



# The Burning Bush - Online article archive

## Future developments in Iraq

(The substance of a message preached in Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church, Lord's Day evening, 10th March, 1991 by Rev Ivan Foster.)

"Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what is this that goeth forth. And I said, What is it? And he said, This is an ephah that goeth forth. He said moreover, This is their resemblance through all the earth. And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead: and this is a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah. And he said, This is wickedness. And he cast it into the midst of the ephah; and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof. Then lifted I up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came out two women, and the wind was in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork: and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven. Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah? And he said unto me, To build it an house in the land of Shinar: and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base," Zechariah 5:5-11.

There are basically two schools of thought regarding what the Bible has to say about the future of the ancient city of Babylon.

There has been a city of Babylon from the very earliest times. "And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar." Genesis 10:10

"So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth." Genesis 11:8-9.

It became a city of great prominence in the time of Nebuchadnezzar. It, rather than Nineveh, became the city of Assyria. The city is now in ruins.

The question arises whether the present destruction under which Babylon lies is the one prophesied by Isaiah and Jeremiah or whether there is yet to be a fuller execution of the destruction referred to by the servants of God. Both these prophets speak of the utter ruin of the city and the land by the judgment of God.

There are those who believe that it was utterly destroyed as predicted and therefore it is wrong to look for a future rebuilding of Babylon followed by its utter ruin.

But there are those, and I am among them, who believe that the prophecies of Babylon's destruction have not been fulfilled completely and that a future fulfilment of the prophecies, in which every detail of the destruction spoken of by Isaiah and Jeremiah will most minutely take place.

Of course, for that to happen the city of Babylon must be built again from its present ruins.

Who is right?

Well, please consider these points.

### **A. Virtually all prophecy has a primary as well as an ultimate fulfilment.**

Consider these words of Scripture: "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: but my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever," 2 Samuel 7:12-16.

Here is a prophecy, given to David, that relates to Solomon initially but ultimately it refers to Christ and His



## The Burning Bush - Online article archive

Kingdom and His building of the House of God.

Christ is called the Son of David. "And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end," Luke 1:31-33.

The use of the words "for ever" in 2 Samuel 7:13 and 16 show that there is a reference to Christ rather than Solomon. Solomon saw a partial fulfilling of this prophecy but Christ will see a complete fulfillment.

I believe that in like fashion the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah with regard to the destruction of Babylon remain to be ultimately fulfilled at a future date.

### **B. If the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah were completely fulfilled back in 539 BC, then nothing whatsoever should remain of the city of Babylon or of the land of Mesopotamia.**

Consider what these prophets said:

"And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged," Isaiah 13:19-22.

"And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations." Jeremiah 25:12.

"Declare ye among the nations, and publish, and set up a standard; publish, and conceal not: say, Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, Merodach is broken in pieces; her idols are confounded, her images are broken in pieces. For out of the north there cometh up a nation against her, which shall make her land desolate, and none shall dwell therein: they shall remove, they shall depart, both man and beast. . . . Therefore the wild beasts of the desert with the wild beasts of the islands shall dwell there, and the owls shall dwell therein: and it shall be no more inhabited for ever; neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation. As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbour cities thereof, saith the LORD; so shall no man abide there, neither shall any son of man dwell therein." Jeremiah 50:2-3, 39-40.

"Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will raise up against Babylon, and against them that dwell in the midst of them that rise up against me, a destroying wind; and will send unto Babylon fanners, that shall fan her, and shall empty her land: for in the day of trouble they shall be against her round about. . . . Prepare against her the nations with the kings of the Medes, the captains thereof, and all the rulers thereof, and all the land of his dominion. And the land shall tremble and sorrow: for every purpose of the LORD shall be performed against Babylon, to make the land of Babylon a desolation without an inhabitant. . . . The sea is come up upon Babylon: she is covered with the multitude of the waves thereof. Her cities are a desolation, a dry land, and a wilderness, a land wherein no man dwelleth, neither doth any son of man pass thereby," Jeremiah 51:1-2, 28-29, 42-43.

These prophecies are of a complete desolating, "perpetual desolations" of not just the city of Babylon but the whole territory of the Babylonians for ever.

That is obviously not the case today. The government of Iraq began the restoration of the ruins of Babylon in 1958. Such renovations and rebuilding is contrary to what God says of Babylon after the judgments He declares will take place at its final ruin.



## The Burning Bush - Online article archive

Maps of Iraq show the location of Babylon and you can go and visit its ruins today.

The ancient site has the modern town of Al-Hillah built upon it according to the Encyclopedia Britannica. The Internet site, Wikipedia, states: "Hillah . . . . also spelled Hilla or Al Hillah is a city in central Iraq on the Hilla branch of the Euphrates River, 100 km (62 miles) south of Baghdad. The population is estimated at 364,700 in 1998. It is the capital of Babylon Province and is located adjacent to the ancient city of Babylon, and close to the ancient cities of Borsippa and Kish. It is situated in a predominantly agricultural region which is extensively irrigated with water provided by the Hilla canal, producing a wide range of crops, fruit and textiles. Its name may be derived from the word "beauty" in Arabic. The river runs exactly in the middle of the town, and it is surrounded by date palm trees and other forms of vegetation enhancing the weather and reducing the harmful effect of dust and the desert winds."

If a population of 364,700 lived adjacent to the location of the ancient city of Babylon then the ultimate fulfilment of the prophecies Isaiah and Jeremiah, with their references to utter desolation without inhabitant within that whole region, must await a future day and the Babylon that presently lies in ruins must be rebuilt to an even greater splendour than it ever has known.

### Inspiration

We either believe that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," 2 Timothy 3:16, or we do not. We either believe that Babylon shall "never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there," Isaiah 13:20, or we do not.

I believe with millions of others in the divine inspiration and total accuracy of these words of prophecy and therefore await an exact fulfilment of these predictions rather than embrace the present state of Babylon as that which the Lord says will prevail after His final judgment falls upon it.

In the portion of Scripture before us, there is a prophecy of Babylon coming into prominence again at the end of this age. The prophecy has to do with the LAND OF SHINAR. That is Iraq of today. Zechariah is shown an ephah, a large container or jar, being carried to the land of Shinar where it will be placed upon a base in its house and established.

Consider this prophecy.

#### I. WHAT IS IT THAT IS GOING TO BE CARRIED TO SHINAR?

**1. It is the symbol of commerce and trade.** An ephah was the largest instrument of measure used by the Israelites. It is equal to about 22 litres. It was to be found wherever trade took place.

**2. This ephah concealed a woman called 'wickedness'.** This is a familiar likeness and appears prominently in the Book of Revelation regarding the evil ecclesiastical system which will dominate the prophetic world at the end of this age. It is the spirit of lawlessness and rebellion.

"And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: and upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH," Revelation 17:1-5.



## The Burning Bush - Online article archive

Here is that 'revealed' which was 'concealed' in Zechariah's prophecy. This evil thing was concealed and confined in the ephah. It would not have been seen by the prophet only God permitted him to see it.

Today, within the EU, trade and commerce have taken on great importance. They are considered more important than national liberties and heritages. For them all things are jeopardised, the throne, parliament, laws and rights, the Lord's Day and the truth of God itself. In order to remain on good standing within the EU the British people have been forced to give up many of their God-given blessings. Rebellion against God is being advanced under the guise of commercial progress.

There is much talk about withdrawal from the EU but that is all it is: TALK!

When, if ever it happens, a referendum takes place, I have no doubt that the British Government will trot out all the numerous financial benefits the United Kingdom enjoys from its membership of the EU and the desire for withdrawal will wilt and die before the arousal of greed that the enumerating of such benefits will generate!!

**3. The woman was restrained within the ephah.** The lead weight kept her there. It was not lifted up by the prophet in order to see within but it was lifted up for him. This evil system was constrained by divine power. She was obviously impatient to get out otherwise she would not have to be restrained. But she would not always be concealed.

Paul speaks of the unbinding of this "mystery of iniquity" in 2 Thessalonians 2:6-9. "And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders."

This woman that the Lord declares to be "wickedness", has ever been struggling to establish herself amongst men, but the Lord has held it back until the time He has appointed for it to develop amongst the nations, which is, of course, just prior to the return of the Saviour when He will confront and destroy the attempted coup of the devil.

Just as the Church of Christ is likened unto a chaste bride, so the counterpart of truth and righteousness, the religious system of falsehood and wickedness, is portrayed as an evil woman, a "harlot", Revelation 17:5.

### II. CONSIDER THE CARRYING OF THE EPHAH TO SHINAR.

**1. The ephah was carried by two women.** The stork, an unclean bird, Leviticus 11:19, is referred to. This was an evil force. They had the wind in their wings. This symbolism points to Satan. He is the power behind this system. He is the Prince of the powers of the air and his agents are likened unto the birds of the air. "And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up . . . . When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side," Matthew 13:4, 19. "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience . . . . Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places," Ephesians 2:2, 6:11-12.

#### Source of evil

There can be little room for doubt as to the source of the evil power confined within the ephah, the symbol of commerce. Revelation 13:2-4 makes it clear who is the power behind the Antichrist's throne and his administrations. "And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great author-



## The Burning Bush - Online article archive

ity. And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?"

**2. The movement advances suddenly and swiftly.** The women with wings like stork's wings 'came out', verse 9. "Then lifted I up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came out two women, and the wind was in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork: and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven." The stork is a migratory bird which swiftly covers great distances, crossing many borders as she returns to her appointed nesting place. I believe this movement of the ephah refers to that lifting of restraint that God exercises upon the powers of hell as they strain to advance their evil design. There will be a swift and sudden transfer of the ephah to Shinar.

**3. The ephah will be established in its own place in Shinar.** Before this move by this evil force, concealed within commerce and trade, and its identification with Shinar or Babylon, it had a common likeness throughout the earth. "And I said, What is it? And he said, This is an ephah that goeth forth. He said moreover, This is their resemblance through all the earth," verse 6. Many nations have risen to the fore in commercial matters only to give place to another. Gt. Britain, Germany, USA, Japan and now China, all have been powerful in the world of commerce.

### EU

But, in recent times, there has been a concentrating of the power of trade in Europe, in the EU. It has yet to move further and be established in the land of Shinar. I have no doubts that the consequences of the Gulf war and the continuing concentration of the leading nations of the earth in that region will see the Bible's prophecies come to pass.

### III. DOES THE BIBLE MAKE ANY FURTHER REFERENCE TO THE WOMAN IN THE EPHAH?

If it did not, it would be most disappointing. It would be a story but half told. The end of the story is told and that in the last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation.

**1. In chapters 17 and 18 we see two evil entities. One ecclesiastical, the other mercantile or commercial.** Both are energised by the same evil. Both are referred to under the feminine possessive pronoun "her". "So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: and upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH," Revelation 17:3-5.

"For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies," Revelation 18:3.

The woman of Revelation 17 will be the final combining of all the false religions of the world along with apostate Protestantism and Popery and centred in Babylon from which it had sprung in the dawn of time. Such a system will rightly be called 'THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS' since spiritual harlotry or idolatry had its origins in Babel, the city of Nimrod. The same spirit of iniquity will be at work in the realm of merchants, spreading her evil virus via the arteries of commercial enterprise.

### Foreshadowed

Her end will come when Antichrist decrees that none shall be worshipped but himself, an event foreshadowed in Daniel chapter 3 and spoken of in New Testament prophecies. "Now we beseech you, brethren, by (concerning) the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by (concerning) our gathering together unto him, that



## The Burning Bush - Online article archive

ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God," 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4.

"And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. . . . And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name," Revelation 13:5-8, 11-17.

The Antichrist, who for a time was happy to carry the evil harlot upon his back (Revelation 17:3), will destroy her i.e. organised apostate religion, and establish himself as "God"!

"And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. . . . And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled." Revelation 17:12-13, 16-17.

"Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God," 2 Thessalonians 2:4.

**2. Through these two systems of evil, Satan will advance his malevolent work at the close of the last days.** We must not confuse Ecclesiastical Babylon with Commercial Babylon. They are not one and the same. In spirit, yes. But in sphere of activity, no.

The woman of Revelation 17 principally has dealings with the leaders and peoples of the nations under her sway, while the woman of Revelation 18 deals with the kings and the merchants. "With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication," Revelation 17:2. "For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies," Revelation 18:3.

**3. There is a further distinction between the two manifestations of evil in that the destruction of the woman in Revelation 17 is at the hands of the Antichrist and his confederates whereas the woman in Revelation 18 is destroyed directly by the judgment of God.** "And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled," Revelation 17:16-17.



## The Burning Bush - Online article archive

"And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double. How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her. . . . Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. . . . Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her," Revelation 18:4-8, 10, 20.

**4. The woman of Revelation 17 is destroyed and her dominions absorbed by the Antichrist (her flesh is eaten, thus her enemies are nourished and strengthened by her destruction) before the destruction of the woman of Revelation 18, since the destruction of the latter takes place just prior to the Saviour's return to destroy the Antichrist, save Israel and avenge His elect.** It is interesting to notice that Revelation 18/22-23 - "And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; and the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived" - is but a summary of the prophecies uttered against Babylon by Isaiah and Jeremiah.

We have been seeking to follow the career of the woman in the ephah. From her position of concealment and constraint in Zechariah 5 she has advanced to a position of highest commercial glory and power. From that position she has defied God and exercised a baleful influence upon the nations. She has nourished and nurtured and prepared the way for the rise of the Antichrist There is an evil future ahead for Iraq and for that city which shall again arise from the dust.

What a privilege is ours in having the Word of God to give us clear warning of these matters.

- **The Bible makes us wise concerning Satan's devices.** "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices," 2 Corinthians 2:1. We have all his battle plans. Why should he get the victory over us? Undoubtedly, it will be his desire to deceive us when we read those plans. Let us look to God for His guidance and wisdom.
- **The Bible makes us wise concerning the times in which we live.** Understanding of the times and knowing what the people of God ought to do is an important knowledge. David said that the Holy Scriptures made him more wise than the ancients. May God give us the spirit of discernment that we may discern the signs of the times!

"And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment," 1 Chronicles 12:32.

"And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" Matthew 16:3.

- **The Bible makes us wise concerning the way of salvation.** Is this not the most important knowledge of all? To be able to recognise the significance of the events of the momentous age in which we live is important. But what if we had all knowledge of such matters and had no knowledge of God's salvation. What good are danger signs to those who will pay no heed? My dear friends, it is vital that we make ready for eternity. If our understanding of the events in the world around us is correct then ought we not to pay more urgent heed to the salvation of our souls?

As you see the day of God drawing on ` . . . what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation



## **The Burning Bush - Online article archive**

and godliness'. There is hope only for those who have come to the only Redeemer of God's elect, the Lord Jesus Christ. Be ye also ready.

Rev Ivan Foster.

September 17th, 2015.