

Archaeology and the Bible

Course 2 – Living in Babylon

Slide 1 – Intro Slide

Tonight we want to take a look at one of the great cities, or should I say, one of the more infamous cities, that have ever existed on earth. It is the city of ancient Babylon. It was a city where the Jewish people were held captive for 70 years. It was a place of beauty, of wonder, of great wealth, of extreme cruelty and evil. It was situated on the Euphrates River about 50 miles south of Bagdad in what is now Iraq.



Hammurabi was the 6th king of Babylon. He ruled from 1795-1750 BC. During his reign Babylon became the world's first great metropolis. Artifacts from Hammurabi's reign have been preserved, and today we discover this remarkable King was a wise law-giver. How do we know that?

Slide 2 – Code of Hammarabi.

In the year 1901, this stone of black diorite was found not in Babylon, but in a city of the Persian mountains, to which some later conqueror must have carried it in triumph. The most remarkable of the Hammurabi records is his code of laws, the earliest-known example of a ruler proclaiming publicly to his people a set of laws, arranged in orderly groups, so that all men might read and know what was required of them. The code was carved upon a black stone monument, eight feet high. It begins and ends with addresses to the gods. Even a law code was regarded as a subject for prayer in those days. The prayers are chiefly cursings of whoever shall neglect or destroy the law.



The code then regulates the organization of society. The judge who blunders in a law case is to be expelled from his judgeship forever, and heavily fined. The witness who testifies falsely is to be slain. Indeed, all the heavier crimes are made punishable with death. Even if a man builds a house badly, and it falls and kills the owner, the builder is to be slain. If the owner's son was killed, then the builder's son is slain. We can see where the Hebrews learned their law of "an eye for an eye."

These grim retaliatory punishments take no note of excuses or explanations, but only of the fact--with one striking exception. An accused person was allowed to cast himself into "the river," the Euphrates. Apparently the art of swimming was unknown; for if the current bore him to the shore alive he was declared innocent, if he drowned he was guilty.

So we learn that faith in the justice of the ruling gods was already firmly, though somewhat childish, established in the minds of men.

Before we further explore Babylon, I want to introduce you to one of my professors from Johnson Bible College in Knoxville, TN, where I studied for my Masters Degree. This was one of my favorite professors. He is still at Johnson, but he lectures on archaeology and has written extensively. He also leads a group that is digging in Jordan. This is Dr. Gerald Mattingly.



Slide 3 – Dr. Mattingly has co-authored an archaeological study you can purchase. The book is titled, “Peoples of the Old Testament World.” It has received rave reviews. He is the Coordinator of the Karak Resources Project, an archaeological study group in the Karak region of Jordan. Faculty members from several Appalachian College Association (ACA) colleges are involved in the project as well as faculty from the University of Tennessee. He written lectured in various parts of the world on archaeological findings.



Slide 4 – This is one of the digs they were on in Jordan. I wanted you to see the kind of work they do. This does not have the Indiana Jones glamour. They go out to the site before daylight. They have to quit about noon because of the severe heat. Notice the brush in the lady’s hand and the dust pan in the man’s. Digs are laid out in small squares and you slowly brush away dirt and scoop it up so you don’t damage anything that might be there.

Slide 5 – This is a guffa, a rubber bucket that is used for collecting dirt to sift through. That is the exciting life of archaeology! It is not for everyone. However, when you find something, it is all worth it.





Pottery sherds in situ in Square E5

Slide 6 – Pottery shards from the Jordan dig site

These broken jars and dishes were often used for writing on once they were busted. It was cheap notebook paper a few thousand years ago. They would write on them. They were even used at one time for voting. I guess this would eliminate the hanging chads problem.



Slide 7 - Ostrakon of Cimon

An ostrakon bears the name of a Greek statesman from Athens. He was a key politician in 5th cent. B.C.



Pottery being excavated

Slide 8 – Pottery being excavated in Jordan

Slide 9 – The Guffa is dumped into the screen to be examined



Examining what remains in sift

Slide 10 - Toby Johnson

<http://www.tobiasly.com/gallery/main.php>



This is Toby Johnson. He was with the 1st Battalion of the 151st Infantry Regiment, which is part of the 76th Infantry Brigade, an Indiana Army National Guard unit. When he was in Iraq, he traveled 50 miles south of Bagdad to the ruins of Babylon. I found him on Facebook and he was kind enough to give me permission to use these photos he took of the ruins for our class. I was excited because now you can see the ruins and compare them with the ancient gates and tiles that were taken from there to Berlin. Now that you've seen what's involved in excavation, it will be a bit mind boggling to imagine what it took to excavate this site.



Slide 11 – City Walls and Towers of Babylon

Slide 12 – Modern and Ancient Walls of Babylon





**Slide 13 – Ancient Wall Carvings
and foundations**

**Slide 14 - Restoration Project of the
Ancient City of Babylon**



Slide 15 – Original Walls

**Slide 16 – Babylonian Statue of
Lion**

Mauling a Man



Slide 17 – City Streets

One of the original Seven Wonders of the World was the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, also known as the Hanging Gardens of Semiramis. Today they are near the present-day city Al Hillah, Babil in Iraq. They were built by Nebuchadnezzar II around 600 BC. His wife, Amytis of Media, was supposedly ill and Nebuchadnezzar constructed the gardens for her. She was from Persia and missed the trees and fragrant plants of her homeland. The gardens were destroyed by several earthquakes after the 2nd century BC.

Slide 18 – The Hanging Gardens of Babylon – Artist Rendering



Detailed descriptions of the Gardens come from ancient Greek sources, including the writings of Strabo and Philo of Byzantium. Here are some excerpts from their accounts:

"The Garden is quadrangular, and each side is four plethoras long. It consists of arched vaults which are located on checkered cube-like foundations. The ascent of the uppermost terrace-roofs is made by a stairway..."

"The Hanging Garden has plants cultivated above ground level, and the roots of the trees are embedded in an upper terrace rather than in the earth. The whole mass is supported on stone columns... Streams of water emerging from elevated sources flow down sloping channels... These waters irrigate the whole garden saturating the roots of plants and keeping the whole area moist. Hence the grass is permanently green and the leaves of trees grow firmly attached to supple branches... This is a work of art of royal luxury and its most striking feature is that the labor of cultivation is suspended above the heads of the spectators."

Slide 19 – The Hanging Gardens of Babylon – Modern Dig Site



More recent archaeological excavations at the ancient city of Babylon in Iraq uncovered the foundation of the palace. Other findings include the Vaulted Building with thick walls and irrigation well near the southern palace. A group of archaeologists surveyed the area of the southern palace and reconstructed the Vaulted Building as the Hanging Gardens. They reconstructed the site of the palace and located the Gardens in the area stretching from the River to the Palace. On the river banks, recently discovered massive walls 25 m thick may have been stepped to form terraces... the ones described in Greek references.

Slide – 20 and 21 – The Pergamum Museum in Berlin



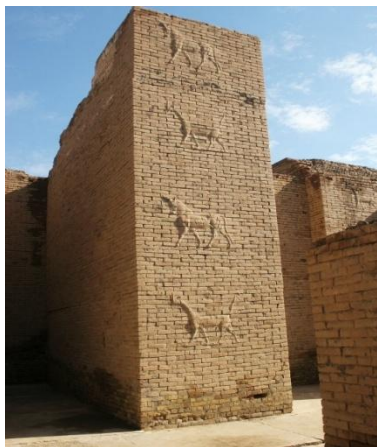
The site was designed by Alfred Messel and Ludwig Hoffmann and was built from 1910 to 1930. The Pergamon houses original-sized, reconstructed monumental buildings such as the Pergamon Altar, the Market Gate of Miletus, and the Ishtar Gate, all consisting of parts transported from the original excavation sites.



Slide 22

A typical tourist surrounded by Babylonian lions.

**Slide 23 – Ancient Walls with Mythical Animals
Taken by Toby Johnson**



Slide 25 – Ishtar Gates

Slide 24 – Same Animals on the Ishtar Gates



In 1902, German archaeologist Robert Koldewey unearthed the fabled Ishtar Gate in the ruins of Babylon. The gateway dated from the time of King Nebuchadnezzar (about 600 B.C.) and was decorated with bas-reliefs. The animals depicted on the Gate were known to the Babylonians - two of the animals depicted were lions and rimi (aurochs, a type of wild ox). Of the three animals depicted, one could not be identified. It seemed to show a mythical animal.

The animal, which Koldewey recognized as a sarrush (dragon; the word mushrushu or mushhushshu is the commonly-accepted modern form, based on a retranslation of the original word) can be described as having

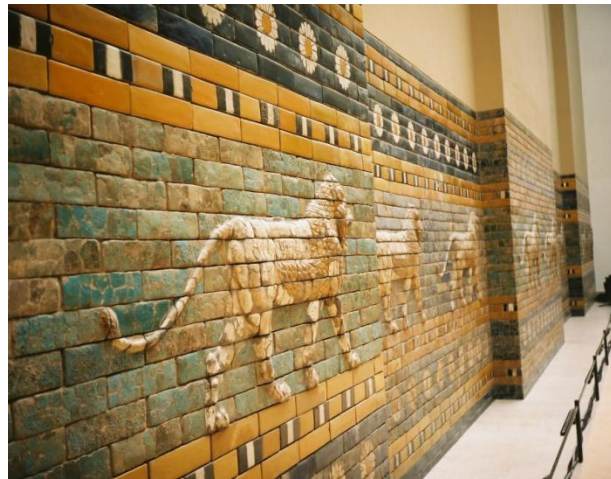
...a slender body covered with scales, a long slender scaly tail, and a long slim scaly neck bearing a serpent's head... [from the mouth] a long forked tongue protrudes. There are flaps of skin attached to the back of the head, which is adorned (and armed) with a straight horn.



Slide 26 - Side Wall of Ishtar Gate

Slide 27 - Processional Way

Read Jeremiah 39:1-10 – Imagine standing by the very gates and by the walls that lined the street called the Processional Way, the very stones that were there when Zedekiah the King of Judah was led as a prisoner.



Slide 28 – Artists Model of the Ishtar Gates and the Processional Way



Read Daniel 1:1-7 – Imagine this site as God's faithful servant Daniel is led through the Ishtar Gate and down the Processional Way as a slave to an evil nation. Imagine that wall of lions surrounding you.

We saw another breath taking site that let us see how incredibly advanced these early civilizations really were, except they were no match in the end for the Almighty God.

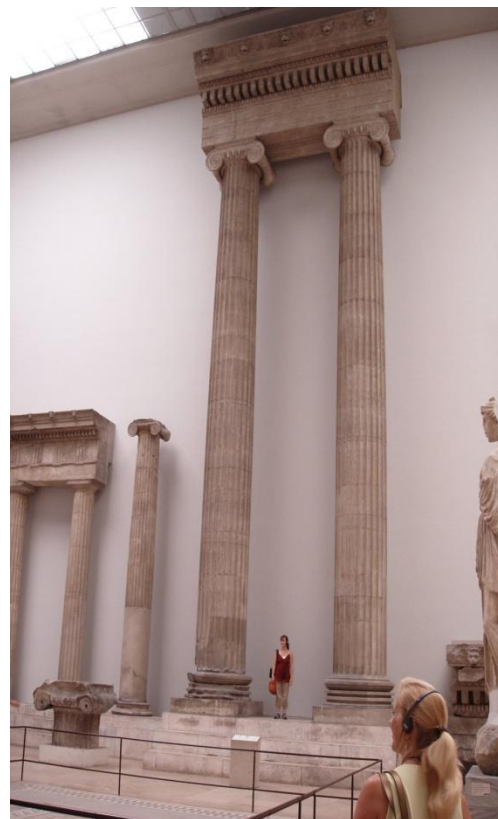
Read Acts 20:15-38 - Miletus was an ancient city on the western coast of Anatolia (in what is now Aydin Province, Turkey), near the mouth of the Maeander River in ancient Caria. It was just south of Ephesus. Evidence of first settlement at the site has been made inaccessible by the rise of sea level and deposition of sediments from the Maeander.

Slide 29 – Imagine standing with Paul and the Elders from the church at Ephesus as they are on the beach here at Miletus. These are the gates that once stood at the city entrance.



Slide 30 - Gates of Miletus

My wife is in the foreground and we are taking this picture of our friend standing by a building column from Miletus. Notice the height



I hope you have learned a bit more about the importance of archaeology to understanding the world and the historical accuracy of the Bible as it lays out these places and events that we can see thanks to God and some brilliant and dedicated archaeologists.

Next month we are going to look at the tunnel built in Jerusalem by King Hezekiah. The Bible speaks about it, but does it really exist? We will find out.