

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

A Monthly Newsletter of B'rit Hadashah Ministries

John
5:39



Volume 1, Number 5

May 2003

IRAQ: BABYLON REVISITED

Now that war is raging in Iraq, the world's attention is riveted and focused on this ancient and important region where the Bible says human civilization began (Genesis 2:14). The current war America is waging against Iraq is preparing for a major event in Bible prophecy — the rebuilding of Babylon.

Iraq is quite interesting and prophetically significant for the simple fact that the ancient Empire and city of Babylon was located there.

Babylon was the first city to mount a rebellion against God under its first recorded ruler, Nimrod, when his subjects built the tower of Babel (Genesis 10-11). From that point on, Babylon in the Bible was to epitomize man's wickedness and rebellion before God.

Babylon is the second most mentioned city in Scripture (found 280 times) with Jerusalem being the first mentioned (811 times). The Bible seems to predict that the ancient city Babylon will be rebuilt in the last days to become the commercial and economic center of the world during the reign of the Anti-Christ in the future seven year Tribulation period (see Revelation 17-18). This prophecy is now beginning to come to pass.

For the last ten years, Saddam Hussein has been quietly rebuilding ancient Babylon, 60 miles south of Baghdad, to the cost of several billion dollars! This act in itself seems to be fulfilling End Time prophecy in the Scriptures that predict the ancient city along the Euphrates River will rise again to be a major city of international prominence and prosperity for the world in the last days. The prophet Zechariah foretold that the Rebuilt Babylon of the end times will be the commercial center of the economic world (see Zechariah

5:5-11 where Zechariah makes this astonishing prediction in 519 B.C., twenty years after Babylon was captured and conquered by the Persians in 539 B.C.!)

The Bible predicts this Rebuilt Babylon will be destroyed and suddenly overthrown in one hour by fire and brimstone at the conclusion of the Great Tribulation period, right before the return of Jesus Christ (see Isaiah 13-14; Jeremiah



Todd Baker

50-51). Ancient Babylon did not fall this way. Daniel chapter 5 and such ancient historians as Herodotus and archaeological artifacts (i.e., Cyrus's Cylinder) of that time recount the way Babylon was conquered. They all tell of the fact that King Darius, the Persian ruler, captured the capital city of the Babylonian Empire in the stealth of night without bloodshed or a massive battle being fought (Daniel 5:13-31). Therefore the prophecies of Babylon made in Isaiah 13-14, Jeremiah 50-51, Zechariah 5:5-11, and Revelation 18 must speak of a future rebuilt Babylon since the destruction foretold in these passages are stunningly different from the manner in which ancient Babylon fell in the sixth century B.C. A closer look at these prophetic passages about rebuilt Babylon will conspicuously



make this quite clear.

The first factor indicative of this is the time factor for when rebuilt Babylon is destroyed. The prophecies of Isaiah 13-14 and Jeremiah 50-51 foretell that Babylon's destruction will occur during "the Day of the Lord." The term "the Day of the Lord" is a frequent theme in Bible prophecy and the context will determine which of the three meanings is meant.

The first meaning can describe God's personal intervention in the affairs of Israel or the Gentile nations around her (Joel 1:15; Ezekiel 30:3). The second meaning refers to a historical event with Israel or the Gentile nations whereby such an event is emblematic of

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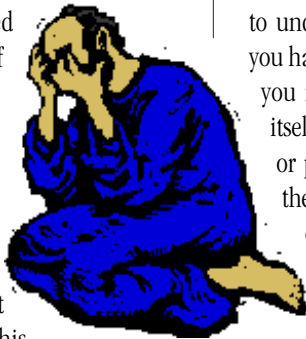
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ROMANS 7:

Pre-Christian, Post-Christian, or Both? Part 5

Paul's cry, "O wretched man that I am" in Romans 7:24, is simply a specific expression and example of that part of the creation "groaning and travailling" to be released from the bondage of corruption under which the created order has been subject to since the fall (Romans 8:22-23). Therefore it is quite reasonable that Paul expresses this heartfelt longing "in the body of this death" still fighting the power of sin while awaiting the completion of our redemption in Christ (verse 25).



Christians are a pilgrim people in transition...

The interpretation, in this writer's view, that best fits the biblical context, human experience, and personal history would be to take Romans 7:14-25 as describing the ongoing struggle with the sin nature in the believer's present life so indicated by the repetition of the present tense. Verses 7-13 described Paul's former life as a Jew under the Law of Moses so indicated by the recurring past tense. The most plausible way to harmonize the past tense use in Romans 7-13 and the present tense use in 14-25 is to view the Law's impotency to save a person under the old era of the Mosaic dispensation. And the second unit of Romans 7 further reveals its ongoing inability to bring the power of doing right in the present era of grace. Hence, the

only answer and escape from this moral dilemma and inward civil war is the acceptance of Christ's saving death on the cross and the provision of His Spirit given to us. Thus both the natural man and the Christian cannot escape the condemnation of the Law within and of themselves apart from salvation in Christ with the power of the indwelling Spirit of God.

The view that takes the whole of Romans 7 as a pre-conversion Paul cannot, it would appear, adequately "explain away" the past tense/present tense chronological scheme of 7:7-25. If we are to follow the grammatical historical method of interpretation which says to understand the biblical text interpretively, you have to understand it grammatically, then you must let the passage plainly speak for itself. Those who take 7:7-25 as either past or present experience ignore or gloss over the literal presence and grammatical force of the past tense/present tense chronological sequence of Romans 7:7-25 and infer something else not stated explicitly in the text. Romans 7-13, therefore, describes the condemned man under the death penalty of the Law being unable to perfectly keep its requirements from a pre-conversion state of the past.

Verses 14-25, following, describe the present time tension and struggle in a believer's heart, mind, and soul between the implanted new nature that is Christ centered and the old corrupt sin nature orientated around self and inclined away from God toward evil. This inner warfare between the flesh and the Spirit is a negative, but normative, sign of spiritual regeneration in the life of every authentic Christian. For, if otherwise, there would be no struggle present if spiritual rebirth in Christ had not occurred. The person would naturally follow the corrupt dictates of the fallen self without struggle or moral pang of conviction, generally speaking (see Eph. 4: 17-20; Col. 2:13; 1 Pet. 4:3-4).

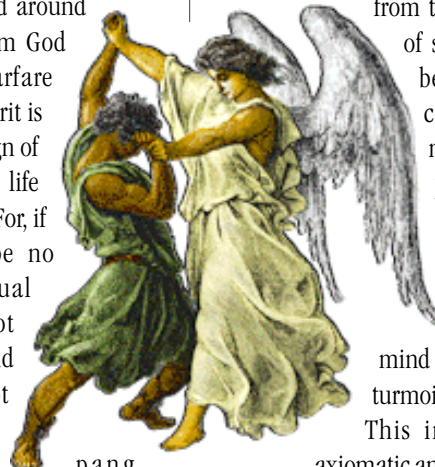
Romans 7:14-25 portrays the "now (now justified in Christ), not yet (will be glorified)" aspect of salvation. Martin Luther, commenting on these verses, gives the classic

and most accurate description of the justified sinner with the Latin phrase "Simul iustus et peccator" (at the same time a justified person and a sinner). The believing sinner is legally declared righteous before God with the imputed righteousness of Christ while at the same time contending with the power of sin in his mortal body. The tension and struggle between the flesh and the spirit is the normal Christian experience of the present time as exemplified by Paul's own struggle as a Christian in Romans 7:14-25.

... there would be no struggle present if spiritual rebirth in Christ had not occurred.

Christians are a pilgrim people in transition traveling from this corrupt fallen world order and sphere to the eschatological completion in heavenly glory. Those who trust Christ alone for salvation have been redeemed from the penalty of sin and will yet be saved from the presence and power of sin. Our salvation has begun and will yet be complete. While in the midst of this transitional journey from justified faith to glorified faith, our regenerate selves continue to struggle against a sin oriented mind and body with the inner turmoil associated with them. This intense experience is axiomatic and universally true of the common condition of true believers waiting for the glorification and perfection of their bodies in the future when Christ comes for His Church.

"Even so come Lord Jesus," should be our constant cry to this end. ✠



Matthew 13 and the Prophetic Parables About the Present Age

Part 4 - the Parable of the Sower and the Seed

MATTHEW 13:7, 22

"And some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns sprung up and choked them." (Matt. 13:7)

In verse 22, we have the Lord's explanation of the thorny ground hearer: "He also that received seed among the thorns is he that hears the Word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the Word, and he becomes unfruitful." The third out of the four hearers in the parable of the Sower and the seed is the thorny ground hearer. Jesus teaches here that though the thorny ground hearer receives the Gospel for a season, it fails to have lasting fruitful impact simply because worldly pursuits for riches and domestic concerns prevent the seed from taking root and bearing fruit later. The thorny ground hearer exemplifies the person of a divided heart who cannot fully believe in the Gospel because of the four thorns evident in his life, two of which are mentioned in Matthew 13:22 (1) "The cares of this world;" (2) "The deceitfulness of riches." The other two thorns of temptation are mentioned in relationship to the same parable found in Mark 4:9 (3) "The desires of this world" and (4) "The desire for other things." These four deadly thorns will eventually challenge the heart of every listener to the Gospel. God allows these thorns to spring up in the life of those who profess faith in the Gospel to test his quality and commitment to the Word of God in response to temptations that prompt one to go after other things - pursuing other things rather than God.

The four thorns no doubt represent the allure of wealth and worldly possessions that the enemy of our souls will use to cause the listener of the Gospel to pursue these things at the expense of not being saved by this Gospel. Thorns are counterproductive hindrances in the soil that naturally prevent a seed from sprouting and bearing fruit. The thorny composition of the soil allows it to splinter and tear any seed planted into it further nullifying the seed's germinating capabilities. The thorny ground hearer accurately exemplifies the individual with a divided allegiance between the Gospel of Christ and the pleasures and riches of the present world order. This explains why the double minded person is unable to take the Gospel literally to heart and put his entire trust in the all sufficiency of Christ due to the undermining and thorny influences evident in his life. To find lasting fulfillment in this insufficient world is the chief occupation that keeps the unbeliever, like the thorny ground hearer, from fully committing himself to Christ where complete satisfaction of soul is really found. Jesus metaphorically labels these ephemeral and unsatisfactory worldly substitutes for the Gospel as "thorns" that pierce and divide the human heart from fully receiving the Word of God that yields the fruit of eternal life to those who believe with the whole heart.

Taken generally together as one, this is the operating principle human civilization has lived by since the fall of



Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. The four thorny preoccupations of the present world system can definitely be categorized under the three headings of temptation listed in 1 John 2:16-"the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." When an unsaved worldling is exposed to the hearing of the Gospel the four thorns of worldliness will suddenly arise in his heart in a diversionary attempt to draw him away from giving his whole self to the Lord Jesus Christ. The symbol of thorns Jesus used to depict the cares and various desires of the earthly life is an apt symbol for them. A thorn is simply defined as a woody protuberant outgrowth from a stem having a sharp and spiny tip that causes pain and discomfort when accidentally touched. Thorns have the natural ability to pierce and protrude anything that gets caught in their tangled clusters. Hence, they must be carefully and systematically removed from the soil first before a planting of the crop begins, or else, the thorns will "choke" out the efficient outgrowth of the seed.

The application to both sinner and professing Christian is clear. Every effort must be diligently used to thoroughly remove from the soil of the heart the thorns of worldly ambition and fleshly desires for wealth, prestige, and power which war against the soul. Such things are intent on losing and crowding out the Word of God from remaining intact in the heart. The spiritual exercise of removal can only be done first by repentance. Unless the fallow sinful heart is effectively tilled

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and uprooted with the plough of repentance, the implanted Word cannot be substantially rooted. This divine Word seed must be implanted in an honest repentant heart of faith cleared of unholy obstructions before it can realistically produce the fruits of salvation. "For thus says the Lord...break up your fallow ground and sow not among thorns" (Jeremiah. 4:3). Unfortunately, Christ informs us there will be plenty of those who foolishly receive the Word with thorns in their hearts. They failed to sow the seeds of repentance and faith in properly prepared ground. The Word does not have first place in their lives because their hearts were steadfastly concentrated on selfishly advancing in this world at the damnable expense of neglecting the eternal welfare of their souls. A further look at the four thorns securely lodged within the thorny ground heart amplifies this sad truth. In the next issue our analysis of the thorny ground hearer in the parable of the Sower and the seed will continue with a closer examination of the four types of thorns that prevent the thorny ground hearer from truly receiving the Gospel for salvation. †

BABYLON... Continued from page 1

the future Day of the Lord (Joel 2:1-11). The third meaning is descriptive of the future seven-year period in which God shall cataclysmically judge the entire world for their unbelief that will culminate in the return of the Lord Jesus Christ (Revelation 6: 17; 14:14-20). From the context of these prophecies, “the Day of the Lord”, as in most cases in Scripture, refers to the future judgment God will pour out on the whole world immediately preceding the return of Christ to earth. This period comprises Daniel’s 70th week - the last seven years of human history (Daniel 9:24-27). Revelation chapters 6 through 19 give a detailed forecast of that future time with chapters 17-18 exclusively dealing with the divine judgment on rebuilt Babylon occurring at the end of the Tribulation. Babylon’s ultimate destruction will occur at that time.

The “burden against Babylon” prophecy in Isaiah 13:9 still awaits future fulfillment on “The Day of the Lord.” In that passage we are told at such a cataclysmic time “the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light. The sun will be darkened in its going forth, and the moon will not cause its light to shine.” No such stellar or cosmic events transpired or accompanied the fall of ancient Babylon in Belshazzar’s day. In Matthew

those days, the sun will be darkened and the moon not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven... Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and the power of the heavens will be shaken... and they will see the Son of Man coming on the



clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” Thus the Babylon of Isaiah 13 must be a future city that is rebuilt where the old one once stood and will be destroyed at the Second Coming of Christ at the same time when the luminary bodies of heaven are darkened.

The Babylon of Isaiah 13 is a future city yet to experience these judgments since no such events were ever witnessed or recorded in conjunction with Babylon’s past history. The city will be rebuilt, as it is even now by the Iraqi government, before the terrible Day of the Lord comes. This fact must indicate we are near the return of Christ. Furthermore, Babylon’s final destruction will happen at the same time Israel is fully regathered and restored to the Promised Land and receives the salvation blessings of the New Covenant when Christ returns to save them. The Lord says this very thing in Jeremiah 50:4-5: “In those days and in that time (the time when God finally destroys Babylon), says the Lord, the children of Israel shall come...and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces toward it saying, come let us join ourselves to the Lord with an eternal covenant that will not be forgotten.” At the

present time, the nation of Israel is in unbelief and they, as a nation, have yet to accept the Messiah Jesus. Nor have they been fully regathered to the land of Israel. When Rebuilt Babylon is destroyed, the return of Christ and the conversion of Israel to Him will then happen.

A second indicator that the city of Babylon must be rebuilt is the building factor. The prophetic Scriptures state in Jeremiah 51:26 that after the overthrow of Babylon, not a single stone or brick will ever be used again from her ruins. This was certainly not true of ancient Babylon. For centuries after its decline, the stones of Babylon were regularly carried away to build other buildings and cities. Seleucia, Ctesiphon, Kufah, and Hillah are some of the cities built from the stones and bricks of ancient Babylon. Indeed, Baghdad, just sixty miles north of Babylon, used some of the same bricks that came from the ancient city!

Babylon is the second most mentioned city in Scripture...

Babylon continued to exist as an inhabited city well after the time of Isaiah and Jeremiah. The Apostle Peter went to Babylon to preach the Gospel to a large Jewish community living there. He wrote his first epistle from Babylon around 63-64 A.D. (1 Pet. 5:13). Babylon was one of the major cities of the Jewish Diaspora up until the 5th century A.D. The Babylonian Talmud, which is a major component of rabbinic teaching in Judaism, was composed there at that time. Obviously, then, Babylon’s complete destruction could not have happened yet due to these things and still awaits a future fulfillment.

In next month’s newsletter, we will look at other reasons why Babylon, the literal city, must be rebuilt. †

When Rebuilt Babylon is destroyed, the return of Christ and the conversion of Israel to Him will then happen.

24:29-30 Christ foretold that these same awesome events will happen during the latter part of the Tribulation period to immediately precede His return to earth! “But immediately after the tribulation of

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About the Author

Todd Baker is president of B'rit Hadashah Ministries — a Gospel outreach ministry to the Jewish people of Israel. He is also a full-time chaplain at Medical City Hospital. Since called to the ministry in 1984 his ministering experience includes Bible teaching, jail and prison chaplaincy, counseling, evangelism, and church ministry. Todd is also a theological consultant, writer, and tour leader in Israel for Zola Levitt Ministries. He has led several Gospel outreaches to

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Search the Scriptures

This is a monthly newsletter of B'rit Hadashah (*New Covenant*) Ministries. Special thanks go to several people who helped to make this newsletter possible:

Zola and Mark Levitt Nancy Baker
Greg Hartwig Pat and Claudia Rutherford
Don and Elisa Retzlaff Sean Robinson

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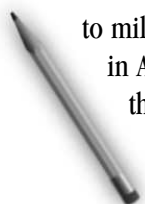
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*Photo and rendering of Babylon courtesy of
Neville V. Stevens
(www.zionministry.com/babylon.html)

OOPS!!!

In our March issue, we ran an article titled "Who is Allah?". It has been pointed out to us that we had an error in that text. The sentence read: "When Muhammad rose to military power and his creation of the Muslim religion was gaining ground in Arabia, around 360 A.D., he conquered Mecca and purged the Kabah of the 359 or so Arab gods except for one, Allah the moon god, whom he and his tribe exclusively worshipped." The year 360 A.D. should have been 630 A.D. We humbly apologize for this unintentional error.





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B'rit Hadashah (New Covenant) Ministries is a non-denominational evangelistic and teaching outreach devoted to proclaiming the Gospel to the Jewish people (Romans 1:16) with particular focus on Gospel outreaches to Israel. This being our vision, it is appropriate that we share with you glimpses into the work we are doing. These excerpts will be a continuing feature of this newsletter, keeping you in touch with our work in progress.

This excerpt was taken from an article written by Todd Baker which appeared originally in the May 2002 issue of the [Levitt Letter](#). Todd was joined by Kevin Parker on this mission trip.

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"...we ventured into Tiberias during the evening and decided to eat at one of the restaurants, eventually striking up a conversation with the owner's son. He was

a Jewish man of twenty-three years and had lived in New York City. He told us he worked a block and a half away from the World Trade Center and was a personal eyewitness of what happened on 9-11. He was still suffering from post traumatic stress. He knew he had to return home - to Israel. He revealed to us later that he had also been taking narcotics and felt tormented and controlled by an evil spirit! We explained to him that there was a battle going on for his soul between God and Satan, and that only the power of Messiah could set him free. Kevin and I then demonstrated to him out of the Jewish Scriptures from the Hebrew text that Jesus was indeed the prophesied Messiah of Israel who came to set humanity free from

the captivity of sin (John 8:34-36). After looking at a few of the prophecies for himself, he exclaimed, "Y'shua really is the Messiah!"

The young man became teary-eyed and prayed with us to accept Y'shua into his heart as Lord, Savior and Messiah. Afterwards his face glowed with the peace, joy and relief that only the Prince of Peace can give. He is now a new creation, a completed Jew born anew and delivered from the power of darkness, translated into the kingdom of God's beloved Son (Colossians 1:13). What a thrill it is to harvest souls for our Lord!" ✠

