

Woe, Woe, Woe!

Archaeologists have been reporting for about 10 years that Saddam Hussein of Iraq had been rebuilding the ancient city of Babylon. Books have been published and stories have been written. Now as a result of the recent war in Iraq, news reporters have been providing the world with pictures of the partially restored ancient city. Here is an excerpt from an article written by Bassem Mroue, Associated Press.

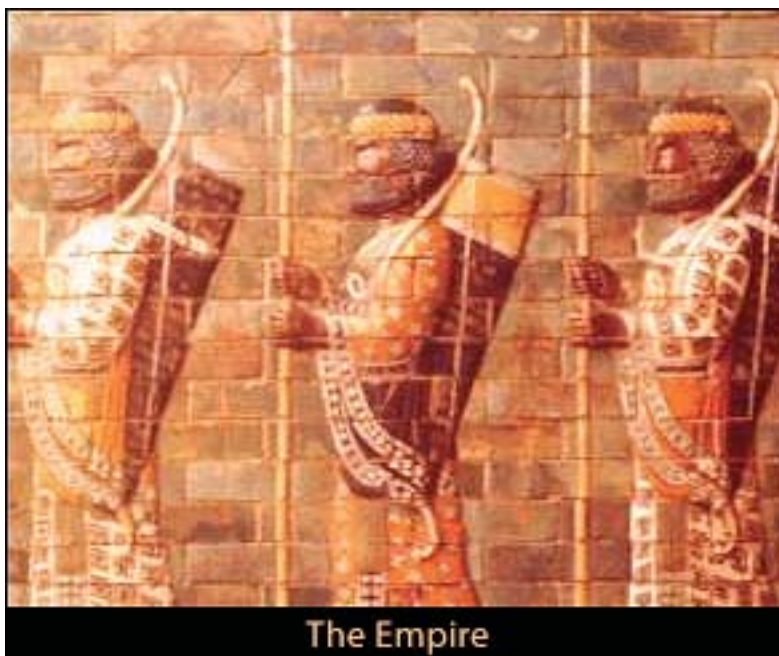
This 4,300-year-old town -- now mainly an archaeological ruin and two important museums -- knows political and military upheaval well. Dynasties have risen and have fallen here since the earliest days of settled human civilization . . . Still, more than 10,600 U.S. Marines, sailors, soldiers, aid workers and journalists have passed through ancient Babylon since April 26, Marrero said. Those who visit the ruin in the years to come will be reading the name of Saddam, stamped into the bricks used in reconstructing Nebuchadnezzar's Southern Palace, the seat of the king's ancient empire. When reconstruction began, the palace walls had crumbled to a fourth of their original height. On Saddam's orders the walls were reconstructed between 1982 and 1987. Some of the mud bricks in the original wall carried the seal of Nebuchadnezzar. The bricks used in the Saddam reconstruction, not to be outdone by the likes of the ancient king, read: "The City of Babylon was reconstructed during the era of the victorious Saddam Hussein, President of the Republic, protector of the great Iraq, the modernizer of its renaissance and builder of its civilization." (Copyright 2003 by The Associated Press. All Rights Reserved. July 27, 2003)

When the U.S. Marines entered ancient Babylon, they found dozens of vendors, museums, souvenir shops, a restaurant and a police station. People are living there now. What is the future of this ancient city? The answer is found in this study.

PAST PROPHECIES.

We have discovered in our studies of Revelation that the origin of all false religions began in the ancient city of Babylon and spread throughout the world (Genesis 11:1-9). The Antichrist will destroy all false religion; and when he does, he will require the world to worship him as the only god.

Nebuchadnezzar



and his army invaded, defeated, and deported the Israelites in 605 B.C. to the ancient city of Babylon. As a result, it became a symbol of the hated Babylonian Empire to the Jews. The city of Babylon is not just a symbol of false religion, but also of evil government.

As a result, God predicted that Babylon would be destroyed

some day in Isa. 13:19-22; Jer. 50:39-40, 51:52-58. This prophecy has been only partially fulfilled. The horrible descriptions of the destruction of Babylon have never been completely fulfilled.

Therefore the desert creatures will live there along with the jackals; the ostriches also will live in it, and it will never again be inhabited . . . (NASB) Jer. 50:39

and 18:2 tell us that the Euphrates River and the region around ancient Babylon will be the center of great demonic activity. At the end of our last study in Revelation 17, we were told that Babylon the Great was a city. Now here in Revelation 18, we will discover that Babylon will also have great economic influence in the world.

The expression “Babylon” may include modern Bagdad and the surrounding region since “Babylon” symbolized the



Jeremiah predicted that Babylon “will never again be inhabited,” but Babylon is alive today with people. Its complete destruction has not yet occurred. The prophecy has been only partially fulfilled. Complete fulfillment is still coming. Babylon will be finally destroyed and prophecy fulfilled at the end of the Tribulation.

FUTURE OF BABYLON. Revelation 9:1-16; 16:12-14;

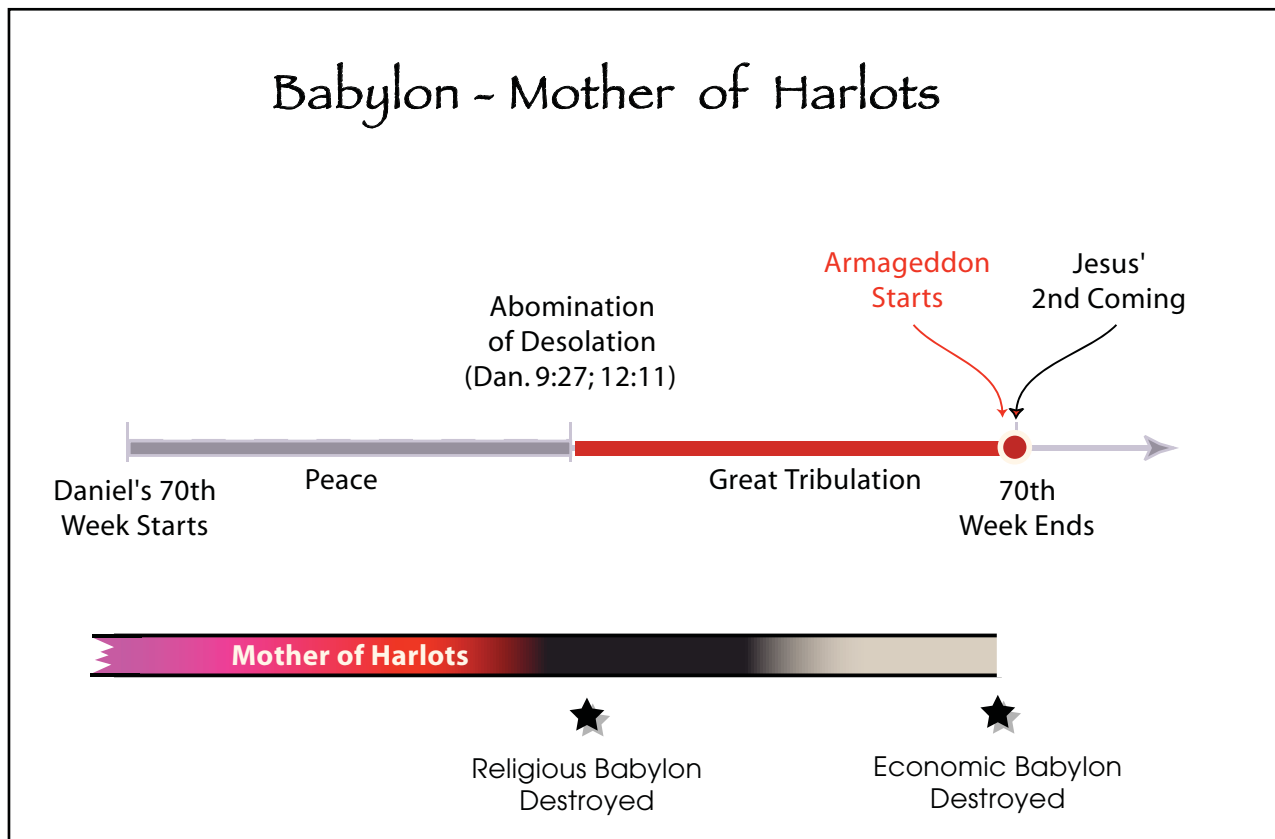
ancient Babylonian Empire. The Babylonian Empire once included the countries of the Middle East. But the city of Babylon will be God’s main interest.

Today, Iraq produces only about 4% of the world’s available oil supply. This may seem unimportant, but it is the second largest supplier of oil to the world, since the other nations cannot produce enough oil to meet their own needs.

But Babylon's future is not necessarily connected to oil. It appears that the Antichrist will make Babylon a great economic center, even though he destroys her religious influence. Both satisfy his desire for greatness and control.

We already know that the Antichrist will take control of the world's economy when he and the demonic forces require that anyone who buys or sells must have the mark of "666" (Rev. 13:16-18). The Antichrist will not only have the greatest military power, but he will also have control of the world's economy. Where will he keep track of everyone's

with his glory. And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird. For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality." (NASB) Rev. 19:13



identity? Where will the administration offices and bureaucracy be that must track every man, woman, and child? They do not exist today. Maybe they will be located in Babylon. If so, this could explain why the world economy will be in ruin when Babylon the Great is destroyed in this chapter. The destruction of Babylon and the collapse of the world economy will come later at the end of the Tribulation.

After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illumined

FALLEN, FALLEN. Wow, what a verse! The announcement of final destruction of Babylon will be given by a holy angel. The angel is announcing what will quickly occur. It will be God's action. He is in control. I am glad that our righteous and just God is in control, and not immoral, self-centered leaders. God is in silent total control today, not just in the past or in the future. There is nothing that God cannot control.

Why will God destroy Babylon? First, the destruction fulfills the prophecy about Babylon (Isa. 13:19-22; Jer.

50:39-40, 51:52-58). Second, it will be the home of demons. Revelation 9:1-16; 16:13-14 predicts that they will be there. Third, verse three says that every nation and its leaders will have supported her. It appears from Rev. 17:3, 7 that the Antichrist and the world leaders will join forces during the Tribulation.

FLEE. Then another voice, probably an angel, warns men and women who have believed in Jesus Christ to flee from Babylon and escape. This is another reminder that men and women will be able to have their sins forgiven forever. They will be able to become Christians during the Tribulation.

I heard another voice from heaven, saying, "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues; for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. (NASB) Rev. 18:4-5

If Babylon was not a city but something larger, how could Christians escape? How could the saints avoid her plagues? It appears that "her plagues" are the plagues which occur when the seventh bowl is poured out in Rev. 16:17-19.

Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air,

and . . . there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty . . . Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath. (NASB) Rev. 16:17-19



Babylon - Mother of Harlots

(NASB) Rev. 18:6-8

"Pay her back." What a statement! These are not words Christians should speak. Only a holy God and holy angels can make these statements, according to Romans 12:19-21.

God will remember her and destroy her.

PRIDE - THEN THE FALL. The voice continues speaking and says,

Pay her back even as she has paid, and give back to her double according to her deeds; in the cup which she has mixed, mix twice as much for her. To the degree that she glorified herself and lived sensuously, to the same degree give her torment and mourning; for she says in her heart, "I SIT as A QUEEN AND I AM NOT A WIDOW, and will never see mourning." For this reason in one day her plagues will come, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for the Lord God who judges her is strong.

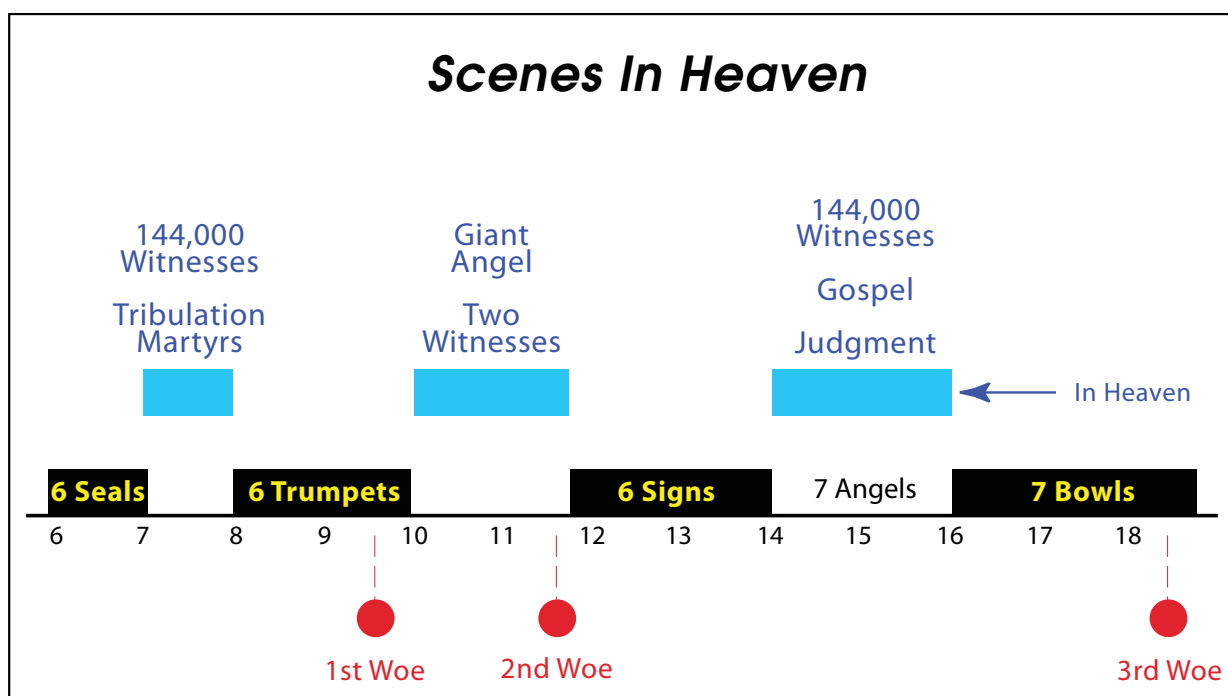
The actual Greek says, "Give back to her . . . and double the double . . ." These are strong words. Double her pain. Double her misery. We should not be surprised because God hates sin, and judgment is coming upon anyone who ignores Him and persecutes His saints - Christians.

On some future day God will not pull out some cosmic scale and weigh your good deeds against your bad deeds to determine if you had more good deeds than bad ones. God has already put His fist in one dish of His scales and none of us have any good deeds that we can put in the other dish which will outweigh His heavy hand. The only way a person can go to heaven is to believe that Jesus is God, that He died for our sins, returned to life, and is now in heaven, and to

over her when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance because of the fear of her torment, saying, "Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour your judgment has come." (NASB) Rev. 18:9-10

This is the beginning of the third woe (see chart below). This third woe is actually repeated three times (v. 9, 16, 19) in order to make a point.

Once again, we read that Babylon is a city - a strong one, a wicked one. Babylon is the origin of evil and symbolizes it exists upon this earth. Babylon may be the Antichrist's capitol city. Why would all of the demons locate at the Euphrates River? Why is Babylon described as the center of



trust Jesus to forgive his/her sins.

The angel also tells us that Babylon considered herself to be a queen. This is important because Isaiah 47:5 refers to Babylon as the queen of kingdoms. The passage is about the city of Babylon. So God will destroy her.

WOE! The two angels have announced God's judgement and warned the saints to flee. Now the angel describes the coming destruction.

And the kings of the earth, who committed acts of immorality and lived sensuously with her, will weep and lament

economic power? Remember that the Antichrist will control the economy of the world with the mark of "666."

MY MONEY! How will the world respond?

And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their cargoes any more - cargoes of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet, and every kind of citron wood and every article of ivory and every article made from very costly wood and bronze and iron and marble, and cinnamon and spice and incense and perfume and frankin-

cense and wine and olive oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep, and cargoes of horses and chariots and slaves and human lives. The fruit you long for has gone from you, and all things that were luxurious and splendid have passed away from you and men will no longer find them. (NASB) Rev. 18:11-14

The world will respond in grief. Money will be their god. That is already true of many non-Christians and some Christians. How many men and women who claim to be Christians will accept the mark of “666” and worship the beast in order to have money for food, housing, clothes, and the good things of this life? Those who accept the mark will only prove that they were never Christians (Rev. 14:9-10). When economic Babylon is destroyed, when the Antichrist’s global economy is destroyed, the world will weep.

WOE, WOE! The economy will be severely damaged. Even today, the stock markets of the world respond negatively to major and minor events in the world. How will they respond to the collapse of the economic center of Babylon?

The merchants of these things, who became rich from her, will stand at a distance because of the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, she who was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls; for in one hour such great wealth has been laid waste!’ And every shipmaster and every passenger and sailor, and as many as make their living by the sea, stood at a distance, and were crying out as they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, “What city is like the great city?” (NASB) Rev. 18:15-18

Every store owner, retail company, and conglomeration will be effected. The world will be in crisis. Woe, Woe! The city will be burning, and the financial center will be destroyed. This is one more reminder that Babylon is a city. The entire world will not burn during the Tribulation, just Babylon.

WOE, WOE, WOE! Next the saints of all the ages, the apostles, and the prophets are encouraged to rejoice because God will be giving Babylon what she deserves.

And they threw dust on their heads and were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying, “Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had ships at sea became rich by her wealth, for in one hour she has been laid waste!” Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced judgment for you against her. (NASB) Rev. 18:19-20

The destruction of the city will be a victory for the saints. Religious persecution will finally end. While the world cries, “Woe, woe,” Christians will be shouting for joy.

THREE REASONS. Now another angel speaks. He announces three reasons for the coming destruction of Babylon.

Then a strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, “So will Babylon, the great city, be thrown down with violence, and will not be found any longer. And the sound of harpists and musicians and flute-players and trumpeters will not be heard in you any longer; and no craftsman of any craft will be found in you any longer; and the sound of a mill will not be heard in you any longer; and the light of a lamp will not shine in you any longer; and the voice of the bridegroom and bride will not be heard in you any longer; for your merchants were the great men of the earth, because all the nations were deceived by your sorcery. And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth.” (NASB) Rev. 18:21-24

The first reason is that the merchants of the world were great men. At first this may not seem like a good reason. But God is saying that the merchants of the world became rich and were arrogant. They took advantage of the world’s population. They exploited the people of the world and became rich. This is a serious message to Christian business men and women.

The angel’s second reason is that the world accepted the Antichrist’s economic system because the people were deceived by demons or spirit forces. The occult deceived the

world and the world followed. The third and final reason is that Babylon has been the origin of the persecution of every saint, prophet, and apostle.

CONCLUSION. Religious Babylon will be destroyed in the middle of the Tribulation, and commercial Babylon will be destroyed at the end of the Tribulation. Every false religion can be traced back to Babylon. Babylon has been responsible for the persecution of God's saints down through history, and God has not forgotten. The message throughout the last three chapters - 16, 17, and 18 - is that Babylon has shed the blood of the saints - Christians.

The world has persecuted Christians. Christians are still persecuted and ridiculed. The world prefers non-Christians. That has always been true, and Christians know it. The world appears to have more fun than Christians. Sex, gluttony, immorality, and violence appear to be enjoyable. In the book of Malachi, some Jews complained that unbelievers had more fun. Serving God did not appear to be satisfying.

You have said, "It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His charge, and that we have walked in mourning before the LORD of hosts? So now we call the arrogant blessed; not only are the doers of wickedness built up but they also test God and escape." Then those who

feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name. They will be Mine," says the LORD of hosts, "on the day that I prepare My own possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him." So you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him. (NASB) Malachi 3:14-18

So God answers by saying that the wicked will not be spared. Non-Christians will experience God's wrath and judgement, but not His saints. Revelation 16:6; 17:6; and 18:24 are a warning. God will not allow His saints to be punished and those who have lived wickedly will not escape.

God is the avenger of His holy ones. He will not allow sinners to go unpunished, unless they trust Jesus to forgive their sins. Therefore, Christians rejoice . . .

Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced judgment for you against her. (NASB) Rev. 18:20