

## *Introduction*

# **The Babylon Prophecy**

Babylon—both as a legendary ancient city and the first unrivaled world empire—has loomed large in memory throughout human history. Six hundred years before Jesus Christ came to earth, the Euphrates River Valley was home to the magnificent Babylonian Empire. At that time, the Babylonians had conquered the rest of the known world and had brought the citizens of many defeated kingdoms to Babylon as slaves. However, references to Babylon date much earlier, with the first mention in Genesis 10.

The name *Babylon* evokes a powerful image of the greatest city of the ancient world. The name is derived from *Babel*, the Hebrew word meaning “the gate of God.” Located fifty-six miles south of Baghdad in modern Iraq, it rapidly grew in power until it became the most important city in the ancient world. Babylon is located in an area originally known by the name *Sumer*, or *Shinar*, designating the very fertile country lying between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The land also was known as Mesopotamia, meaning “the land between the rivers.”

The first mention of Babylon in the Bible occurs in the book of Genesis and reveals that the city of Babel was founded by Nimrod, who was the son of Cush. “Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord. . . . And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel” (Genesis 10:8-10). This was the site of the first major rebellion against God. The proud men of Babel built an enormous tower in a sinfully arrogant attempt to rebel against God and make themselves famous.

“And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth” (Genesis 11:4). God’s response to their rebellion was to “confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech” (Genesis 11:7). In the confusion that resulted from their inability to understand each other, “the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city” (Genesis 11:8). The dispersion of humanity after the flood throughout the three continents as described in Genesis 10 has been verified by Scientists.

History records that much later, around 1760 BC, King Hammurabi made Babylon the political and religious capital of his very powerful but small empire. Hammurabi combined astute diplomacy with superb military leadership to defeat the surrounding kingdoms of Mesopotamia. He was the first major king who created a written code of laws, called the Code of Hammurabi. He became the ruler of the first united Babylonian Empire that extended from the Persian Gulf to the Habur River more than a millennium before the rise of the Babylonian Empire of Nebuchadnezzar.

In the seventh century B.C., under King Nabopolassar, and later his famous son Nebuchadnezzar, the new empire of Babylon waged continuous wars against neighboring kingdoms and nations, laying waste to cities and carrying hundreds of thousands into captivity to what is present-day Iraq and northern Iran. Most notable among the millions of captives were the Judeans of Israel, who were taken in three phases between 606 and 587 BC.

Some historical sources conclude that Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah in 605 BC. However, a careful reading of the Scriptures reveals that the correct date for his conquest of Judah was actually 606 BC. The prophet Jeremiah recorded: “The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the

people of Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon” (Jeremiah 25:1). Jehoiakim’s “fourth year” was 605 BC. However, the prophet Daniel declared that Jerusalem was taken by Nebuchadnezzar’s army a year earlier, in the “third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah” (Daniel 1:1), which was the year 606 BC. “In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it” (Daniel 1:1).

The historian H. F. Clinton also confirmed in his exhaustive chronological study of ancient history that prince Nebuchadnezzar led his army against the kingdom of Judah in the summer of 606 BC. [Clinton, Henry Fynes, *Fasti Hellenici*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1835, vol. 1, p. 328]

The powerful Babylonian Empire did not endure for long, however. The Medo-Persian Empire, led by the powerful kings Darius and Cyrus the Great, conquered the empire and the city of Babylon in 536 BC. But during the years that Nebuchadnezzar ruled the known world from his capital, one of Israel’s greatest prophets Daniel, was prepared by God in Babylon’s royal courts. Daniel was chosen by God to see remarkable visions, to interpret inspired dreams, and to record the most detailed prophecy of all regarding the precise events that will occur in the last days.

It is significant that when God was giving Daniel such precise revelations about “the end of the age,” which will be fulfilled in the near future, the young prophet was living in the land that today is the major focus of international tension and the daily subject of international news headlines. Iraq is torn by continual Sunni and Shite militant uprisings, armed factions fighting for control of the country, and sectarian violence that causes

massive death and injury to civilians through the use of terror attacks. Foreign fighters, devoted to the cause of Al Qaeda and radical Islam, continue to enter Iraq to join militant Islamic groups, to participate in training terrorists, to battle against Western allied forces, and to plot the demise of the Jewish State of Israel.

Intriguingly, Babylon once again looms large on the international stage. Many of the prophetic visions that Daniel received and interpreted described the upheaval in the world that has already occurred. In fact, that is why we know that Daniel was truly God's prophet. His predictions came true just as Daniel said they would. However, many of Daniel's most intriguing prophecies describe the events that are to come to pass at the end of this age, and our generation will see these end time prophecies unfold in our lifetime.