

# Babylon

In Genesis 10 we find a man by the name of Nimrod:

**Genesis 10:8:** "And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth.  
9 He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord.  
10 And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar."

The Bible describes Nimrod as "a mighty one in the earth" and as "a mighty hunter before the Lord". However, there is a great deal more to the story. Nimrod was not like Esau, who was a mighty hunter of wild animals; instead he was a depraved hunter of *men* who fought the Lord and did many terrible things.

The name "Nimrod" comes from the Hebrew word *marad*, which means "rebel". (Some people think that Nimrod might actually be his title instead of his name.) History tells us that Nimrod was an evil tyrant who hated the Lord and who spent his life fighting him. This is how the ancient Jewish historian Josephus described him:

Now it was Nimrod who excited them to such an affront and contempt of God. He was the grandson of Ham, the son of Noah -- a bold man, and of great strength of hand. He persuaded them not to ascribe it to God, as if it were through his means they were happy, but to believe that it was their own courage which procured that happiness. He also gradually changed the government into tyranny -- seeing no other way of turning men from the fear of God, but to bring them into a constant dependence upon his own power. He also said he would be revenged on God, if he should have a mind to drown the world again; for that he would build a tower too high for the waters to be able to reach! and that he would avenge himself on God for destroying their forefathers. (*Ant.* 1: iv: 2)

As you can see, Nimrod was driven by a passionate hatred for God. He was angry at God for destroying the ancient world in the Flood and was determined to do three things: turn men away from God, get his revenge, and build a tower so tall that if God sent another Flood He would not be able to destroy mankind a second time. Nimrod was a rebellious, powerful king who had no fear of God whatsoever.

That in itself is an astonishing thing. The Lord had just shown His awesome power and wrath by *destroying the entire world in the Flood* – a fact that Nimrod knew but did not take to heart. Everyone who rebelled against God had died; the only ones who survived were God's servants. The rebels may have thought that they were stronger than God, but the Lord showed them how utterly powerless they really were. God had clearly demonstrated how *futile* it was to rebel against Him. It is simply not possible to gain victory over God – and yet Nimrod did not care. He was determined to be just like the rebels who lived before the Flood, even though those rebels had fought God *and lost*.

It is an amazing thing that men who knew about the Flood still chose to rebel against God. The

Flood did not strike fear into their hearts; in fact, *it only made them hate God even more*. God had proven that He was stronger than man, but Nimrod did not care. He was determined to fight an all-knowing, all-powerful God. Nimrod saw that men feared God and was determined to draw men away from Him.

This is not the first time that men have chosen to wage war against God, and it would not be the last. Throughout history God has poured out His wrath upon those who hate Him, and yet people respond by deciding to rebel even more. Despite the fact that rebelling against God is hopeless, men *still* refuse to repent and be saved. They cling to their sin and rebellion all the way to the bitter end. Men were like this when history began, and they will still be like this when this Age draws to a close:

**Revelation 16:9:** “And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.”

In Revelation we see the same mindless rebellion that drove Nimrod. During the Tribulation the Lord will pour out terrible judgments upon the Earth. When God clearly demonstrating His wrath and power in a way that no one can deny or ignore, men will *still* refuse to repent. Instead of seeking forgiveness and grace they will instead curse God. Nimrod cursed God for judging the old world in the Flood; these men will curse God for judging the modern world in the Tribulation. It is the same sad story – men deliberately choosing God's wrath over God's mercy and grace. God offers forgiveness, but they will not take it. Their hatred for God is so great that they would rather curse God and die.

Nimrod's desire to rebel against God by building a tower was more than just words. As Genesis 10:10 points out, Nimrod founded Babel – the city made famous for its tower that was supposed to reach Heaven itself:

**Genesis 11:2:** “And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.

3 And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.

4 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.”

The city of Babel was founded as an act of rebellion against God. In fact, some have called it the first organized rebellion against God. Cain had rebelled against God, but he was just one man; there is no evidence that he led a movement. Nimrod was quite different: his goal was nothing less than the corruption of all mankind.

Nimrod founded the city of Babel and was determined to make a name for himself. He was going to build an empire that was dedicated to fighting God. Babel was not simply another city; it was an act of defiance against the Lord Himself.

Although he was determined to thwart God's plan, he did not succeed. His city of Babel did not grow into a worldwide empire that dominated the world and stamped out worship of God. The Lord saw what was going on and decided to stop it:

**Genesis 11:5:** “And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.

6 And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

7 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

8 So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.

9 Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth."

Notice how easy it was for the Lord to put an end to this scheme! Once again, mankind discovered that trying to rebel against God was fruitless. God is simply too great; He cannot be defeated. No city or power or scheme of men can possibly overthrow Him. He is far above our reach and has infinite power and wisdom. Nimrod was trying to thwart God by building a tower too tall for any flood to overcome, but the Lord did not send another flood. Instead God simply confused the languages of man, and that was that. Since men could no longer communicate with one another they were scattered abroad. The great tower at Babel was abandoned and left unfinished.

(As a side-note, notice that the Lord said "let *us* go down" – a reference to the Trinity. There are many times in the Old Testament when God refers to Himself in plural form. The Jews reject the concept of the Trinity, but despite their protests the Trinity is found in both the Old *and* New Testament.)

It is important to realize why God decided to intervene. Verse 6 tells us that "nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do". Mankind was determined to build a kingdom that was in direct opposition to the Most High God. They were going to form a one-world government that would rule over the planet in the name of wickedness. God realized that if He did not stop them *they were going to succeed*, so He intervened. Mankind was planning on creating a tyrannical empire that spanned the entire globe, and which was headed by one wicked person who hated God. They almost succeeded – but God stopped them.

*But they were not stopped forever.* You see, the story of Babel did not end on the day that God confused the language of men. Babel is just another name for Babylon. Nimrod did not just found a city; he started a civilization. Although the tower was abandoned, Babylon itself did not disappear; it continued to grow in power until it became a major civilization that conquered much of the ancient world. The book of Revelation tells us that one day Babylon will actually succeed in taking over the entire world. There *will* be a one-world government headed by an evil man of incredible wickedness – a man known as the antichrist. Nimrod's dream will come to pass and it will endure for a short while, until Jesus Christ returns and destroys it once and for all.

It is important to realize that Babylon is more than just a city or an ancient civilization. There are two sides in this universe: the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world. Babylon is the sum of everything that is in rebellion against God. You might say that Babylon *is* the kingdom of this world. (Some have described history as a tale of two cities: Jerusalem, the city of God, and Babylon, the city of this world.) Babylon may no longer be a world power, but it was never really defeated. Saddam Hussein rebuilt the city of Babylon and it endures to this day. As the years go by its power will increase until it dominates the entire planet – and then God will judge it, just as the book of Revelation describes.

Before getting into that, however, we need to take a quick history lesson. Babylon is mentioned

many times throughout Scripture. For example, during Israel's conquest of Canaan, Achan was led into sin when he saw a *Babylonian* garment:

**Joshua 7:20:** "And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done:

21 When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it."

When this event happened Joshua had just started leading the children of Israel into battle against the Canaanites. They had conquered Jericho and moved on to Ai, a city that was so small and weak that Joshua paid little attention to it. When he sent his army against it, however, his army lost; Ai defeated them and killed 36 Israelites. Joshua inquired of the Lord and found out that God had removed His blessing from them because one of the Israelites had sinned. All of the spoil from Jericho was supposed to go to the Lord, but Achan kept some of it for himself. This sin caused the Lord's favor to be removed from Israel and they began to lose battles; they did not win another battle until Achan was put to death.

It is interesting that Achan was tempted by a *Babylonian* garment. Achan was led astray by the kingdom of this world, and it destroyed him. The Bible strictly warns us to not love this world or the things that it contains:

**1 John 2:15:** "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

Achan loved the things of Babylon more than the things of God, and it cost him his life.

This is far from the only time that Babylon brought grief to Israel. When the evil king Ahaz rebelled against God, the Assyrians came and settled men from *Babylon* into Israel:

**2 Kings 17:24:** And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof."

Later, of course, Babylon would completely conquer Israel and relocate its entire population. Israel rejected God, so God gave them over to the kingdom of this world.

The good King Hezekiah was also ensnared by Babylon. Hezekiah had been gravely ill, but he cried out to God and the Lord healed him. After his recovery a group from *Babylon* came to pay their respects. Hezekiah responded by boasting about his wealth and showing them what a great and powerful king he was:

**2 Kings 20:12:** "At that time Berodachbaladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present unto Hezekiah: for he had heard that Hezekiah had been sick.

13 And Hezekiah hearkened unto them, and shewed them all the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment,

and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not."

You may recall that King Nebuchadnezzar also made the mistake of boasting about his greatness. That did not end well for him, and this did not end well for Hezekiah:

**2 Kings 20:14:** "Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country, even from Babylon.

15 And he said, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All the things that are in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewed them.

16 And Isaiah said unto Hezekiah, Hear the word of the Lord.

17 Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the Lord.

18 And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.

19 Then said Hezekiah unto Isaiah, Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken. And he said, Is it not good, if peace and truth be in my days?"

Do you see how Hezekiah simply did not care? He didn't cry out to God and ask Him to forgive his pride and arrogance. The king did not intercede on behalf of Israel as Moses had done on countless occasions. Hezekiah was so self-centered and hard-hearted that the warning of God's coming judgment meant nothing to him! The fact that Israel would be conquered, his own sons would be enslaved, and many people would be killed made no impression on him at all. In fact, in verse 19 he even calls it "good"! All he cared about was himself. "Things will be good in my time; who cares what will happen to my children? If they're going to be brutally murdered by Babylonians, well, hey, that's not my problem."

Hezekiah had been a good king but he was led astray by the things of this world. He cared about his money, his power, and his glory; he wanted to make sure that things were good for *him*. He had fallen in love with the things of this world and wanted to make sure that the Babylon king respected him. The wrath of God was of no concern to him whatsoever.

Isaiah's dire prophecy came true. Years after Hezekiah died, King Nebuchadnezzar conquered Israel and hauled its men away to Babylon:

**2 Kings 24:24:** "In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant three years: then he turned and rebelled against him."

Judah rebelled against Babylon, but the rebellion did not go well. In the days of Jehoiakim's son, Nebuchadnezzar came and besieged Jerusalem. When the city fell he destroyed the temple, sacked the city, and hauled away its treasure and people to Babylon:

**2 Kings 24:10:** "At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged.

11 And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city, and his servants did besiege it.

12 And Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers: and the king of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign.

13 And he carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the Lord, as the Lord had said.

14 And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths: none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land.

15 And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon, and the king's mother, and the king's wives, and his officers, and the mighty of the land, those carried he into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon.

16 And all the men of might, even seven thousand, and craftsmen and smiths a thousand, all that were strong and apt for war, even them the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon."

God had warned Israel repeatedly that if they rebelled against Him He would hand them over to their enemies, but they did not listen. Moses warned Israel about this before they even set foot in the promised land, and prophet after prophet repeated the warning of Moses. It was all to no avail: Israel refused to serve God, so He handed them over to Babylon. Since Israel loved this world more than it loved God, the Lord handed them over to it.

But Babylon was not left unpunished. God promised to put an end to them:

**Isaiah 13:19:** "And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.

20 It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there."

Interestingly, *this prophecy has never been fulfilled*. When God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah the cities were utterly destroyed in a matter of moments, and all of their inhabitants were suddenly killed. Babylon, however, did not suffer that fate; instead it was gradually abandoned over a period of centuries. In fact, the city still existed in the days of Peter. The apostle mentioned it in one of his letters and said that there was a congregation of believers there:

**I Peter 5:13:** "The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son."

Some have tried to claim that this was a code-word for Rome, but that is not the case. There is no evidence that Peter ever visited Rome; when Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans he greeted a very long list of people who were there (Romans 16), but Peter was not mentioned. It is much more likely that Babylon simply meant Babylon – especially since the city was still inhabited at that time.

Besides this, Isaiah 13:20 says that after Babylon is judged it will never be inhabited again, and that is something else that has never happened. In 1983 Saddam Hussein rebuilt the city of Babylon

directly on top of its old site. In May of 2009 the site was reopened for tourism, and today it is a tourist attraction. The ancient city lives again.

The reason this happened is because the city's final judgment is still in the future. Isaiah's prophecy will come true during the Tribulation. Toward the end of that seven-year period the city of Babylon will be destroyed:

**Revelation 18:1:** “And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.

2 And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.

3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.”

By the time this happens the city of Babylon will be far more than a mere tourist attraction. All nations and kings will have become entangled with her, and she will have given many merchants great wealth. Babylon will be in a position of great political and economic power. Yet, despite its power, it will be destroyed in a single day and a single hour – just as Isaiah foretold:

**Revelation 18:8:** “Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.

9 And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning,

10 Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.”

Notice how Babylon is called a “great city” and a “mighty city”. For more than a thousand years there was no city of Babylon; there were only ruins. Now the city of Babylon lives again, just as the Bible foretold. As the Tribulation draws near we can expect Babylon to grow tremendously and amass great wealth and power. It will once again become a mighty city that rules over the entire world – just as it did in ancient times. In fact, it will become the greatest city on the planet:

**Revelation 18:17:** “For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off,

18 And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city!”

In the cosmic struggle between the city of God and the city of this world, the city of this world will be utterly destroyed. God will avenge His people:

**Revelation 18:20:** “Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.”

21 And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.

22 And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee;

23 And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.

24 And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth."

Long ago Nimrod founded Babylon in an attempt to defeat God and set himself up as king. Near the end of the Tribulation the Lord will utterly destroy the city that he created and put an end to the rebellion that he started. As Revelation says:

**Revelation 11:15:** "And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."

Amen!