

Babylon

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

Genesis 10:8-10: “And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord. 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 “a mighty hunter before the Lord”. However, Nimrod wasn't 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 Nimrod might have been 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)

Nimrod was driven by a passionate hatred for God. He was angry with God for destroying the ancient world in the Flood and he 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 wouldn't be able to destroy mankind a second time. Nimrod was a rebellious and powerful king who had no fear of God.

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!* Nimrod knew this and yet he didn't take it to heart, even though everyone who rebelled against God had just died. The only people who survived the Flood were Noah (a servant of God) and his family. The wicked people of Noah's day may have thought they were stronger than God, but the Lord showed them how powerless they really were. God had clearly demonstrated how *futile* it was to rebel against Him. It's simply not possible to gain victory over God – and yet Nimrod didn't care. He decided to be just like the rebels who lived before the Flood, even though those people fought against God *and died*.

It's amazing that people who knew all about the Flood still chose to rebel against God anyway. The Flood didn't strike fear into their hearts; instead it seems that *it only made them hate God even more*. God had proven that He was stronger than mankind but Nimrod didn't care. He was determined to fight an all-knowing, all-powerful God. Nimrod saw that some people feared

God and was determined to lure them away from Him.

This isn't the first time that people have chosen to wage war against God, and it wouldn't be the last. Throughout history God has poured out His wrath upon those who hate Him, and yet some people responded to these displays of divine power by rebelling even more. Despite the fact that rebelling against God is hopeless, many people refuse to repent and be saved. They cling to their sin all the way to the bitter end.

People were like this when history began, and the book of Revelation tells us that they'll still be like this in the future as well:

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.”

Here we see the same mindless rebellion that drove Nimrod. During the seven-year tribulation period the Lord will pour out His terrible judgments upon the Earth, to punish the world for its sins. When God demonstrates His wrath and power in a way that no one can deny or ignore, people will *still* refuse to repent! Instead of seeking God's forgiveness and grace they'll curse Him. Nimrod cursed God for judging the old world in the Flood, and these people will curse God for judging the world in the tribulation. It's the same sad story of people deliberately choosing the wrath of God instead of the grace and mercy of God. The Lord offers forgiveness but they won't take it. Their hatred for God is so great that they'd rather curse God and die.

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

Genesis 11:2-4: “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. 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. 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 people have called it the first organized rebellion against God. Cain had rebelled against God, but he was just one man. There's no evidence that he led a movement. Nimrod was 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 decided to build an empire that was dedicated to fighting against God. Babel wasn't simply another city; it was an act of defiance against the Lord Himself.

Although he was determined to thwart God's plan, he didn't succeed. His city of Babel didn't grow into a worldwide empire that ended the worship of God. The Lord saw what was going on and He decided to stop it:

Genesis 11:5-9: “And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. 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. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. 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 fight against God was fruitless. God is simply too great; He can't 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 defeat God by building a tower that was too tall for any flood to overcome, but the Lord didn't send another flood. Instead He stopped the project by confusing the languages of mankind. Since people could no longer communicate with one another they were scattered abroad, which was what God wanted. The great tower at Babel was abandoned and left unfinished.

It's important to understand 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 said that if He didn't 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 a wicked person who hated God. They almost succeeded – but God stopped them.

But they weren't stopped forever. The story of Babel didn't end on the day that God confused the languages. Babel is another name for Babylon. Nimrod didn't just found a city; he also started a civilization. Although the tower was abandoned, Babylon itself didn't disappear. It continued growing 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 that's 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 to this world and destroys it once and for all.

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

Before getting into that, however, we need to take a quick look at history. 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 7:20-21: “And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: 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 which was so small and weak that Joshua paid little attention to it. When he sent his army against it, however, they 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 didn't win another battle until Achan was put to death.

It's 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 commands 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 isn't 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 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 when he cried out to God the Lord healed him. After his recovery a group from *Babylon* came to pay their respects. Hezekiah responded by boasting about his

wealth and proudly showing them what a great and powerful king he was:

2 Kings 20:12-13: “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. 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.”

King Nebuchadnezzar also once made the mistake of boasting about his greatness. That didn't end well for him, and this didn't end well for Hezekiah:

2 Kings 20:14-19: “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. 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. And Isaiah said unto Hezekiah, Hear the word of the Lord. 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. 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. 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 didn't care that he had sinned? He didn't cry out to God and ask Him to forgive his pride and arrogance. The king also didn't intercede on behalf of Israel as Moses had done on several occasions. Hezekiah was so self-centered and hard-hearted that God's warning of 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. He was so proud that he didn't care what happened to his own children – or to his nation, for that matter.

Hezekiah had been a good king but he was led astray by the things of this world. At the end of his life it seems that the only thing he cared about were 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 relocated its people 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 tried to rebel against Babylon but it didn't 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 24:10-16: “At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city, and his servants did besiege it. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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 then He would hand them over to their enemies, but they didn't listen. Moses warned Israel about this before they even set foot in the promised land, and one prophet after another 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 gave them over to it.

But Babylon wasn't left unpunished. God promised to one day put an end to them:

Isaiah 13:19-20: “And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. 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.”

This prophecy has never been fulfilled. When God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, those cities were utterly destroyed in a matter of moments and all of their inhabitants were suddenly killed. Babylon, however, didn't suffer that fate. Instead it was gradually abandoned over a period of centuries. In fact, the city still existed in the days of the apostle Peter! He mentioned it in one of his letters and said 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's not the case. There's no evidence that Peter ever visited Rome before he was martyred. When Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans he greeted a long list of people who were in Rome (Romans 16), but Peter's name wasn't mentioned. It's much more likely that Babylon simply meant Babylon – especially since that city was still inhabited at that time.

Isaiah 13:20 says that after Babylon is judged it will never

be inhabited again. That has also not taken place. In 1983 Saddam Hussein rebuilt part of the city of Babylon directly on top of its old site. In May of 2009 the site was reopened for visitors, and today it's a tourist attraction. The ancient city lives again.

The reason these things are happening is because Babylon's ultimate judgment is still in the future. Isaiah's prophecy will come true during the seven-year tribulation period. Toward the end of that time the city of Babylon will be destroyed once and for all:

Revelation 18:1-3: “And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. 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. 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.”

When this takes place the city of Babylon will be far more than a tourist attraction. In those days all of the nations and kings of the world 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 18:8-10: “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.

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, 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; instead there were only ruins. In our day 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 18:17-18: "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, 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 18:20-24: "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her. 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. 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; 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. 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!