

Babylon the Great

Tuesday 11th September 2001 will be a day that is etched on the minds of many people; a day like that of the assassination of John F. Kennedy. Many of my generation remember what they were doing at the time they heard the news of the death of John F. Kennedy. Many of you will remember what you were doing at the time you first heard of this.

I will remember looking across the desk at my wife, who had an ashen look on her face, as she talked on the phone with Wilf Hey, who was telling her what had happened on the news. We went home and watched it on television.

A few of you may remember what you were doing when you heard about D-Day. Tuesday this past week, was a day such as that, a day in which history took a change. Events like those of the 11th September heighten our expectation of the return of Jesus Christ, as the Lord of lords, and King of kings.

It is fascinating if one looks back over the years to see how many climactic events occur around the time of the Feast of Trumpets, and the Feast of Tabernacles. If you could take a gazetteer, and thumb back through the years, and look at what happens around about the Feast of Trumpets, and the Feast of Tabernacles time, you may be surprised.

What happened this year? A major event that has been described as being a point in history, a change of history. In a few days we will be keep the Feast of Trumpets, celebrating the triumphal return of Jesus Christ to take over the governments of this world, to rectify the problems that exist, to address the causes of the problems that exist in this world. Events such as those of Tuesday, heighten that expectation. When is that to occur? What is to happen before the event?

Of course, the question of "when?" has been asked for almost 2,000 years. The disciples asked Jesus Christ that very question, did they not? *"When will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming?"* (Matthew 24 and Mark 13).

If one looks at Matthew 24, Jesus Christ answered that in terms of the things that would happen to the individuals, the way in which it will impact an individual, a member of God's Church; the deception that will occur; the troubles that will come about.

Matthew 24: 8 "All these are the beginning of sorrows.

9 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.

10 "And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.

People will be betrayed. There will be deception.

12 "And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

13 "But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

Jesus Christ, in many ways, is talking to the INDIVIDUAL about what is happening, about the impact, the way in which the events leading up to the end, will impact us as individuals; the things that we have to be alert to, ourselves; trials that we will face, because of this world.

Daniel, on the other hand, portrays a different view of that same time. Once again, inspired by God, equally valid, Daniel portrays a view of the end time at a different level. It is Daniel's view that I would like to focus on today, so that we can put some of these things in their perspective.

Daniel portrays events in terms of the national and international level, rather than the personal level. Daniel is talking about the systems that control the nations, and the individuals, that lead to the troubles that Jesus Christ said would affect the individual, that we have to endure against; that we have to be on our guard against.

In Daniel chapter 2, we find the recording of the first of the dreams and visions. This is in the 2nd year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, so this in fact, predates Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar had had a dream early on in his reign, and his spirit was so troubled that his sleep left him. He gave the challenge to the magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers, the Chaldeans, to tell him his dreams. They came and stood before the king and said *"We cannot tell you your dreams.*

We cannot get inside your head. You will have to tell us what the dream was, so that we can interpret it for you. That is our job."

What we have here, is a power struggle being undertaken. Nebuchadnezzar was a Chaldean himself. The Chaldeans had taken control of Babylon. Babylon previously had been controlled by the Assyrians, and now was controlled by the Chaldeans. The Babylonian Empire, under Nebuchadnezzar and his father, Nabopolassar, had absorbed the Assyrian Empire. It is an interesting factor of history.

If one goes back through history, picking it up from about 2,000 B.C.E. you will find that everybody in Mesopotamia wanted to be in control of Babylon. There was something about Babylon that attracted people to it. So you can start off early on with the Amorites, and then the Arcadians or the Kassites, other tribes that were in that area, and finally the Assyrians, controlling Babylon.

Then the Chaldeans moved in. The Chaldeans became the ruling family, the ruling class, and the priestly class of Babylon. They controlled it. Their names were used somewhat interchangeably. One has to be careful when one goes through Scripture, to realise when reference is made to the Chaldeans, in fact it is referring to Babylon as well.

Notice the following interesting point:

Daniel 9: 1 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans--

It was not just the Chaldeans he took over. It was Babylon. These terms are used somewhat interchangeably from time to time.

Ezra 5: 12 "But because our fathers provoked the God of heaven to wrath, He gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this temple and carried the people away to Babylon.

The Chaldeans were a very influential family in terms of the state of Babylon, the Babylonian Empire.

In Daniel chapter 2, we have a king who was a Chaldean, having a political struggle, a political intrigue, with the priests, magicians and so forth, within the Empire. This aspect for the struggle for the rulership of Babylon continued.

It was not true just of the Babylonian Empire. If we look into the history of the Medo-Persian Empire, we find that there was a king known as Pseudo Smerdis; an unusual name. He was a king promoted by the Chaldeans to take Babylon back over from the Medo-Persians. It was a sort of internal revolt within the Medo-Persian Empire.

As a result of that, the Persians destroyed Babylon. They razed it to the ground. The Chaldeans were forced westward, and eventually became instrumental in bringing about yet another empire: the Greek Empire under Alexander the Great.

Where was it that Alexander the Great died? In Babylon! Apparently he wanted Babylon to be the headquarters of his kingdom. (We are getting ahead of ourselves a little.)

Nebuchadnezzar was doing battle with the Chaldeans within his empire. He was trying to keep them under control, so he gave them a challenge: *"Get inside my head, and tell me what I dreamed"*. It was a bit difficult!

The end result was that he had the ultimate power, and as a result of them being unable to tell and interpret the dream, he was going to have them killed. By the time that edict had been given out, Daniel, and his compatriots had arrived on the scene. Daniel had to be brought up to speed:

***Daniel 2: 14 Then with counsel and wisdom Daniel answered Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon;
15 he answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, "Why is the decree from the king so urgent?" Then Arioch made the decision known to Daniel.
16 So Daniel went in and asked the king to give him time, that he might tell the king the interpretation.
19 Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. So Daniel blessed the God of heaven.***

Scripture talks about Daniel's blessing of God. It talks about Daniel's relationship with God. We tend to read through

the book of Daniel eagerly for prophecy, but there are some incredible GEMS locked away in the book of Daniel that talk about the right relationship of a person with their God.

Here Daniel prays and acknowledges God. He acknowledges the Source of all wisdom, as being God. He was able to go before the king.

26 The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, "Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen, and its interpretation?"

What did Daniel say? *"Yes I can!"*

No. He did not ...

27 Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, "The secret which the king has demanded, the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king.

It is not within the realm of human power to reveal this.

28 "But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days ...

This is something that relates to a future time.

***28 ... Your dream, and the visions of your head upon your bed, were these:
29 "As for you, O king, thoughts came to your mind while on your bed, about what would come to pass after this; and He who reveals secrets has made known to you what will be.***

"This is from a God that you, Nebuchadnezzar, do not serve!"

30 "But as for me, this secret has not been revealed to me because I have more wisdom than anyone living, but for our sakes who make known the interpretation to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your heart.

So Daniel described a human image:

***32 "This image's head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze,
33 "its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.
34 "You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces.
35 "Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.***

It was a remarkable vision. Daniel went on to tell Nebuchadnezzar the interpretation of the vision; that he, Nebuchadnezzar, was the head of gold ...

***37 "You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory;
38 "and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all - you are this head of gold.***

This is a remarkable description of the Babylonian Empire. It was gold! One can go to the British Museum, and look at what the Babylonian Empire replaced. The British Museum has lots of artifacts from the Assyrian Empires. The inner decorations of the kings palaces of at least 4 of the kings of Assyria, are there, in part for us to observe. What are they? They are carved limestone, intricately carved with scenes of events of the lives of kings, with wars, with battles, and events of the nation.

The British Museum does not have very much on Babylon. You really need to go to Berlin to see the remains of

Babylon, but the British Museum has got enough on Babylon to provide you with a contrast. It has nothing from a king's palace, so to speak, but it has representations of some of the gates of the city, where you enter the city. The gates were glazed blue brick.

In that world, where did colouration come from? It came from natural plants. It did not come out of a chemical factory. Indigo came from a mollusc and was highly sought after. It was normally used in the priestly cult casts. It was a sign of great wealth. Trade of the colouration that provided the indigo, was a sought after trade.

We find in the New Testament, for instance (Acts chapter 16), the case of Lydia, who was a seller of purple. What was so significant about being a seller of purple? The purple dye that was used for the cloth, came from the same mollusc, the same slug, or sea-shell. It came in very small quantities. It had to be harvested, and the end result was that it was very expensive.

Here was a city, into which anybody who came into the city, was welcomed with probably one of the most expensive commodities that existed at that period of time, on a par, you might say, with gold, or precious stones. The contrast between the Assyrian Empire, with its simply carved limestone panels that decorated the kings' palace, and the entrance to the city of Babylon is a stark contrast.

So it is the head of gold, of great wealth. Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar that he was the head of gold. What is important about a head? Without a head, you do not have a living being. It is essential. People may amputate legs. They may remove organs from a human body. Obviously some organs are very essential. People sometimes replicate those with external organs, so the person's own organs have help, relief. But if you take away the head, there's nothing, because the head controls the rest of the body.

Here was Nebuchadnezzar being described as the head. The head, the seat of the mind, controlled the rest of the image. Everything flowed from that. The other parts of the body were somewhat less in value. They end up being that of iron mixed with miry clay: quite a contrast! It is probably an appropriate description for a society that places value on ripped denim, and sneakers as being appropriate dress!

So Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold. The head contains the mind, the brain, which influences and controls the rest of the body. That system was to be broken by the return of Jesus Christ: the absolute certainty that system will be broken. It will be destroyed, destroyed to such a point that it will be removed in totality.

We had the disaster on Tuesday 11th September. We heard of Church members walking across the bridge in three inches of soot from the decaying building as it collapsed. Daniel says this system will be blown away, and no trace will be found of it: quite an incredible end result of the system.

Nebuchadnezzar thanked Daniel:

Daniel 2: 47 The king answered Daniel, and said, "Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret."

Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were then elevated over the affairs of Babylon. Daniel sat in the gate of the king. He was an advisor to the king.

You might think that Nebuchadnezzar would have learned a lesson, but did he? Not really, because the next thing we find (in chapter 3) is that he is erecting yet another idol!

God appears to Nebuchadnezzar, in delivering the three men from that fiery furnace. Nebuchadnezzar looks into that fiery furnace and he sees what is in there:

***Daniel 3: 24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king."
25 "Look!" he answered, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."***

You would think that something would start to get through to Nebuchadnezzar! You would think this man would start to wake up and say *"I have got to find out more about this God of Daniel's. I have got to find out more about this God of the Jews"* (however God was described at the time). Did that happen? No.

Nebuchadnezzar had to be driven from the kingdom as a beast into the field for seven years, until he came to understand the most important things. At the end of seven years of depravity he said:

Daniel 4: 34 And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom is from generation to generation.

35 All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven And among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand Or say to Him, "What have You done?"

He came to have real appreciation of who this God was!

36 At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my honor and splendor returned to me. My counselors and nobles resorted to me, I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me.

37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down.

We do not have time to look at that today, but there is a very loaded statement included in what Nebuchadnezzar said. He came to understand what God is really looking for. He is looking for truth and for justice. Those who walk in pride, God will abase.

Is that not the lesson that all humanity has to learn? Nebuchadnezzar, as the head of gold, was put through some experiences by God, that humanity, at this point in time, does not experience: to come to understand the greatness of God.

How great is the challenge that we, as humans, face in defeating the spirit of this world? How great is it? It is not something we can do by ourselves. It is only with God's Spirit that it can be done. Obviously we have two or three highlights recorded from Nebuchadnezzar's life. Not all is recorded.

What other ways did he see the greatness of God through the advice and insight that Daniel, as one of his wise men, his counsellors, the man who interpreted his dreams, gave him? Nebuchadnezzar constantly would have seen the wisdom of God reflecting in the conduct of Daniel and his fellows.

He had to go through experiences to come to set an example of what each human being has to go through, to become part of the Kingdom of God: to come to see God for what He is.

We do not go through the same trials and the same events, yet we have got to come to see God for who and what He really is. All humanity is going to go through that. Humanity in general walks in a vain show, as the Psalmist said. God does not enter into people's thoughts.

We heard many comments this week about what should be done in terms of retribution, or punishment for the events that took place.

How often do people say "What would God have us do in this situation? How would God have us respond, as a people?"

We go to church. We have great events in national buildings, but does God really enter into the thoughts of mankind? It took a lot for Nebuchadnezzar to come to the point where God entered into his thinking. It was a fundamental change.

We hear nothing more about Nebuchadnezzar. We will have to wait until the Resurrection to find out the rest of the story in relation to Nebuchadnezzar. He disappears from the scene.

In fact, the book of Daniel then refers to a couple of kings down the line: Nabonidus and his son and regent, Belshazzar. It does not tell us what happens in the intervening years, in terms of the Babylonian kingdom.

Let us ask ourselves something about the situation Daniel found himself part of. What world ruling empire was Daniel a part of? He lived in, and under, the head of gold. He was a captive in Babylon. He was a vizier in the government of Babylon. He was part of the government of gold at that point in time!

What about Ezra and Nehemiah? A few decades later, they were part of the Medo-Persian Empire. They were part of that chest of silver. What about Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, prophets of God? Where did they fit? They were part of that empire as well.

What empire was Jesus Christ born into? In what empire was the Church founded? The Roman Empire: the thighs of iron.

It never really changed. It has carried on. Almost the entirety of God's Work of the past 2,000 years had been conducted within that system. The gospel has been preached within that system.

Obviously the empire has had quiescent periods. It has had resurrections. The Bible talks of those resurrections, but the system, the mindset that controls those systems has continued throughout that period of time, and it continues down to this day.

We, as people, so often look for the emergence of the ten toes, but we overlook the fact that the system that will control the ten toes is ALREADY HERE WITH US, and we live amongst it! We cannot escape from it on a day by day basis.

Daniel chapters 7 and 8 deal with more visions that show other aspects of this vision of chapter 2. Most of you probably have your "Beast charts" from the Correspondence Course of many years ago. You can put these together. You may even have the chart in the back of your Bible. We can go through the chapters of the books of Daniel and Revelation and we can place these empires and these visions together, seeing how the visions interrelate.

Chapters 7 and 8 of the book of Daniel, talk of the inner conflicts within the Empire. The succession from the head of gold, to the chest of silver, to the loins and thighs of brass, to the legs of iron has not been peaceful. There have been traumatic times in terms of this body. Yet something has been transmitted. People look at it in terms of the world, and think it is just another empire. Yet there is something inherent to that empire, that came from the head. It was OF the head.

Those successive kingdoms have come to power through war, but they are controlled by the same mindset. As I mentioned, the Chaldeans ruled Babylon. After the Medo-Persians got fed up with them, they went west into what became part of the Grecian Empire. They helped Alexander the Great become great.

The Roman Empire eventually took over from the Greek Empire. There was an incredible aspect about the Roman Empire. It simply absorbed all that had existed before it. In terms of history, it was still a Hellenistic world. It may have been a Roman Empire, but it was a Roman Empire based upon Greek philosophy, thought and ideals. Nothing has changed.

Our world is STILL a world based upon Greek philosophy, thought and ideals. Our whole educational system is built upon it. Our government system is built upon it.

There are many others thoughts we could look at here in terms of these aspects.

***Daniel 10: 1 In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a message was revealed to Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar. The message was true, but the appointed time was long; and he understood the message, and had understanding of the vision.
2 In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks.***

It then talks about his encounter with an angel who had been sent to provide a message to him. It talks about the way in which the affairs of this world are controlled by an element that most people give no thought to, whatsoever: the fact that there is a spirit world, which also impacts the systems, the kingdoms and the empires of this world.

13 "But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days ...

This was not a human ruler from Persia who did not want him to understand these things. This was a spirit being, a demon.

***13 ... and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia (plural).
20 Then he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? And now I must return to fight with the prince of Persia; and when I have gone forth, indeed the prince of Greece will come.***

... spirit beings that control these successive empires.

21 "But I will tell you what is noted in the Scripture of Truth. (No one upholds me against these, except Michael your prince.

There should not be a break between chapters 10 and 11 ...

Daniel 11: 1 "Also in the first year of Darius the Mede, I, even I, stood up to confirm and strengthen him.)

So we have an angel taking him back to a previous period of time.

2 "And now I will tell you the truth: Behold, three more kings will arise in Persia, and the fourth shall be far richer than them all; by his strength, through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of Greece.

3 "Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will.

There was a transition period taking place. The kings of Persia were going to stir up the Greeks, and the Greeks were then going to conquer the Persians. A mighty king (Alexander) would arise.

4 "And when he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken up and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not among his posterity nor according to his dominion with which he ruled; for his kingdom shall be uprooted, even for others besides these.

The next verse then starts talking about the king of the South, then we move on into the king of the North; two of those four kingdoms that came out of the division of the Grecian Empire, following the death of Alexander the Great.

The king of the South was based in Egypt. The king of the North was the Seleucid Empire, which eventually overran and absorbed two of the other northern kingdoms that came out of the demise of Alexander the Great.

Let us ask ourselves a question though, that we often overlook. What was the mindset of both the king of the South, and the king of the North? Was it not still Babylonian?

The kings of the South INTRODUCED Hellenism into Egypt. That gave rise to many great undertakings in Egypt, many of the great personages of Egypt. The British Museum has an exhibition at the present time of Cleopatra. She was part of the king of the South. She tried to do business with what became the king of the North.

So in verse 15 we find that the hegemony of the king of the South starts to wane, and the king of the North, the Seleucids, have control. They bring about the pollution of the Temple Jesus Christ refers to in Matthew chapter 24. Antiochus Epiphanes brought about the pollution of the Temple in offering swine's flesh, and the introduction of pagan idols in the temple.

We find, if we come down to verse 30, somebody else coming on the scene:

Daniel 11: 30 "For ships from Cyprus (King James Version "Shittim") shall come against him ...

The Romans appear on the scene. The Romans take over. They take over the king of the North. They take over all of that that remains. So what happens is ...

40 "At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack him; and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter the countries, overwhelm them, and pass through.

41 "He shall also enter the Glorious Land, and many countries shall be overthrown; but these shall escape from his hand: Edom, Moab, and the prominent people of Ammon.

... basically, Jordan today.

42 "He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape.

43 "He shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; also the Libyans and Ethiopians shall follow at his heels.

He will take over a major part of the Middle East. They will go into the "Glorious Land", which is clearly a reference to Israel. They will go down into Israel, and then from there into Egypt, north Africa, and into Africa. These will be overtaken by the king of the North.

44 "But news from the east and the north shall trouble him; therefore he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many.

He gets pushed from another angle. The king of the South on one hand brings him into that region. Now on the other hand, news from the east and the north will trouble him.

45 "And he shall plant the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and no one will help him.

End of story?

No! There should not be a chapter break here either. The prophecy carries on. Chapter 12 does not start a new thought at all. Chapter 11 has been referring to a time of trouble. Verse 1 of the next chapter says "At that time". At what time? At the time of which we have been reading in Daniel 11:40-45!

Daniel 12: 1 "At that time Michael shall stand up, The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people ...

Michael, an archangel is going to stand up for the people of God!

1 ... And there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation, Even to that time...

This is talking about a time of trouble that is in such magnitude that there never has been anything like it!

1 ... And at that time your people shall be delivered, Every one who is found written in the book.

As Jesus Christ said to the disciples, these are the beginning of sorrows! He went on, a few verses later in Matthew chapter 24, and said:

Matthew 24: 22 "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.

They WILL be shortened! That is what Daniel was talking about as well; a time of trouble of a magnitude we could never conceive of.

This past week we've talked about 5,000 people being killed in one day. Daniel was talking of troubles of a magnitude logarithmically greater than that. Many events are going to take place before Jesus Christ intervenes.

It talks about that by default, in terms of Daniel 12:2:

Daniel 12: 2 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt.

It talks about the resurrection, in an overall picture.

So there is a time of trouble. The king of the North absorbs the king of the South, takes over parts of the Middle East, and then goes on a rampage with the people from the north and the east.

Daniel does not tell all the story here. We can go to other places like Zechariah chapter 14, and the book of Joel. We can see the way in which people will seek to fight against Christ, when He returns.

Why is He returning? To save humanity alive! So that humanity is not destroyed in total.

Let us back up a moment, and bear in mind some very important points. At the time of Genesis chapter 11, the flood has been and gone and the earth is being repopulated:

**Genesis 11: 1 Now the whole earth had one language and one speech.
 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 Then they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar.
 4 And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."
 5 But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built.
 6 And the LORD said, "Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them.
 7 "Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech."
 8 So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city.
 9 Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.**

It was called Babel, because the word was related to the confusing of the language. It is exactly the same word that elsewhere in the Old Testament is translated as "Babylon". There is no difference. It is the same place. The translators of the rest of the Old Testament chose to use the Greek term of "Babylon" instead of the Hebrew term "Babel".

There is the origin of it. It is interesting that there is a time of trouble coming such as has not been since there was a nation upon the face of the earth.

Where does it take us back to? It takes us back to this attempt to create a nation-state immediately after the flood!

It does not stop there either. Babylon, or Babel, was on the plain of Shinar, situated between the Euphrates, and the Tigris rivers, north of what we call Basra today, the Persian Gulf.

Chapter 11 carries on. It gives us the genealogy of Shem and his descendants.

**26 Now Terah lived seventy years, and begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran.
 27 This is the genealogy of Terah: Terah begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Haran begot Lot.
 28 And Haran died before his father Terah in his native land, in Ur of the Chaldeans.**

Here we find the Chaldeans again, right back at the time of Babel.

**29 Then Abram and Nahor took wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran the father of Milcah and the father of Iscah.
 30 But Sarai was barren; she had no child.
 31 And Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife, and they went out with them from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran and dwelt there.**

They came from Ur, down the Persian Gulf, and they went north-westwards to Haran, the borders of present day Turkey and Syria.

**32 So the days of Terah were two hundred and five years, and Terah died in Haran.
 Genesis 12: 1 Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you.
 2 I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing.
 3 I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."**

Abraham left. He came into Canaan.

In chapter 15, God spoke to Abraham and entered into a covenant with him. He said:

Genesis 15: 7 Then He said to him, "I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it."

It is interesting how symbolic this is. To inherit the Kingdom of God, to rule with Jesus Christ as King of kings, and Lord of lords, something has to be done. You have to come out from among the Chaldeans. There is a rejection of a way of life that is extant within the world today, that we have to commit ourselves to.

Like Abraham, we have to come out of Ur of the Chaldeans, or whatever part of the Chaldean world in which we live.

What does that mean? Do we have to pack our bags tonight and move somewhere else? Not at all!

Paul addressed this in terms of the Corinthians. Where did the Corinthians live? In Corinth, which was right in the middle of the Roman Empire. It was also part of that Babylonish system, the Chaldean system. Did Paul tell them to pack their bags, and move out at that point?

I am not saying that may not be a necessity, and that God may require that at some point in time. But Paul talked to the Corinthians, about the way in which they had to separate themselves from the world:

2 Corinthians 6: 11 O Corinthians! We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open.

We have given you everything. We have given of ourselves to you.

12 You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections.

What is it that restricts me? Is it my own affections? Where are my affections placed? Are they placed on the things of this world, or are they placed on the things of God? What is it that I seek UPPERMOST in my life?

That is a question that each and every one of us has to ask ourselves. We have to ask, and we have to answer that ourselves.

13 Now in return for the same (I speak as to children), you also be open.

14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness (with anti-nomianism) And what communion has light with darkness?

15 And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?

Paul is putting up a contrast.

16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people."

God wants us to be His people! He wants us to be His people, just as He wanted Abraham to be His person!

17 Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you."

18 "I will be a Father to you ...

If we go back to Genesis chapters 11 and 12, what was the purpose of building the Tower of Babel? It was not called "Babel" to begin with. The purpose was to "make a name for themselves". That was its purpose!

What did God tell Abraham? He said "I will make a name for you". So immediately between chapters 11 and 12, we see a contrast. We see two systems which have contrary purposes.

New York is going to make a name for itself. Rudolph Giuliani said the other day "We will rebuild it. It will be stronger and greater than before. We'll put our finger in their face. We will show them who is greatest around here".

"New York. New York." It has got a name to live up to, which it is going to thrust before the rest of the world.

And they will do it! That is the essence of New York. They are making a name for themselves. But God said *"I will make a name for you"*.

Through Paul, He says:

18 "I will be a Father to you ...

What does a father do? He names his children. He puts his name upon his children. I have the names I have because of my father. God said:

18 "I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty."

What was the system of Belial that the Corinthians had come out of? The Babylonish system.

How do WE come out? How do we separate ourselves from it?

Jesus Christ addresses those personal aspects of our responsibility. How do we endure to the end? How do we confront this?

Matthew 24: 36 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.

Life will be going on. It will be like the days of Noah. People will be marrying, giving in marriage, drinking, eating and so forth, not knowing that the end is upon them ...

39 "and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

It will be something that people are unprepared for.

***40 "Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left.
41 "Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left.
42 "Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.
43 "But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into.
44 "Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.***

How do we be ready? How do we watch for that period of time?

***45 "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season?
46 "Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing.
47 "Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods.
48 "But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,'
49 "and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards,
50 "the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of,
51 "and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.***

Chapter 25 goes on and outlines in greater detail the difference between the faithful and wise servant on the one hand, and the evil and foolish servant on the other hand. So often we find ourselves in a trap because we follow the chapter breaks. Chapter 25 carries right from chapter 24, and shows us what sort of people we are to be; how we come out of the system; the changes that are necessary in our lives. God provides that for us.

We live in a world which is dramatically changing. We had an event this week which is unparalleled in American history. It will be a date that will be burned in people's minds and remembered until the end of history.

But in many ways, it is just "the beginning of sorrows". What is going to develop before the return of Jesus Christ will make 11th September pale into insignificance.

11th September is undoubtedly a step towards that. We do not know what sort of flow on will come from that. Certainly it has set a new benchmark for terrorists. They want to be noted in the world. *"Now you have to surpass what was done on that particular date"*.

What I have said today, in no way undermines the development of the rise of the ten toes, and what they do to the nations of Israel. That will come about. The important thing to realise is that you and I are ALREADY part of a Babylonish system, that will in fact control, influence and direct those ten toes in due course.

The end result of that, will be the return of Jesus Christ. Humanity is going to have to learn a hard lesson, just as Nebuchadnezzar had to learn a hard lesson.

You and I have the privilege of learning it now, ahead of time, so that we can serve with Jesus Christ; so that we can serve the rest of humanity, in bringing about those changes. As Nebuchadnezzar said, God was a God of truth, and a God of justice (Daniel 4:37).

The faithful servant, described in Matthew chapters 24 and 25, is a servant who understands those principles of God.

*...Peter Nathan
15 Sept 01*

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