

TEXT: Revelation 16:12-21

12 The sixth {angel} poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east.

13 And I saw {coming} out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs;

14 for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.

15 ("Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.")

16 And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon.

17 Then the seventh {angel} poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, "It is done."

18 And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake {was it, and} so mighty.

19 The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. *Babylon the great was remembered before God*,
, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath.

20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

21 And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe (Revelation 16:12-21, NASB-U).

INTRODUCTION:

Have you ever watched a movie for the second or third time and knew exactly what was going to happen next, and perhaps mouthed the words a character was going to say next before he said them?

This is the way I feel when I watch or read news reports coming out of the Middle East these days. I have read the story before. You see, John foresaw these events nearly 2000 years ago and recorded them in great detail. I have been reading his account for more than 50 years and now am thrilled as I watch his vision unfold each evening on the world news broadcasts.

Verse 15 of our Scripture passage tells us why John recorded these events in such detail, ("**Be hold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his**

garments, lest he walk about naked and men see his shame.")

Earlier this week a diplomat from a Muslim nation of the Middle East spoke to journalists and declared, "If the United States attacks Iraq it will unleash hell on earth." My immediate thought was, "You know, this one time you are exactly right."

In this passage the scene is set in Mesopotamia, indicated by the great river Euphrates in verse 12 and in Israel in the Valley of Armageddon in verse 16.

This story is about the culmination of a great struggle between two kingdoms; the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan.

These two kingdoms are symbolized by two cities; the city of Jerusalem for God's Kingdom, and the city of Babylon for Satan's kingdom.

This morning we want to look at the history, the current development, and the final outcome of this great struggle.

I. THE HISTORY OF THE STRUGGLE

A. Cain the builder of cities

1. After he murdered his brother, Cain was summoned by God and cursed:

12 "When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth" (Genesis 4:12, NASB-U).

2. Cain does two things to make his curse bearable: he knows his wife sexually, who gives him a son; and he builds a city:

16 Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

17 Cain had relations with his wife and she conceived, and gave birth to Enoch; and he built a city, and called the name of the city Enoch, after the name of his son (Genesis 4:16-17, NASB-U).

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3. Enoch means *initiation or a new beginning*. It is a beginning without God.
 - a. A settled place-no longer a vagabond or wanderer.
 - b. A secure place-he is responsible for himself and his life.
 - c. He reduces God to the superfluous.
4. The word city in Hebrew is '*iyr*' or '*iyr re'em*'-a guarded place or a refuge.
5. All the builders of cities in the early chapters of Genesis were sons of Cain.

B. Nimrod the builder of "The Great City"

1. Nimrod was the son of Ham, the impure son of Noah on whom God placed a curse Gen. 10:6-8.
2. He was called the mighty hunter (*warrior-tzayidh*).
3. He built 10 great cities in the Plains of Shinar (war, rage and fury).
4. The center of his kingdom is Babel, Babylon-derived from *Bab El*, meaning the Gate of God.
5. The city builders launch an attack against heaven:
 - 1 Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words.**
 - 2 It came about as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.**
 - 3 They said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and burn {them} thoroughly." And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar.**
 - 4 They said, "Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top {will reach} into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth" (Genesis 11:1-4, NASB-U).**
6. The city builders committed the sins of Lucifer:
 - a. Let us exalt ourselves to the heavens.
 - b. Let us make a name for ourselves.
7. They rejected the curse of Cain.

C. Babylon comes to represent opposition to God's Kingdom.

1. The confusion of tongues reimposes the Curse of Cain.
2. The kings from Shinar take Lot captive-Gen. 14.
 - a. Abraham rescues Lot.
 - b. Melchizedek—king of Jerusalem (City of Peace)—blesses Abraham.
3. The sin of Achan was to take the mantle from Shinar:

21 when I saw among the spoil a beautiful mantle from Shinar and two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold fifty shekels in weight, then I coveted them and took them; and behold, they are concealed in the earth inside my tent with the silver underneath it" (Joshua 7:21, NASB-U).

4. God's Chosen People were deported to Shinar:

1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.

2 The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god (Daniel 1: 1-2, NASB-U).

5. The Woman Called Iniquity is to have her throne in Babylon:

5 Then the angel who was speaking with me went out and said to me, "Lift up now your eyes and see what this is going forth."

6 I said, "What is it?" And he said, "This is the ephah going forth." Again he said, "This is their appearance in all the land

7 (and behold, a lead cover was lifted up); and this is a woman sitting inside the ephah."

8 Then he said, "This is Wickedness!" And he threw her down into the middle of the ephah and cast the lead weight on its opening.

9 Then I lifted up my eyes and looked, and there two women were coming out with the wind in their wings; and they had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heavens.

10 I said to the angel who was speaking with me, "Where are they taking the ephah?"

11 Then he said to me, "To build a temple for her in the land of Shinar; and when it is prepared, she will be set there on her own pedestal" (Zechariah 5: 5-11, NASB-U).

6. Babylon-"The great city" is to lead the way in the great struggle of the "last days":

1 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters,

2 with whom the kings of the earth committed {acts of} immorality, and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality."

3 And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns.

4 The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality,

5 and on her forehead a name {was} written, a mystery, "BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."

6 And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. When I saw her, I wondered greatly (Revelation 17:1-6, NASB-U).

18 "The woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth" (Revelation 17:18, NASB-U).

1 After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory.

2 And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird (Revelation 18:1-2, NASB-U).

9 "And the kings of the earth, who committed {acts of} immorality and lived sensuously with her, will weep and lament over her when they see the smoke of her burning,

10 standing at a distance because of the fear of her torment, saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour your judgment has come' (Revelation 18:9-10, NASB-U).

16 saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, she who was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls;

17 for in one hour such great wealth has been laid waste!' And every shipmaster and every passenger and sailor, and as many as make their living by the sea, stood at a distance,

18 and were crying out as they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What {city} is like the great city?'

19 "And they threw dust on their heads and were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had ships at sea became rich by her wealth, for in one hour she has been laid waste!'

20 "Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced judgment for you against her."

21 Then a strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "So will Babylon, the great city, be thrown down with violence, and will not be found any longer (Revelation 18:16-21, NASB-U).

II. CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE STRUGGLE

A. Babylon is in the dust-bin of history from 536 B.C. until the present century.

1. Cyrus overran Babylon in 536. B.C.
2. Alexander Hellenizes her in 330 B.C.
3. Babylon was a wasteland for 21 centuries.

B. Modern civilization revitalizes Babylon.

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1. The industrial revolution.
2. The internal combustion engine brought with it the need for oil.
3. Petroleum sparks the resurgence of Babylon (Iraq).

C. Political and military might of the Middle East gravitates to Iraq.

1. The oil spout gives economic clout.
2. Modern weapons give military clout.
3. The ancient struggle between Babylon and Jerusalem gives political clout.

III. THE FINAL OUTCOME OF THE STRUGGLE

A. The rebirth of Israel ushers in the "last days."

B. "The Great City" had to emerge in Babylon (Iraq)

C. No strong rival to Iraq for the leadership of the Islamic world

1. Is Saddam the Anti-Christ?—There is no way that anyone can know this prior to the Rapture.
 - a. There are Building-sized portraits of Saddam in Iraq.
 - b. Islamic peoples give adulation to Saddam Hussein.
 - c. Saddam has dedicated an abundance of wealth to the destruction of Israel.
 - d. Saddam has visions of grandeur and the is working to re-edify the ancient city of Babylon.

2. Does Iraq play a significant role in this great rebellion against God? Absolutely!

3. The Woman called Iniquity will have her temple there.

4. The economies of the world will be controlled from there.

5. A great religious system is propagated from there.

D. World sympathy and support for Iraq grows from day to day from:

1. German politicians
2. the Russian president
3. French politicians
4. Koffi Anan of the UN and Third World leaders
5. Dissident youth and secular political leaders in America.

CONCLUSION:

For years we have seen cartoons of bearded hippies and sages carrying signs saying "The end is near." Events unfolding on the world stage lead me to believe that the sign will have to be changed to "The end is here." The question is, "Will you escape the struggle or become a part of it?"

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This is the outline of the sermon Dr. Harold Carpenter preached 22 September 2002. Dr. Carpenter and his wife served as missionaries for twenty years. Dr. Carpenter also taught missions for twenty years at Central Bible College. He has studied biblical prophecy for fifty years. He now serves as Pastor of Fair Grove Assembly of God, Fair Grove MO.

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In Essentials: Unity; In non-essentials: Liberty; In all things: Charity—Peter Meiderlin
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