



**THE RISE AND
FALL OF
BABYLON**

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Forward

The heart of God has always been to bless the whole earth and all **people**, never had all through his life Solomon reminded the **people** that wisdom is a path they **must** walk every day.

In this study we will discover the rise of Babylon and how they became this great empire. We will also see how Babylon fell. Those who chose to remain in Babylon fell with them.

We will also see how any evil governmental system can be called a system of Babylon today.

Without doubt, the world is making ready for such a system today.

Chapter 1



Nimrod the founder of Babylon

Genesis 10:8-9

One of Cush's descendants was Nimrod, who became a heroic warrior.

He was a mighty hunter in the Lord's sight. His name became proverbial, and people would speak of someone as being "like Nimrod, a mighty hunter in the Lord's sight."

Who was Nimrod? Not much is known about him except that he was a mighty hunter. But people with great gifts can become proud, and that is probably what happened to Nimrod. Some consider him the founder of the great, godless Babylonian empire.

How Babylon grew to a world power

2 Kings 20:14

Then Isaiah the prophet went to King Hezekiah and asked him, "What did those men want? Where were they from?"

Hezekiah replied, "They came from the distant land of Babylon."

Hezekiah had been a good and faithful king. But when Isaiah asked him what he had shown the messengers from Babylon, he replied, “They saw everything in my palace.”

From the account in 2 Chronicle 32:24-31, it appears that Hezekiah’s prosperity, success, and deliverance from sickness had made him proud.

Rather than giving credit to God for all his blessings, he tried to impress the foreigners. When God helps us, we must not use his blessings to impress others. A testimony of victory can quickly degenerate into vanity and self-congratulations.

Sennacherib destroyed Babylon, a city that had rebelled against the Assyrian empire, in 689 B.C.

This story probably occurred shortly before that date. When Sennacherib died in 681 B.C., his son, Esarhaddon, foolishly rebuilt the city of Babylon.

Assyria, whose rulers at that time were weak, allowed Babylon plenty of opportunity to become strong. As the Assyrian army marched off to conquer and oppress faraway lands, the city of Babylon grew and expanded into a small nation. After some years, Babylon was strong enough to rebel again.

It eventually crushed Assyria (612 B.C.) and became the next world power.

Hezekiah was saying that it was good that these terrible events foretold by Isaiah wouldn’t happen during his lifetime. Hezekiah’s statement seems selfish, shortsighted, and proud.

However, he knew that his nation would be punished for its sins, so he may have been acknowledging and thanking God for choosing not to destroy Judah during his lifetime.

Babylon established itself at battle of Carchemish.

2 Kings 24:1

During Jehoiakim's reign, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon invaded the land of Judah. Jehoiakim surrendered and paid him tribute for three years but then rebelled.

Babylon became the new world power after overthrowing Assyria in 612 B.C. and defeating Egypt at the battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C.

After defeating Egypt, the Babylonians invaded Judah and brought it under their control. This was the first of three Babylonian invasions of Judah over the next 20 years.

The other two invasions occurred in 597 and 586 B.C. With each invasion, captives were taken back to Babylon. Daniel, who wrote the book of Daniel, was one of the captives taken during this first invasion (605 B.C.; Daniel 1:1-6).

Nebuchadnezzar took control as king of Babylon in 605 B.C.

Earlier that year Nebuchadnezzar had defeated the Egyptians led by Pharaoh Neco at Carchemish.

Thus Babylon took control of all Egypt's vassals (including Judah). Nebuchadnezzar invaded the land later in order to establish his rule by force.

Chapter 2



Babylon's three invasions into Judah

2 Kings 24:10

During Jehoiachin's reign, the officers of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came up against Jerusalem and besieged it.

Babylonian troops were already on the march to crush Jehoiakim's rebellion when he died. After Jehoiakim's death, his son Jehoiachin became king of Judah, only to face the mightiest army on earth just weeks after he was crowned (597 B.C.).

During this second of three invasions, the Babylonians looted the temple and took most of the leaders captive, including the king. Then Nebuchadnezzar placed Zedekiah, another son of Josiah, on the throne.

The Jews, however, didn't recognize him as their true king as long as Jehoiachin was still alive, even though he was a captive in Babylon.

How Babylon treated its captives.

2 Kings 24:14

King Nebuchadnezzar took ten thousand captives from Jerusalem, including all the princes and the best of the soldiers, craftsmen, and smiths. So only the poorest people were left in the land.

The Babylonian policy for taking captives was different from that of the Assyrians who moved most of the people out and resettled the land with foreigners (see the note on 2 Kings 17:24).

The Babylonians took only the strong and skilled, leaving the poor and weak to rule the land, thus elevating them to positions of authority and winning their loyalty. The leaders were taken to Babylonian cities where they were permitted to live together, find jobs, and become an important part of the society.

This policy kept the Jews united and faithful to God throughout the captivity and made it possible for their return in the days of Zerubbabel and Ezra as recorded in the book of Ezra.

Ezra 1:1

In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, the Lord fulfilled Jeremiah's prophecy by stirring the heart of Cyrus to put this proclamation into writing and to send it throughout his kingdom:

THE RETURN LED BY ZERUBBABEL (1:1-6:22)

After 70 years in exile, the captives from Judah were allowed to return to their homeland. Nearly 50,000 people made this journey.

Upon arrival they began to rebuild the temple, but became discouraged by opposition. After encouragement from Haggai and Zechariah, they returned to the task and completed the temple. The message of the prophets still speaks to us today, encouraging us to continue building up God's church.

The book of Ezra opens in 538 B.C., 48 years after Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem, defeated the southern kingdom of Judah, and carried the Jews away to Babylon as captives (2 Kings 25; 2 Chron. 36).

Nebuchadnezzar died in 562, and because his successors were not strong, Babylon was overthrown by Persia in 539, just prior to the events recorded in this book.

Both the Babylonians and the Persians had a relaxed policy toward their captives, allowing them to own land and homes and to take ordinary jobs.

Many Jews such as Daniel, Mordecai, and Esther rose to prominent positions within the nation. King Cyrus of Persia went a step further: he allowed many groups of exiles, including the Jews, to return to their homelands.

By doing this, he hoped to win their loyalty and thus provide buffer zones around the borders of his empire. For the Jews this was a day of hope, a new beginning.

Cyrus, king of Persia (559-530 B.C.), had already begun his rise to power in the Near East by unifying the Medes and Persians into a strong empire.

As he conquered cities, he treated the inhabitants with mercy. Although not a servant of Yahweh, Cyrus was used by God to return the Jews to their homeland.

Cyrus may have been shown the prophecy of Isaiah 44:28-45:6, written over a century earlier, which predicted that Cyrus himself would help the Jews return to Jerusalem.

Daniel, a prominent government official (Daniel 5:29; Daniel 6:28), would have been familiar with the prophecy. The book of Daniel has more to say about Cyrus.

Jeremiah prophesied that the Jews would remain in captivity for 70 years (Jeremiah 25:11; Jeremiah 29:10).

The 70-year period has been calculated two different ways:

(1) From the first captivity in 605 B.C. (2 Kings 24:1) until the altar was rebuilt by the returned exiles in 536 (Ezra 3:1-6), or

(2) From the destruction of the temple in 586 until the exiles finished rebuilding it in 516.

Many scholars prefer the second approach because the temple was the focus and heartbeat of the nation. Without the temple, the Jews did not consider themselves reestablished as a nation.

Isaiah predicted Babylon's destruction.

Isaiah 13:1

Isaiah son of Amoz received this message concerning the destruction of Babylon:

Speak of judgment against the southern kingdom and, to a lesser extent, against the northern kingdom. Isaiah 13-23 are about the judgment on other nations.

Isaiah 13 is an oracle or message from God concerning Babylon. Long before Babylon became a world power and threatened Judah, Isaiah spoke of its destruction.

Babylon was the rallying point of rebellion against God after the flood (Genesis 11).

Rev. 17-18 use Babylon as a symbol of God's enemies. At the time of this oracle, Babylon was still part of the Assyrian empire. Isaiah communicated a message of challenge and hope to God's people, telling them not to rely on other nations but to rely on God alone. And he let them know that their greatest enemies would receive from God the punishment they deserve.

Isaiah 13:20

Babylon will never rise again. Generation after generation will come and go, but the land will never again be lived in. Nomads will refuse to camp there, and shepherds will not allow their sheep to stay overnight.

Even before Babylon became a world power, Isaiah prophesied that, though it would shine for a while, Babylon's destruction would be so complete that the land would never again be inhabited. Babylon, in present-day Iraq, still lies in utter ruin, burned under mounds of dirt and sand.

Isaiah 47:1

"Come, Babylon, unconquered one, sit in the dust. For your days of glory, pomp, and honor have ended. O daughter of Babylonia, never again will you be the lovely princess, tender and delicate.

Here Isaiah predicted the fall of Babylon more than 150 years before it happened. At this time, Babylon had not yet emerged as the mightiest force on earth, the proud empire that would destroy Judah and Jerusalem. But the Babylonians, Judah's captors, would become captives themselves in 539 B.C. God, not Babylon, has the ultimate power. He used Babylon to punish his sinful people; he would use Medo-Persia to destroy Babylon and free his people.

Chapter 3



Why Hezekiah showed them his treasure.

Isaiah 39:4-7

"What did they see in your palace?" asked Isaiah.

"They saw everything," Hezekiah replied. "I showed them everything I own—all my treasures."

Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Listen to this message from the Lord Almighty: The time is coming when everything you have—all the treasures stored up by your ancestors—will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the Lord.

Some of your own descendants will be taken away into exile. They will become eunuchs who will serve in the palace of Babylon's king."

What was so wrong about showing these Babylonians around? Hezekiah failed to see that the Babylonians would become his next threat, and that they, not the Assyrians, would conquer his city.

When Isaiah told him that Babylon would someday carry it all away, this was an amazing prophecy because Babylon was struggling for independence under Assyria.

Hezekiah's self-satisfied display of his earthly treasures brought its own consequences (2 Kings 25; Daniel 1:1-2).

His response (Isaiah 39:8) may seem a bit shortsighted, but he simply was expressing gratitude for the blessing from God that peace would reign during his lifetime and that God's judgment would not be more severe.

Babylon relied on its own greatness.

Isaiah 47:8-9

"You are a pleasure-crazy kingdom, living at ease and feeling secure, bragging as if you were the greatest in the world! You say, 'I'm self-sufficient and not accountable to anyone! I will never be a widow or lose my children.'

Well, those two things will come upon you in a moment: widowhood and the loss of your children. Yes, these calamities will come upon you, despite all your witchcraft and magic.

Caught up in the pursuit of power and pleasure, Babylon believed in its own greatness and claimed to be the *only* power on earth. Babylon felt completely secure, and Nebuchadnezzar, its king, exalted himself as a "god." But the true God taught Nebuchadnezzar a powerful lesson by taking everything away from him (Daniel 4:28-37). Our society is addicted to pleasure and power, but these can quickly pass away. Look at your own life and ask yourself how you can be more responsible with the talents and possessions God has given you. How can you use your life for God's honor rather than your own?

Babylon's deportation policy

Daniel 1:1-2

During the third year of King Jehoiakim's reign in Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it with his armies.

The Lord gave him victory over King Jehoiakim of Judah. When Nebuchadnezzar returned to Babylon, he took with him some of the sacred objects from the Temple of God and placed them in the treasure-house of his god in the land of Babylonia.

While Ezekiel was ministering to the captives in Babylon, Daniel was drafted as a counselor to King Nebuchadnezzar. With God's help, Daniel interpreted two of the king's dreams, Daniel's three friends were rescued from certain death in the fiery furnace, and Daniel was rescued from a lions' den. Daniel's life is a picture of the triumph of faith. May God grant us this type of faith so that we may also live courageously each day.

Born during the middle of Josiah's reign (2 Kings 22-23), Daniel grew up during the king's reforms. During this time, Daniel probably heard Jeremiah, a prophet he quoted in Daniel 9:2. In 609 B.C., Josiah was killed in a battle against Egypt, and within four years, the southern kingdom of Judah had returned to its evil ways.

In 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar became king of Babylonia. In September of that year, he swept into Palestine and surrounded Jerusalem, making Judah his vassal state. To demonstrate his dominance, Nebuchadnezzar took many of Jerusalem's wisest men and most beautiful women to Babylon as captives. Daniel was among this group.

Nebuchadnezzar, the supreme leader of Babylonia, was feared throughout the world. When he invaded a country, defeat was certain. After a victory, the Babylonians usually took the most talented and useful people back to Babylon and left only the poor behind to take whatever land they wanted and to live peacefully

there (2 Kings 24:14). This system fostered great loyalty from conquered lands and ensured a steady supply of wise and talented people for civil service.

At certain times God allows his work to suffer. In this instance, the Babylonians raided the temple of God, and took the worship articles to the temple of a god in Babylon.

This god may have been Bel, also called Marduk, the chief god of the Babylonians. Those who loved the Lord must have felt disheartened and discouraged. We feel greatly disappointed when our churches suffer physical damage, split, close down for financial reasons, or are wracked by scandals.

We do not know why God allows his church to experience these calamities. But like the people who witnessed the plundering of the temple by the Babylonians, we must trust that God is in control and that he is watching over all who trust in him.

Chapter 4



Education in Babylon

Daniel 1:4

"Select only strong, healthy, and good-looking young men," he said.

"Make sure they are well versed in every branch of learning, are gifted with:

1. Knowledge and
2. Good sense, and
3. Have the poise needed to serve in the royal palace.

Teach these young men the language and literature of the Babylonians."

The common language of Babylonia was Aramaic, while the language of scholarship included the ancient and complicated Babylonian language. The academic program would have included mathematics, astronomy, history, science, and magic. These young men demonstrated not only aptitude, but also discipline. This character trait, combined with integrity, served them well in their new culture.

Babylon's riches came from misfortunes of others.

Habakkuk 2:9-13

"How terrible it will be for you who get rich by unjust means! You believe your wealth will buy security, putting your families beyond the reach of danger.

But by the murders you committed, you have shamed your name and forfeited your lives. The very stones in the walls of your houses cry out against you, and the beams in the ceilings echo the complaint.

"How terrible it will be for you who build cities with money gained by murder and corruption! Has not the Lord Almighty promised that the wealth of nations will turn to ashes? They work so hard, but all in vain!

Zechariah tells remaining exiles to leave.

Zech. 2:6-7

The Lord says, "Come away! Flee from the north, for I have scattered you to the four winds. Come away! Escape to Jerusalem, you who are exiled in Babylon!"

Many of the captive Israelites did not return to Jerusalem because they preferred to stay with the security and wealth they had experienced in Babylon. But Zechariah instructed them to leave Babylon quickly.

This was an urgent request because Babylon would be destroyed and because its decadent culture would cause God's people to forget their

spiritual priorities. A vast majority of the Israelites rejected these warnings and remained in Babylon.

Babylon symbolizes anyone opposed to God

Rev. 14:8

Then another angel followed him through the skies, shouting, "Babylon is fallen—that great city is fallen—because she seduced the nations of the world and made them drink the wine of her passionate immorality."

Babylon was the name of both an evil city and an immoral empire, a world center for idol worship. Babylon ransacked Jerusalem and carried the people of Judah into captivity (see 2 Kings 24 and 2 Chron. 36).

Just as Babylon was the Jews' worst enemy, the Roman empire was the worst enemy of the early Christians. John, who probably did not dare speak against Rome openly, applied the name *Babylon* to this enemy of God's people (Rome)—and, by extension, to all God's enemies of all times.

Those who mourn at Babylon's fall

Rev. 18:9-19

And the rulers of the world who took part in her immoral acts and enjoyed her great luxury will mourn for her as they see the smoke rising from her charred remains.

They will stand at a distance, terrified by her great torment. They will cry out, "How terrible, how terrible for Babylon, that great city! In one single moment God's judgment came on her."

The merchants of the world will weep and mourn for her, for there is no one left to buy their goods.

She bought great quantities of gold, silver, jewels, pearls, fine linen, purple dye, silk, scarlet cloth, and every kind of perfumed wood, ivory goods, objects made of expensive wood, bronze, iron, and marble.

She also bought cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, olive oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle, sheep, horses, chariots, and slaves—yes, she even traded in human lives.

"All the fancy things you loved so much are gone," they cry. "The luxuries and splendor that you prized so much will never be yours again. They are gone forever."

The merchants who became wealthy by selling her these things will stand at a distance, terrified by her great torment. They will weep and cry.

"How terrible, how terrible for that great city! She was so beautiful—like a woman clothed in finest purple and scarlet linens, decked out with gold and precious stones and pearls! And in one single moment all the wealth of the city is gone!"

And all the ship owners and captains of the merchant ships and their crews will stand at a distance. They will weep as they watch the smoke ascend, and they will say, "Where in all the world is there another city like this?"

And they will throw dust on their heads to show their great sorrow. And they will say, "How terrible, how terrible for the great city! She made us all rich from her great wealth. And now in a single hour it is all gone."

Those who are tied to the world's system will lose everything when it collapses. What they have worked for a lifetime to build up will be

destroyed in one hour. Those who work only for material rewards will have nothing when they die or when their possessions are destroyed. What can we take with us to the new earth?

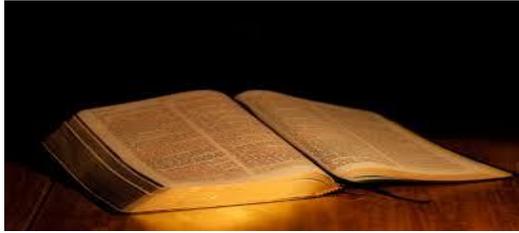
God is our faith, our Christian character, and our relationships with other believers. These are more important than any amount of money, power, or pleasure

Those who are in control of various parts of the economic system will mourn at Babylon's fall. The political leaders will mourn because they were the overseers of Babylon's wealth and were in a position to enrich themselves greatly. The merchants will mourn because Babylon, the greatest customer for their goods, will be gone. The sea captains will no longer have anywhere to bring their goods because the merchants will have nowhere to sell them. The fall of the evil world system affects all who enjoyed and depended on it. No one will remain unaffected by Babylon's fall.

This list of various merchandise illustrates the extreme materialism of this society. Few of these goods are necessities—most are luxuries. The society had become so self-indulgent that people were willing to use evil means to gratify their desires. Even people had become commodities—the “bodies and souls of men” were sold as slaves to Babylon.

God's people should not live for money, because money will be worthless in eternity. And they should keep on guard constantly against greed, a sin that is always ready to take over their lives

Chapter 5



HOW CAN A PERSON KEEP AWAY FROM THE EVIL SYSTEM

People must always be more important than products.

The heart of God has always been to bless the whole earth and all **people**, never had all through his life Solomon reminded the **people** that wisdom is a path they **must** walk every day.

More important than Solomon's building **projects** was the expansion of the kingdom.

Proverbs 1:1-7

These are the proverbs of Solomon, David's son, king of Israel.

The purpose of these proverbs is to teach people wisdom and discipline, and to help them understand wise sayings.

Through these proverbs, people will receive instruction in discipline, good conduct, and doing what is right, just, and fair.

These proverbs will make the simpleminded clever. They will give knowledge and purpose to young people. Let those who are wise listen to these proverbs and become even wiser. And let those who understand

receive guidance by exploring the depth of meaning in these proverbs, parables, wise sayings, and riddles.

Fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. Only fools despise wisdom and discipline.

Keep away from pride in your own programs, plans, and successes.

Listen to what God has spoken.

Jeremiah 3:15

And I will give you leaders after my own heart, who will guide you with knowledge and understanding.

Study the word of God. Do not be proud, for the Lord has spoken. Memorize scriptures and confess your sins. Listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit.

God promised to give his people leaders (“shepherds” after his own heart) who would follow him, filled with knowledge (wisdom) and understanding.

God saw Israel’s lack of direction, so he promised to provide the right kind of leadership. We look to and trust our leaders for guidance and direction. But if they do not follow God, they will lead us astray. Pray for God-honoring leaders in our nations, communities, and churches—those who will be good examples and bring us God’s wisdom.

Hebrews 3:12

Be careful then, dear brothers and sisters. Make sure that your own hearts are not evil and unbelieving, turning you away from the living God.

Our hearts turn away from the living God when we stubbornly refuse to believe him. If we persist in our unbelief, God will eventually leave us alone in our sin. But God can give us new hearts, new desires, and new spirits (Ezekiel 36:22-27).

To prevent having an unbelieving heart, stay in fellowship with other believers, talk daily about your mutual faith, be aware of the deceitfulness of sin (it attracts but also destroys), and encourage each other with love and concern.

1 Peter 3:15

Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if you are asked about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it.

The world system is ever present. Allow your desires to live above the systems of Babylon rise within you as you live what God has spoken.

Rather than fear our enemies, we are to quietly trust in God as the Lord of all. We must believe that Christ is truly in control of all events. When he rules our thoughts and emotions, we cannot be shaken by anything our enemies may do.

Some Christians believe that faith is a personal matter that should be kept to oneself.

It is true that we shouldn't be boisterous or obnoxious in sharing our faith, but we should always be ready to give an answer, gently and respectfully, when asked about our faith, our life-style, or our Christian perspective. Can others see your hope in Christ? Are you prepared to tell them what Christ has done in your life?

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Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tndale House 2007. Print