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## The Babylon Occlusion, Here and Now

By Wilfred Hahn

The topic of Babylon in prophetic Scripture is one of the most actively debated in Christian circles. The most contested portion, of course, has to do with questions of future fulfillment. Here we see a virtual myriad of interpretations ranging from the increasingly popular position that modern-day America is endtime Babylon, on through to strict literal interpretations that emphasize an actual physical rebuilding of Babylon (situated in present-day Iraq) as the final totality of fulfillment. There seem to be tens of interpretations in between, a number of them quite bizarre.



**T**he word "Babylon" appears 294 times in the Bible (KJV). Numerous prophetic statements have been made about this entity in its various forms, many of them already fulfilled. A number of these prophecies are mirrored in the treatments of Tyre in Scripture, another city that prophecy often speaks of (at least 23 times.) Babylon is obviously a very important topic. It is unfortunate that so much confusion exists related to its future fulfillments. Just what is the Babylon of future fulfillment?

We have commented in the past on what it is not ... i.e. America. While America may

be a major contributor to the development of the characteristics of a modern-day Babylonian system, it alone is certainly not endtime Babylon (please see MCM, August, September, October 2005) however, it is reasonably sure that Babylon takes forms and manifestation at a number of different levels in prophecy. This view does not deny in any way that all Bible prophecy ultimately culminates in literal fulfillment.

However, the same challenge on the topic of Babylon may arise as faced the Jews on the question of identifying their Messiah. The mistake made was to assume that only one appearance of the Messiah was to be ex-



pected. Though Scripture said that Christ will appear as “mighty [...] upon on the throne of David” (Isaiah 9:6-7) and as the one “they have pierced” (Zechariah 12:10) they looked for these signs in one event. The Jews therefore nationally rejected Jesus Christ as the Messiah, one of the reasons being that He did not first come as the long-awaited king.

Today, a similar confusion exists with respect to the expected return of Christ. He will appear again at a time that people think not — a time of “eating and drinking, marrying” (Matthew 24:38), as was the case just prior to the Great Flood during Noah’s time. Yet, He also returns at a time marked by great tribulation (Mark 13:24-26). It is the same type of problem. These prophecies cannot be reconciled in one single event; therefore, there must be at least two.

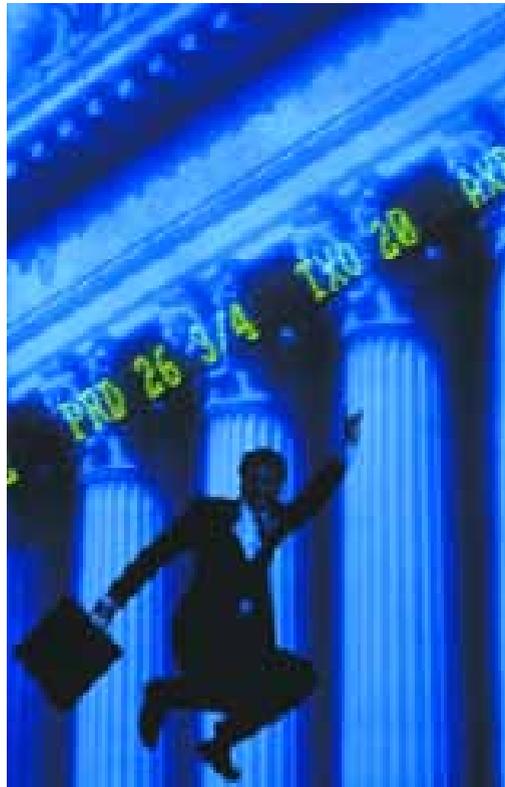
The same concept of multiple occurrences (or manifestations) could apply to endtime Babylon. All of its literal prophetic characteristics may not take the form of one single manifestation or physical entity. Let’s keep possibility open as we continue our examination.

However, rather than try to conclusively answer the broader question of Babylon’s endtime identity, we want to focus upon just one set of its characteristics — its global reach and its commercialism. But before delving into them, we need to be sure that we have the correct mindset.

### The Western Occlusion

Olden time Bible readers could see that one day when the systemic form of Babylon would stretch its tentacles across the whole earth, that it would involve the intertwining of commerce and religion. Imbedded in it would be enormous power.

Consider these comments excerpted from W.B. Newton’s writings, penned in 1843.<sup>1</sup> (Thank you to the Prophezine reader who made me aware of this book.)



What features can be more clearly marked as indicative of the Babylonish period than commercial greatness, the supremacy of wealth and the mixing of iron and miry clay in the government of the kingdom?

“When we consider this, we cannot but confess that such a spectacle has never yet been presented in the history of human things. It is the marvelous exhibition of a power yet to be. It is all the more marvelous, because it will be the power not of an individual, but of a system, which, though long prepared in secret (see Zechariah 5:5), will suddenly burst in development upon the eyes of men. “When I saw the woman,” says the apostle, “I wondered with a great wonder” (Revelation 17:6).

What features can be more clearly marked as indicative of the Babylonish period than commercial greatness, the supremacy of wealth and the mixing of iron and miry clay in the government of the kingdom?

The supremacy of commercial wealth is an unusual feature in the history of men. I do not mean that there have never been cities like Tyre, Corinth, Carthage, or Venice, that have flourished commercially: but their influence has been little felt beyond their own im-

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mediate sphere, nor have they by their institutions ever imparted a character to the general system of the nations. Commerce was not supreme either in the early native monarchy of Nimrod, nor in the Chaldean, Persian, Grecian, or Roman empires. None of these empires were distinctively commercial.

They all would have emblazoned the sword rather than the ephah on their banners.

In times past, democrats were wont to assist despots, and despots to aid despots. But now men have found a new and more efficacious centre of union in their commercial interests, and they feel themselves mutually dependent upon each other for the preservation as well as the increase of their riches. When the ruin of one involves the danger of all, men in such circumstances become wonderfully careful of each other's interests. This is the kind of dependence into which nations are being brought, one on the other.

That peace may be promoted in this way is beyond doubt. The sword is not mentioned in all the detail of the greatness of Babylon. Instead “merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyme wood, and vessels of ivory, and vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, and cinnamon, and odours,

and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and bodies and souls of men” (18: 12-13) are its stabilisers.”

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global, commercial “system,” though it indeed may eventually find its center in a specific city. He clearly sees the picture of the ephah shown in Zechariah 5:5-11 as being related to endtime commercial Babylon. (In previous articles, we reviewed this vision, but more importantly, its companion vision — Zechariah's sixth — which shows a flying scroll. The interpretation of this vision is crucial in understanding the Babylon Occlusion.)

Neither the system, nor the yet future city, existed in his day. He says, “that this system is not as yet developed, so that we must not expect at present to be able fully and accurately to trace its details [...]”

Yet, reading Scripture, he could see that the day would arrive when the enjoining of mammon would almost be universally accepted as the sure “road to peace” and the basis for world union and power. Rather than Christ guiding “our feet in a straight line into the way of peace” (Luke 1:79) the common interests of money and prosperity are seen as the glue and catalyst for world peace and unity. However, the exact opposite would result — tyranny and an insurrection against God.

Christ at His first coming was not at all about peace. Rather He said, “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the



earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword” (Matthew 10:34). Truth and the kingdom of God (in the hearts of believers during the dispensation) would bring turmoil into the world. Only Christ Himself, in the role of Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), brings peace in the Millennium.

### Christian Blindness

Sadly, much of today’s Church has swallowed the lie that enduring peace among men can only be found in the bowels of mammon — particularly those branches of Christendom that endorse Replacement Theology (the Church being substituted for Israel) and aspects of Dominion Theology (which is dominating political circles today), but not exclusively so. Even much of North America’s pre-Millennial, evangelical community suffers from this Babylonian Occlusion. We think our riches and power in the world (also evangelical political power) is a useful tool for God to disseminate faith in the world. We spout and shout judgment, the right way, and sanctified destiny, replete and comfortable from the bowels of the most materialistic societies in the world.

What exactly is this Occlusion? It is an optical one for the most part. Living inside the systemic Babylon now suffusing the world and living in its present hot spots (certainly including North America) — the time of Babylon the Great, the great city, the global village of commercial religion — they (we) cannot see. The sliver has become so large it has become a log: “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?” (Matthew 7:3)

They (we) cannot see clearly for several reasons. The most crucial one is that our point of reference has become the world, not the Bible. The world enjoins us, shouting that the “future is friendly;” that peace is attainable through the eradication of poverty (meaning equality and wealth for all) that the

objective of a prosperous heaven on earth is found in religious and commercial Babylon.

A second reason is that the same smugness and confidence found in ancient Babylon is evident today. “Sit in silence, go into darkness, Daughter of the Babylonians; [...] You said, ‘I will continue forever- the eternal queen!’ But you did not consider these things or reflect on what might happen. “Now then, listen, you wanton creature, lounging in your security and saying to yourself, ‘I am, and there is none besides me. I will never be a widow or suffer the loss of children.’ Both of these will overtake you in a moment, on a single day” (Isaiah 47:5, 7-9). While this prophecy did have a near-term fulfillment, it also speaks of a yet future event.

Isaiah’s words line up with Revelation 18:7, which describes the “great city” of Babylon: “Give her as much torture and grief as the glory and luxury she gave herself. In her heart she boasts, ‘I sit as queen; I am not a widow, and I will never mourn.’” Given these characteristics of pride and complacency, they (we) are blind to the reality of true riches and the world’s extreme vulnerability to the judgment and wrath of God.

A third reason we may not be able to see the greater endtime Babylon today is because we may have misconceived notions. Some prophecy commentators today hold the view that Babylon the Great of Revelation 18 is only a city — in other words, a physical place. Indeed, there may be a city considered to be its center. But, in fact, endtime Babylon the Great is never called a city in the Bible. To be technically correct, the “economic” Babylon of Revelation 18 is always called the “great city” — in fact, six times in the book of Revelation. It is never called a “city,” only a “great city.” This is significant.

In the Greek, the word combination “great city” is found only 10 times in the New Testament — 6 times for economic Babylon, 3 times for religious Babylon and once for the New Jerusalem. Each of its uses leaves open

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the interpretation that that “great city” means something bigger than just a common city — perhaps a system, organization, or a unique structure. In former times, a city was the closest thing there was to an organized economic entity. In fact, ancient Greek had no word for “system” or “organization” as we understand the terms today. We are hard pressed to find words or word combinations anywhere in the Bible that explicitly refer to the idea of a system. We do find word combinations in the Old Testament that refer to globalism. But not a specific word that means “system.”

As such, Babylon the Great is not necessarily only a physical city. Rather, it seems more plausible that it is also a system, in this case the economic trade and financial system dominated by the present or future high-income countries of the world, if not the entire world.

The great global commercial system or “city” exists today. A similar concept is still imbedded in the English language today ... the global village. This global economic village has erupted upon the world in very short order.

### The End of Babylon

We live during a great, great time of deception and corruption. Many can't see it. A great trap is being laid for the people of the world.

Many Christians are in that number, particularly those who live in the prosperous West. We have also been duped into believing that, in the end, it is mammon

that will bring peace to the world, not Christ. Globalization finds a common ground upon gain and complacency.

There is one thing that all prophecy scholars must agree upon: Babylon — whatever its type or identity — clearly comes to an end. In one hour it falls and is judged. The final form of Babylon does not carry through into the Millennium. The great commercial colossus and its imbedded religious idolatries are ended. But what does that really mean?

The answer will be a shock to most readers. Virtually all of us are inclined to view Bible prophecy through the lens of what is seen — the conditions of today, the same mistake the Jews made 2,000 years ago. We are living in this brief space of time marking the great ascendancy of man's global systems. It is the unprecedented time of the great industrial age of rising wealth and prosperity (though largely an illusion for the majority of the world's citizens); the Age of Oil; and the Age of Global Capital. It is a time of great arrogance, smugness and confidence. Mankind thinks that its progress will endure forever and that these great



global phenomena of the last 200 years are permanent.

The Age of Oil, the Age of Global Capital, and Globalism will pass and be replaced. Technology will have its pedestal moved as well. It all seems so unthinkable to us at this late great point of history today. And, therein we find a major occlusion. It is a form of blindness and confidence apart from God. And, that is precisely why it is so easy for us as Christians to say, "I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing" (Revelation 3:17) as does the church of Laodicea. The same blindness applied to Sodom and Gomorrah just prior to its judgment — "[...] pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness" (Ezekiel 16:49-50).

In fact, Bible prophecy about the Millennium does confirm significant changes for the world and mankind.

#### Thoughts to Ponder

The great Babylon Occlusion: Can you see it?

I believe we live during the day that Zechariah and the Revelator saw ... at least with respect to the systemic Babylonian conditions. And, this system has culminated in deep idolatry and is not unassociated with religion, even modern-day Christianity. Said John Wesley, more than two centuries ago, "I fear, wherever riches have increased, the essence of religion has decreased in the same proportion. Therefore, I do not see how it is possible ... for any revival of true religion to continue long. For religion, almost necessarily, produce both industry and frugality, and these cannot but produce riches. But as riches increase, so will pride, anger, and love of the world in all its branches."<sup>3</sup>

We need to regain our sight to this fact. For, "How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own

eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye" (Matthew 7:4-5).

Without a doubt, the massive commercial idolatry that the world would witness in the last days is evil. Zechariah tells us that this system "is the iniquity of the people throughout the land" (Zechariah 5:6). In short, "This is wickedness" (verse 8). "This is the iniquity [...]" (Ezekiel 16:49).

Now is the time to repent of the rose colored glasses through which we peer at our condition today. Christ specifically calls out to us, even as He stands at the door of His imminent return. "Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:19-20).

Is there a price? We can take the example from Moses. "He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible" (Hebrews 11:25-27). 

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#### ENDNOTES

- 1 B.H. Newton, *Thoughts on the Apocalypse*, 1843.  
Source: The Coming Day, Volume 2, *The Babylonian System Revelation 17 & 18*. Accessed: December 23, 2006 <http://www.searchlight-missions.org/Periodicals/ComingDayIssues.cfm>.
- 2 Advertising slogan of Telus Inc., a communications company.
- 3 John Wesley, quoted in Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Harper-Collins Academic, 1992), 175.