

Book Review – Babylon: The Bookends of Prophetic History – Andrew M. Woods

INTRODUCTION

For full disclosure, I know Andy Woods and have happily suggested the church he pastors, Sugar Land Bible Church, to anyone who lives in the southwest Houston area.

A few weeks ago, Andy Woods released a book under Dispensational Publishing House entitled “Babylon: The Bookends of Prophetic History.” The book is 100 pages, and the font is nicely large. It is an easy read, probably the easiest of all his books. For those interested, there are a few pictures and graphs.

The book has a clearly defined purpose, and he does a good job of providing evidence for his premise.

PREMISE

“This work will survey various lines of biblical evidence that call for a futuristic, literal Babylon in God’s end-time program.”

The passage in question is Revelation 17:5. Looking at this in multiple versions, we see there is a question. Is Babylon in this text a cryptic/mystic/spiritual Babylon? Or is this referring to historic Babylon?

OUTLINE

The book is laid out with headings rather than chapter numbers. The chapter titles are as follows:

1. The Tower of Babel
2. Isaiah 13-14 and Jeremiah 50-51
3. Zechariah 5:5-11
4. Sixth Trumpet and Bowl Judgments (Revelation 9:13-21, 16:12-16)
5. Revelation 17-18
6. Alternate Interpretations
7. Current Events
8. Conclusion

In this review, we will only look at the writer’s evaluation and not the alternate views. I do find reviewing various interpretations valuable, but each section has a level of depth that we do not have time for. Also, the current events section will not be discussed at this time.

CHAPTER 1 – The Tower of Babel

The first chapter takes us back to Genesis 10 where the generations of Noah are discussed. These descendants became the great nations of the Bible, and many of the nations are recognizable: Gomer, Magog, Cush, Mizraim (Egypt), Canaan, Eber, Aram, Uz, and others.

Among these sons, one stands out (Genesis 10:8-12). The writer quoted Josephus concerning Nimrod, which was very interesting. In that statement, the claim was made that Nimrod gained tyranny by causing all the people to depend upon him. With this power he believed he could, and attempted to, build a ziggurat that could not be destroyed by floodwaters and could be used to enter heaven to wage war against the God of Heaven.

It was at Shinar that Nimrod organized his rebellion. This land is also called Babylonia or Mesopotamia (between the rivers). This location was between the Tigris and Euphrates, modern-day Iraq.

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The writer states “Babylon is the city where mankind first began to worship himself in an organized manner.” Furthermore, it is stated that “Babel is also the location of the origin of the infamous mother-child cult” (picture).

It was because of this rebellion that God confused the languages and caused all the peoples to scatter. But the seed of rebellion had been planted in every society. Satan’s plan since the judgment at Babel was to regather the people into a centralized rule, a global empire, which will happen (at least in part) in the seven years of the Great Tribulation, which Dr. Luther Smith calls the False Messianic Kingdom.

Dr. Woods emphatically concludes the chapter by pointing out that Babylon is a literal place, a city, a system that is “the mother or source of all harlotry.” He then foreshadows the rest of the book by stating “Prophetically speaking, human history will end up right where it began.”

CHAPTER 2 – Isaiah 13-14 and Jeremiah 50-51

These two sections of Scripture detail a horrific judgment upon Babylon. The chapter asks if this has already been fulfilled or is this still in the future. If it is in the future, then the city with all its glory must be rebuilt.

The writer presents very clear and persuasive evidence that Isaiah 13-14 and Jeremiah 50-51 are describing a distant future event that has not yet taken place. Dr. Woods gives 13 observations from the entire text that I believe are very persuasive. The fall of Babylon in both sections does not match up with the destruction of Babylon in 539 BC, and the writer makes an excellent argument for the parallel of Jeremiah 50-51 and Revelation 17-18 (picture).

CHAPTER 3 – Zechariah 5:5-11

For me, this chapter is the most compelling. When I did an overview of Zechariah, my eyes were drawn to this section of Scripture, particularly verse 11 and the mention of Shinar. It was strange and seemingly unexplainable. Dr. Woods presents the text in comparison to the future concept of the woman in Revelation 17-18. Once again, a chart is used to demonstrate the comparison (picture).

CHAPTER 4 – Sixth Trumpet and Bowl (Revelation 9:13-21; 16:12-16)

After reading the section we see that something is stirring in the East. Armies begin to prepare and move against Israel from beyond the Euphrates; the writer believes that this army is an army of Babylon.

“Although most gravitate immediately to Revelation 17-18 to understand the role of Babylon in the end times, the preceding chapters in this work have already surfaced multiple areas in God’s Word that argue for a role for literal Babylon in the last days, even before Revelation 17-18 are consulted. These preliminary areas include the Tower of Babel, the pre-exilic prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah, the postexilic prophecy of Zechariah, and the information in the sixth trumpet and bowl judgments.”

CHAPTER 5 – Revelation 17-18

Now, Dr. Woods turns his attention to the chapters at hand. In Revelation 17-18, an eschatological scene is set with Babylon at the center. Here, with the proletary work accomplished, a look at this chapter is simplified. The writer deals with the word *mystery*. Is Babylon a cryptic or spiritualized name or is it literal? The claim is that the mystery is not an identification issue but the interaction between Babylon and the beast’s empire.

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Interestingly, the beast and Babylon are both evil but not necessarily on the same team, and the beast moves against Babylon and destroys her.

Next in the chapter, the writer demonstrates that Babylon is a city and not a spiritual or mystic system. When the text says Babylon, the writer states, it means Babylon. Dr. Woods brings back from the previous chapters the imagery and statements of Babylon and the claim that Babylon is the Mother of Harlots stemming from the time of Nimrod.

CONCLUSION

The book is a fine work with compelling information.

I normally side on the absolute literal view when discerning locations. If that is an error, then so be it. I would rather be wrong calling Babylon Babylon than to make some allegorical claim and be off base.

But I believe Dr. Woods provides the best case for Babylon being rebuilt in the end times and becoming extremely prominent. As the writer states, “Prophetically speaking, human history will end up right where it began.”

There are a couple of points of disagreement that are a matter of my own opinion. The primary one is that Dr. Woods states that the empire of the beast is “Euro-centric,” meaning that the empire will be based upon a reformed Roman Empire. I disagree, but I cannot be emphatic. The point of the book does not discuss or defend this point, so I have no problem with his conclusion in the book. It is a topic for a different time.