.

- a. **Is 13:19** 19 Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the splendor and pomp of the Chaldeans, will be like Sodom and Gomorrah when God overthrew them.
- b. **Jer 25:11-12** 11 This whole land [Israel] shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. 12 Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, declares Yahweh, making the land an everlasting waste.
- c. **Je 25:26** 26 All the kings of the north, far and near, one after another, and all the kingdoms of the world that are on the face of the earth [will drink the cup of God's wrath]. And after them the king of Babylon shall drink.
- d. **Jer 50:9** 9 For behold, I am stirring up and bringing against Babylon a gathering of great nations [Media and Persia], from the north country. And they shall array themselves against her.
- e. **Je 50:17-18** 17 Israel is a hunted sheep driven away by lions. First the king of Assyria devoured him [722 bc], and now at last Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has gnawed his bones [586 bc]. 18 Therefore, thus says Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I am bringing punishment on the king of Babylon (בְּכַל) and his land, as I punished the king of Assyria (אַשּׁוּר).
- f. **Je 50:46** 46 At the sound of the capture of Babylon the earth shall tremble, and her cry shall be heard among the nations.
- g. **Je 51:41** 41 How Babylon is taken, the praise of the whole earth seized! How Babylon has become a horror among the nations!
- h. **Je 51:49** 49 Babylon must fall for the slain of Israel, just as for Babylon have fallen the slain of all the earth.
- i. **Je 51:58** 58 Thus says Yahweh of hosts: The broad wall of Babylon shall be levelled to the ground, and her high gates shall be burned with fire.
- j. **Da 5:30-31** 30 That very night [in 539 bc] Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed. 31 And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.
- k. Babylon never rose again. From 312 bc onwards, she disappeared from history.
  - (1) "Babylon, as of old, was the centre of a number of rebellions, by *Nindintu-Bēl* in 522 bc, and Araka (521 bc), and by Belshimanni and Shamash-eriba in 482 bc. In suppressing the latter, Xerxes destroyed the city (478 bc); although Alexander planned to restore it, he met his death there before work had progressed far, and with the founding of Seleucia on the river Tigris as the capital of the Seleucid rulers after the capture of Babylon in 312 bc, the city once again fell into disrepair and ruins...."<sup>3</sup>
  - (2) Possibly, Alexander the Great died because he tried to rebuild Babylon.
    - (a) **Jos 6:26** 26 Joshua laid an oath on [Israel] at that time saying, Cursed before Yahweh be the man who rises up and rebuilds this city, Jericho.

<sup>3</sup> D. J. Wiseman, "Babylon," ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 110.

## 6. Rise of Symbolic Babylon. In New Testament, Babylon symbolises:

- a. The city of Rome.  
(1) **1 Pe 5:13** 13 [The church] who is at Babylon [Rome], who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son.
- b. Possibly, the city of Jerusalem.
- c. A global religious system.  
(1) **Re 17:18** 18 And the woman that you saw is the great city [Babylon] that has dominion over the kings of the earth.
- d. A global economic system.
- e. Satan's cosmic/world ([]) system.  
(1) See *World System*.

## 7. Characteristics of Symbolic Babylon.

- a. **Re 14:8** 8 Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality.
- b. **Re 17:4-6** 4 The woman [Babylon] was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold, jewels, and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality. 5 And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations. 6 And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. When I saw her, I marvelled greatly.
- c. **Re 18:2-3** 2 [Babylon] has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast. 3 For all nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality, the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living.

## 8. Fall of Symbolic Babylon.

- a. **Re 14:8** 8 Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great (Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη), she who made all nations drink the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality.
- b. **Re 16:19** 19 The great city was split into three parts, the cities of the nations fell, and God remembered Babylon the great (Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη), to make her drain the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath.
- c. **Re 18:2** 2 [The angel with great authority] called out with a mighty voice, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!

## 9. Ultimate Destiny.

- a. **Is 14:22** 22 I will rise up against them, declares Yahweh of hosts, and will cut off from Babylon name and remnant, descendants and posterity, declares Yahweh.
- b. **Is 14:23** 23 I will make [Babylon] a possession of the hedgehog and pools of water, and I will sweep it with the broom of destruction, declares Yahweh of hosts.
- c. **Je 50:39-40** 39 Wild beasts shall dwell with hyenas in Babylon, and ostriches shall dwell in her. She shall never again have people, nor be inhabited for all generations. 40 As when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighbouring cities, declares Yahweh, so no man shall dwell there, and no son of man shall sojourn in her.

- d. **Je 50:12-13** 12 Behold, [Babylon] shall be the last of the nations, a wilderness, a dry land, and a desert. 13 Because of the wrath of Yahweh she shall not be inhabited but shall be an utter desolation.
- e. **Je 50:34** 34 [Yahweh] will surely plead [Israel's] cause, that he may give rest to the earth, but unrest to the inhabitants of Babylon.
- f. **Je 51:26** 26 No stone shall be taken from you for a corner and no stone for a foundation, but you shall be a perpetual waste, declares Yahweh.
- g. **Je 51:53** 53 Though Babylon should mount up to heaven, and though she should fortify her strong height, yet destroyers would come from me against her, declares Yahweh.
- h. **Je 51:57** 57 I will make drunk her officials and her wise men, her governors, her commanders, and her warriors. They shall sleep a perpetual sleep and not wake, declares the King, whose name is Yahweh of hosts.
- i. **Je 51:62** 62 Yahweh, you have said concerning this place that you will cut it off, so that nothing shall dwell in it, neither man nor beast, and it shall be desolate forever.

## 10. Application.

- a. **Je 51:6** 6 Flee from the midst of Babylon. Let every one save his life! Be not cut off in her punishment, for this is the time of Yahweh's vengeance, the repayment he is rendering her.
  - (1) **Ge 19:15-17** 15 As morning dawned [on Sodom], the angels urged Lot saying, Up! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be swept away in the punishment of the city. 16 But he lingered. So the men seized him and his wife and his two daughters by the hand, Yahweh being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city. 17 And as they brought them out, one said, Escape for your life. Do not look back or stop anywhere in the valley. Escape to the hills, lest you be swept away.

## *Bibliography*

Hislop, Alexander. *The Two Babylons: Romanism and Its Origins*. 1853.