

## Babylon

One of the themes of the “end times” teaching in the Bible is the fall of Babylon. The fall of this city, in spiritual form, marks, in the book of Revelation, the end of existence as we know it. Before we study Babylon, there are some things it is important to remember:-

- \* The teaching on Babylon cannot be separated from the other end times teaching of the Bible - especially Matthew 24 and 25.
- \* As the revelation of the Bible proceeds, Babylon moves from being a physical place to being a spiritual experience. Trying to find the “place” is not Biblical.
- \* The spiritual Babylon is a representation of evil. Attempts to attach it to any one person, organisation or country miss the Biblical point.

***“Babylon” is summed up like this: - There is a focus for the dark spiritual forces which oppose the will of God and seek to rule and ruin His creation. The growth in power of this force marks a vital point in the spiritual history of our world.***

### Babylon - its history

The first mention of Babylon is found in the book of Genesis: - **“Cush was the father of Nimrod, who grew to be a mighty warrior on the earth. ...The first centres of his kingdom were Babylon...”** (Genesis 10:8-10) The evil influence of this place was soon felt in Israel. The terrible sin of Aachen, which brought the anger of God on Israel came about **“when I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels. I coveted them and took them.”** (Joshua 7:21) Babylon was actively involved in the destruction of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

The Bible says: - **“The king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath and Sepharvaim and settled them in the towns of Samaria to replace the Israelites.”** (2 Kings 17:24) But it was an Israelite King who made possibly the greatest error of all:-**“At that time, Merodach Baladan son of Baladan king of Babylon sent Hezekiah letters and a gift, because he had heard of Hezekiah’s illness. Hezekiah received the messengers, and showed them all that was in his storehouse...there was nothing in the palace or in his entire Kingdom that Hezekiah did not show them.”**

Then Isaiah the prophet went to King Hezekiah and asked **“What did those men say and where did they come from?”** **“From a distant land,”** Hezekiah replied. **“They came from Babylon.”** (2 Kings 20:12-20) Hezekiah, the anointed and chosen King of Israel, had let Babylon into every part of his Palace, and into Jerusalem. There was nothing he did not show to the Babylonian visitors. The evil had found its man and its access.

Isaiah saw all too clearly what this would mean:-**“The time will surely come when everything in your palace and all that your fathers have stored up till this day will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left says the Lord.”**

This is exactly what did happen. Babylon had found what it wanted. Slowly but surely it pressed against God’s people until it destroyed them, exiled them and tore down the very Holy Place of God. But God rules. He had seen the sin of Babylon, and through Jeremiah he said: - **“But when the seventy years are fulfilled, I will punish the King of Babylon and his Nation, the Land of the Babylonians, for their guilt,”** declares the Lord, **“and will make it desolate forever.”** (Jer. 25:12)

### **Babylon - the spiritual reality**

The Old Testament period saw the rise of the evil Kingdom of Babylon, almost an evil copy of Jerusalem. One was the throne of David, and the place where God had chosen to put his light, and the other was a foreshadowing of Satan’s throne, an evil and dark place, determined to destroy the people of God, and raise a throne for the evil dark powers. In the New Testament times, the physical place of Babylon no longer existed. But as a spiritual evil reality, its power was very prominent, aggressive and committed to the same programme as Babylon of old - to dominate, to destroy God’s kingdom, and to rule as God. These truths are seen at their clearest in the Book of Revelation. Here, in Chapter 13, the purposes and plans of Babylon are explained in the vision of the two beasts. It is vital that Christians understand the purposes and aims of the Beasts, for they are, and have remained, the aims and purposes of Satan:-

## The Beast out of the sea (Rev 13: 1-10)

The dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. It had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on its horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was filled with wonder and followed the beast. People worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, "Who is like the beast? Who can wage war against it?"

The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority for forty-two months. It opened its mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. It was given power to wage war against God's holy people and to conquer them. And it was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the Lamb's book of life, the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world.

This evil manifestation has a very clear aim and purpose:-

\* To steal the position of Jesus. The Bible teaches that Jesus has authority over all things (Philippians 2:11) yet **"The dragon gave the beast his power, and his throne and great authority."** (13:2)

\* To claim resurrection, the very heart of the ministry of Jesus: **"One of the heads of the beast seemed to have a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed."** (13:3)

\* To capture the hearts of all men by deception, instead of by love:- **"The whole world was astonished and followed the beast. Men worshipped the beast and asked "Who is like the beast?"** (13:4)

\* Not to honour but to attack God:- **"The beast was given a mouth to utter blasphemies..he opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name."**(13:5-6)

## The Beast out of the earth (13:11-18)

Then I saw a second beast, coming out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb, but it spoke like a dragon. It exercised all the authority of the first beast on its behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. And it performed great signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to the earth in full view of the people. Because of the signs it was given power to perform on behalf of the first beast, it deceived the inhabitants of the earth. It ordered them to set up an image in honour of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. It also forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads, so that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name.

The next manifestation makes the evil intentions of darkness even clearer. Jesus taught us to honour God, out of love and thanksgiving. But the beast **“ordered them to set up an image in honour of the beast who was wounded with the sword yet lived ... He also forced everyone to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast, or the number of his name.”** (13:14)

The beasts had, and still have, only a single aim - to rule as God. To do this, they either fooled or destroyed God's people and fooled or enslaved all the rest. They copied the signs and characteristics of Jesus - they claimed authority, they claimed resurrection, they performed miracles, they astonished the people. But unlike Jesus, they showed their real plans by blaspheming God, His ways, His laws and his dwelling. Their ultimate goal was to destroy all that God had made, to pull God down, and to be God. In this capacity they would reign with terror, dominate and subdue the human spirit, breaking the beauty of creation in man, and casting chains of sorrow and destruction over all men.

## The heavenly finale

Ultimately, the spiritual Babylon is as doomed as the physical one was:-

**“Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea and said ‘With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again.’” (Rev 18:21)**

The physical city of Babylon became the focus of dark forces, committed to the destruction of God’s people. It made great progress, but ultimately failed. The spiritual Babylon, equally full of dark forces, continued to make war on all that was and is God’s, and as we see in Revelation 13, they are capable of great success. But in the heavenly places, where spiritual realities rule, Babylon is broken by the blood of Jesus. Its defeat is clear for all to see, and its doom already decided. It has lost. It will one day have to acknowledge before God and the Lord Jesus its utter defeat. Then it will be delivered out of spiritual existence forever.

**“After this I saw another angel, coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendour. With a mighty voice he shouted: ‘Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!’” (Revelation 18: 1-2)**

**“Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea and said: ‘with such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again.’” (Revelation 18:21)**

## The work of Babylon today

Why should it be necessary for God’s people to study these things today? The victory of Jesus is assured. Satan is broken. One day Jesus will return. We must live as people ready and patiently working at our tasks as that great day draws near. Isn’t that enough?

To think like this is to think like a child, and I find that many of God’s people do think like children. We are commanded to enter the Kingdom like a little child, but then we are expected to grow up, to learn to read the signs of the times, to grasp the teaching of the Bible, and to live our lives accordingly. The Bible says **“When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish things behind me.” (1Cor. 13:11)**

In our understandings of the end times, many of us must start growing up. ***The spiritual Babylon may be defeated, but it is still a very dangerous place, even in defeat.*** The dark powers which inhabited the earthly Babylon still inhabit the spiritual Babylon, and have not changed their intent nor their methods. Still today they want to be God, to destroy God's people, and to put God's creation in bondage.

## Methodia

Their methods haven't changed much either, and we are going to look at these methods now.

\* They work mostly in the dark, because that is what Satan prefers, being a creature of the darkness – Jesus said **“But this is your hour – when darkness reigns.”** (Luke 22:53) This is why it is so essential that God's people have no dealings with darkness – no occult practice, no criminal dealings, no deceit, lies or evil. These things give Babylon a space in which to work.

\* They work by deceit and trickery. Nothing they say is truth, yet they can make it appear so. Satan would have us believe **“I will give you all their (the kingdoms of the world) authority and splendour, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to.”** (Luke 4:6)

But Jesus warns us **“He (Satan) was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar, and the father of lies.”** (John 8:44) God's people must train themselves to recognise true from false, by study of the Bible, by prayer and by discussion. There is a tendency to believe the preacher who shouts the loudest, or who can do the most miracles. These are not the tests for truth or falsehood. These tests are made diligently, by prayer and in full understanding of both the Bible and the moving of the Holy Spirit. Many people have been deceived, but it is not necessary to be deceived. Jesus said **“You shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”** (John 8:32) One of the deceits of the enemy is to prevent God's people from the diligent study which will reveal truth. We are living in an age where everything has to be spectacular and instant. Discerning truth is neither of these, and God's people often do not want to exercise the discipline of seeking after truth. No wonder that the enemy grows in strength and the Church seems to founder.

\* They try to copy the things of God, so that God's people cannot tell the difference between false spirits and true ones; (1John 4:1) between false preachers and true ones; (Matthew 7:15) between false practices and true ones. (2 Corinthians 11:14) This last verse from St Paul to the Corinthians is very illuminating of the ways of Babylon: **"Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light."**

\* They work with reason and common sense. Demetrius gives us a clear demonstration of the rational ways of Babylon:- **"Men, you know we receive a good income from this business. And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus, and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that man-made gods are not gods at all. There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited, and the goddess herself, who is worshipped throughout the whole of Asia and the world will be robbed of her divine majesty."** (Acts 19: 25-27) Such clear Babylonian reasoning from Demetrius led to riot and great danger to God's people. Fortunately Babylon is brought down on this occasion by equally clear reasoning from the city clerk. (See Acts 19: 35-41.)

\* They sow seeds of discord between Christians, knowing that this will weaken the body. (1 Corinthians 1:10-17) This is one of the greatest enduring achievements of Babylon. Not only are we badly divided, but there often doesn't seem to be the will or the purpose to end division. In many countries, especially developing countries, there is little awareness of other Churches or denominations, an unwillingness to work together in the common cause, and a very quick "finger pointing" attitude.

The refusal to recognise other churches and fellowships, the conviction that we are right and they are wrong, and the desire to build our own personal kingdoms, rather than THE Kingdom - these are wounds on our body, places where Babylon can and does still exercise a great amount of control over us. How can we overcome this problem?

\* **First**, remember this parable of Jesus:- **"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."** (Matthew 7:3-5)

\* **Second**, remember why we are here:- **“The Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give his life as a ransom for many people.”** (Mark 10:45) He demonstrated this in the washing of the feet of his disciples. (John 13.) A little bit more foot washing and service to others would greatly strengthen our defences against Babylon.

\* **Third**, look for the good in other Churches, and for points of contact and sharing. In this way we build the body up, and do not pull it down. **“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”** (Galatians 6:2)

\* **Finally**, be aware. This is fruitful soil for Babylon. We must be ever watchful:- **“Your enemy the devil prowls round like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith.”** (1 Peter 5:8-9)

\* They work in the human mind, raising people up in their own thinking, and weakening dependence on the Bible. The Bible teaches that in such a man, **“the unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. He has lost connection with the Head..”**( of the body.) (Colossians 2:18 -19) The problem is that such people easily deceive the elect, because they speak in such firm voices, presenting such positive philosophies and doctrines. They speak loudly, they write books and make videos. It is vital that we listen with **“testing ears”** – ears that sift and check what people say, so that we can spot the false, through all the good words and powerful thoughts. The human mind, unconnected with the Head of the Body, can cause such havoc, and is an open channel for Babylon to use.

\* They work with the weaknesses of human nature - sexuality, greed and power. They use these to damage people, Churches, families and Nations. The Bible warns us again and again about the danger which our fallen humanity can present to us – for out of us can come **“evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly.”**(Mark 7:20-23) In the Sermon on the Mount, (Matthew chapters 5-7) Jesus expands on the dangers of these weaknesses. Babylon loves them! They give the enemy plenty of space to divide and weaken the Church, and to lead the world away from the commandments and the ways of God.



\* They infiltrate and gain political, financial and economic power. From this position, they can make it difficult for true religion to grow. In highly intellectual countries, they will plant heretical teaching, and then raise the cry "We must not stop this in favour of Christianity. We are a free society. All must be equal." This sounds OK, until we discover that their meaning of equality is not ours. What this really means is "promote the false and tear down the true." In the same way, they will weaken morality and goodness. "Sexuality is a free decision" means allowing deviant sexuality equality with God's teaching. They encourage the "if it feels right to you then it's OK to do" attitude. They harden people's hearts and increase greed.

In the less intellectual cultures, they promote the worship of false religions, promote tribalism, and inflame greed. They use the more basic instincts to oppose God's ways. They use the political powers to hinder and destroy God's works, God's ways and God's people.

\* They have a world view. The Bible teaches us this in the Temptation stories, where we read **"Again the devil took Jesus to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and their splendour. 'All this I will give you,' he said, 'if you will bow down and worship me.'"** (Matthew 4: 8-9) Christians are very poor at having any view beyond their own fellowships. The enemy is not so stupid. The physical Babylon wanted to dominate, and was very successful in this process. The spiritual Babylon is just the same. It is looking for world domination - clearly expressed in Revelation 13. So the enemy is keen to find groups and organisations which have a world influence - a political influence, an economic influence or a social influence. Figures or groups which have the power to influence the world are very dangerous - they always have been. Now that we have a world wide media, the enemy has many opportunities to use situations which work to the disadvantage of Christians and to the advantage of the enemies of God. The media may be the instrument itself, but more often, it is the vehicle for others to manipulate situations.

Speaking personally, this is the area of Babylon's influence which concerns me most of all. Not because Babylon cannot be defeated - I have no doubts on that fact, but because most Christians are asleep to this danger. Most Christians will pray and work against the evil which appears in their street or their village, but do nothing about the roots of evil which are everywhere on the global scale.

We are living in a time when genocide on a National scale is becoming too common an event; where international power is being concentrated in fewer and fewer hands, and where the international Media is very much under the influence of just a few very powerful individuals. Yet I do not see God's people rising up in their spiritual power to tear down these strongholds. Nothing else will break Babylon, as it tries yet again to establish its influence over God's creation.

The re- emergence of Babylon, which I believe is taking place now, will bring great suffering to the people of God. All end times teaching underlines the pain and suffering which will come to God's people, as the enemy makes his last final push for power. He will come against God's people, and many will perish. It is going to be a confused and difficult period for us. We must prepare. Revelation 13:20 challenges us:-

**“This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.”**

### **What can we do?**

It's so easy to be overwhelmed by the size of Babylon, and as a consequence, to do nothing. But that only leaves Babylon with the opportunity to grow stronger. In a spiritual battle, we are the victors, and there is plenty we can do:-

### **Roots**

Search out the roots of Babylon - in your own personal life, in your locality, in your Church, in your village, city or Nation. We have to ask the Holy Spirit to show us the works of Babylon. Jesus said that nothing which is hidden will not be made known, (Luke 8:17) and as we seek and ask, He will reveal. Do not expect this to be easy. Babylon has had a lot of time to make mighty strongholds. And do not expect it to be quick. Are you prepared for the patient endurance in this searching?

### **Bind the strong man**

Learn to bind Babylon. Jesus taught us:- **“When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armour in which the man trusted, and divides up the spoils.”** (Luke 11:21-22) The stronger man has come. Jesus can and does bind the evil of Babylon.

But it is our task to seek out and bind that which needs to be bound. This is a tough task, and a long struggle. But the more we bind Babylon, the more weak it becomes. Satan wants us to sit back, and give him room. We must attack, bind and break, all in the name of Jesus.

### **International**

Pay special attention to the National and International works of Babylon. This means taking time to find out what is happening, and to turn what you discover into prayer.

### **Blood of Jesus**

Plead the blood of Jesus into the things you see, and the things God reveals. Nothing is stronger than the blood of Jesus. It reminds the enemy of his total and irreversible defeat at Calvary. (Romans 5:9) How do we do this? By regularly reading the passion, death and resurrection story of Jesus. Every time Babylon hears this story, it knows that it cannot resist the blood of Jesus. Make a habit of reading this story out loud whenever you can.

### **Spiritual weapons**

Know and use the spiritual weapons the Bible reveals in Ephesians 6 verses 10 to 18. This passage needs very careful study, for it also reveals more of the enemy. But it is essential that we are clothed in this armour, and know how to use the sword of the Spirit.

### **Fight**

Victory will not be made a reality until God's people rise up in spiritual power, and break the strong places of Babylon:- **"They overcame him by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death."** (Revelation 12:11)

### **Discussion Questions**

Babylon needs a lot of thought and prayer. Perhaps a group could study the material in this book, and then try to answer these questions:-

**Where do you think are the greatest centres of Babylon's power today?**

**How do we, as individuals, begin to bind and overcome these places?**

**Do we have the power? (See 2 Corinthians 10.3-5)**

**Has Babylon got any control in our local fellowship? How?**

**How do we overcome this?**

**How do we move out to challenge Babylon with the positive power of the Kingdom of God?**

**What features of the Kingdom of God should we be encouraging in the lives and the actions of the members of our fellowships?**

**How do we move out with these principles beyond our fellowships?**

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