

## PETER'S BABYLON: A BIBLICAL MYSTERY SOLVED?

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Babylon The Great Is Rome Theory, Apostle Peter Went To Rome Theory, Peter And Paul Disagree In Antioch, Barnabas And Paul Disagree And Split Up, Did Peter Visit Old City Of Babylon In Mesopotamia?, Slow Demise And Eventual Desertion Of Babylon, Greek General Seleucus Nicator, Seleucia And Antioch, Syria, Flavius Josephus, Antiquities of The Jews, Seleucia Massacre, Reasons Why Peter May Not Have Gone To Babylon In Babylonia, Babylon Fortress In The Nile Delta, Coptic Cairo / Old Cairo, Mary And Joseph Flee To Egypt, Mark The Evangelist Establishes Christian Church In Alexandria, Egypt, Peter Writes Epistle From Babylon, Egypt While With Mark, Spiritual Sons, Timothy, Babylon, Egypt A Safer Journey, Suggested Reading Resources

The following article concerns a Biblical mystery which has baffled me personally for a number of years now. It concerns the question of where Peter wrote his first Apostolic letter from. Do you think that you know the answer to this question? Has God already revealed this mystery to you? If not, then I invite you to join me as I explain the information that I have uncovered, as I undertook my own journey to solve this Biblical question.

As I note in my 1998 article "Revelation's Babylon the Great", one widely-embraced belief suggests that Babylon the Great -- which is discussed in the Book of Revelation -- may possibly be a coded reference to the city of Rome. According to the people who strongly promote this particular doctrine -- such as the Seventh Day Adventists -- the name "Rome" was replaced with "Babylon", in order to protect the propagation of God's Word during the First Century era. In other words, by adopting this coded system -- so it is said -- the Early Christians were able to write about and discuss different issues that were related to Rome and its evil leadership, without drawing attention to themselves, or hopefully, at

least drawing less attention to themselves.

In fact, if you are familiar with the history of the English translation of the Holy Scriptures, then you may know that the 17th Century Reformers who produced the Geneva Bible and related editions, likewise believed the Roman Catholic Church was the epitome of Babylon the Great. This becomes evident by some of the marginal notes which are included in the Geneva Bible. While the "Babylon = Rome" theory is interesting, and on the surface seems to have some degree of merit, as I point out in the series called "Lies and Deceptions of the Roman Catholic Church", currently, I am not convinced that it is the proper interpretation of the Scriptures.

This particular theory reminds me of a -- in my view -- false Roman Catholic doctrine which claims that the Apostle Peter went to Rome, where after supposedly becoming the first pope of the Roman Catholic Church, he was killed by crucifixion. This misguided doctrine finds its basis in a New Testament apocryphal work known as the "Acts of Peter". As I explain in the aforementioned series, like so many other apocryphal and pseudepigraphical writings which I have read, I really doubt that the "Acts of Peter" is Divinely Inspired, because some of its contents clearly contradicts the accepted Canon -- that is, the Bible -- and is, to be honest, quite strange. Please refer to the aforementioned series for more details.

At any rate, the New Testament seems to indicate that, for the most part, the Apostle Peter traveled primarily within the borders of what was known during the First Century as the Roman province of Judea, or Iūdaea in Latin. This area of Roman jurisdiction was comprised of Judea, Samaria to the north, and Idumea to the south. After all, the New Testament establishes that Peter was primarily an Apostle to his own Jewish brethren, just as Paul was called to be an Apostle to the Gentiles. In reading the Book of Acts, we discover that Peter, together with the Apostles James and John -- who the Lord Himself selected as His innermost circle -- guided the Early Christian Church from Jerusalem, and certainly not from the city of Rome.

To my knowledge, there is only one place in the Scriptures where we are clearly told that Peter physically left Israel. That is when he left Jerusalem in order to visit the Apostle Paul in the city of Antioch, Syria. In fact, it was during

that particular visit that Peter and Paul had a rather strong disagreement, as we can determine by these verses:

"But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?"

Galatians 2:11-14, KJV

Allow me to clarify what is going on in those verses, for those of you who may not understand them. As I explain in other articles, when Paul first began to win the Gentiles to Christ, there were some questions and challenges regarding what Jewish laws the new Gentile converts were required to keep, such as circumcision, for example. What Paul is saying in those verses is that prior to the Apostle James sending some brethren from Jerusalem to Antioch, Peter didn't have a problem with intermingling with the Gentile converts. But the minute that the brethren arrived from Jerusalem -- which included some Jews who still believed that circumcision was necessary -- Peter began to act very differently, even going so far as to separate himself from the Gentile brethren, as if they were an unclean thing. In fact, we are told that even Barnabas -- who was Paul's companion -- also began to do the same.

So, in those verses, Paul is saying that he stood them to the face, and accused them of acting like utter hypocrites. We know this because the word "dissembled" is derived from the Greek word "sunupokrinomai", which the Thayer's Greek English Lexicon defines as meaning "to act hypocritically with". In those same verses, the word "dissimulation" is derived from the Greek word "hupokrisis", which, as you can probably tell, means dissimulation or hypocrisy.

This is not the only time that Barnabas had a falling out with the Apostle Paul. As I've mentioned before, when Paul

suggested that he and Barnabas revisit some of the churches they had established, Barnabas wanted to take along John Mark, but Paul disagreed with that suggestion, and here is what happened:

"Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also. And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches."

Acts 15:35-41, KJV

Some sources suggest that after Peter visited Paul and the Gentile brethren in Antioch, he went on to visit some of the other churches in the cities of Asia Minor, which today is a part of Turkey. This belief is based on Peter's opening lines in his first Epistle where he writes the following:

"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied."

1 Peter 1:1-2, KJV

Please notice, however, that there is nothing definitive in those verses which indicates that Peter physically visited those places. Perhaps he did, as it doesn't seem likely that Peter would have written to the brethren there, unless they knew him personally. On the other hand, Peter does address them as strangers; so maybe He merely wrote to the Christian brethren in those cities, without having ever visited them in person. Perhaps he simply wrote a pastoral letter to them at Paul's request, or maybe at Mark's request. I write to a lot of people whom I have never met in person; don't you?

At any rate, there is one other place in the New Testament which, at first glance, seems to associate the Apostle Peter with a place that was located outside of physical Israel of the First Century. It is in the following verse that is found at the very end of Peter's first Epistle; and it seems that it is this particular verse which is apparently used to try to support the Rome equals Babylon theory. Consider the following:

"The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son."

1 Peter 5:13, KJV

Let me make it clear that suggesting that the previous verse is referring to Rome is just personal speculation at best; because the simple fact is that there are no other verses in the New Testament which support that conjecture. Absolutely none at all. If not Rome, then where exactly was this Church at Babylon located? A number of years ago, I considered the possibility that this verse may be an indication that Peter may have made an apostolic visit to a Christian Church which at some point had been established in the ancient city of Babylon, in what had previously been known as Babylonia and Mesopotamia. After reading both the beginning and the end of his first Epistle, I considered that maybe Peter wrote to the brethren in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia while he was with Marcus -- or Mark -- in Babylon. That understanding made perfect sense to me at the time.

However, there is a problem with embracing that theory. You see, by that time, Babylon would have no longer been the grand metropolis that had been established by the Babylonian kings, and which was later ruled by both the Persians and Greeks as well. In fact, there would not have been much left to the city at all by the time of the First Century. Thus, Thayer's Greek English Lexicon informs us of the following concerning the demise of Babylon:

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Cyrus had formerly captured it, but Darius Hystaspis threw down its gates and walls, and Xerxes destroyed the temple of Belis. At length the city was reduced to almost solitude, the population having been drawn off by the neighbouring Seleucia,

built on the Tigris by Seleucus Nicanor.

----- End Quote -----

Here we see that Persian kings Cyrus -- also known as Koresh -- Darius Hystaspis -- there were various kings named Darius -- and Xerxes contributed to Babylon's demise. Furthermore, this process was continued by Greek General Seleucus Nicanor, who was also known as Seleucus Nicator. It may interest you to know that while Seleucus Nicator first established the capital of the Seleucid Empire at Seleucia -- which had a negative effect on neighboring Babylon -- it was not long after this that the Greek general moved the Seleucid capital to Antioch in Syria. As we have already seen, Antioch, Syria eventually became an important hub for Christianity as well. In fact, as you may recall from your own Bible studies, the followers of Christ were first called Christians at Antioch, as we see by these verses that are found in the Book of Acts:

"Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."

Acts 11:25-26, KJV

On a side note, today, modern Antioch, Syria is the seat of a patriarchate of the Oriental Orthodox Church. I must wonder in what condition that ancient city is in, considering the ongoing bloody civil war which has ravaged that country for well over five years now, with no end yet in sight.

As I explain in a number of other articles, the fall of the city of Babylon was a fulfillment of some of the prophecies of the ancient Israelite Prophets, and was due to the fact that the Babylonians, under the leadership of Nebuchadnezzar, invaded, captured and destroyed Jerusalem. This included the complete destruction of the Temple of Solomon, as well as the theft of all of the holy golden objects which had been in it. So to reiterate, in my opinion, it seems highly unlikely that the Church at Babylon which the Apostle Peter mentions at the end of his Epistle, is referring to the actual ancient city of Babylon which was located in the empire of Babylonia.

There is another reason regarding why I have my doubts about

the ancient Babylonian capital being the Babylon which Peter refers to in his first Epistle. It concerns something that occurred in neighboring Seleucia. In his "Antiquities Of The Jews", Jewish historian Flavius Josephus describes a terrible massacre that occurred in Seleucia in about the year 41 BC. Historical records reveal that as a direct result of strong persecution by the Greeks and the Syrians, Seleucia became a refuge for some of the Jews, who were the descendants of the Jewish captives who had been taken to Babylon by the forces of Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar over five hundred years earlier.

In chapter nine of Book 18 of his "Antiquities Of The Jews", Flavius Josephus tells us that the Greeks and the Syrians of that time overcame the differences which divided them, and found a common enemy in the Babylonian Jewish refugees. This resulted in the massacre of about 50,000 Jews around 41 BC. In a translation of the "Antiquities" by English theologian, historian, and mathematician, William Whiston, we read the following:

----- Begin Quote -----

"Now the way of living of the people of Seleucia, which were Greeks and Syrians, was commonly quarrelsome, and full of discords, though the Greeks were too hard for the Syrians. When, therefore, the Jews were come thither, and dwelt among them, there arose a sedition, and the Syrians were too hard for the other, by the assistance of the Jews, who are men that despise dangers, and very ready to fight upon any occasion. Now when the Greeks had the worst in this sedition, and saw that they had but one way of recovering their former authority, and that was, if they could prevent the agreement between the Jews and the Syrians, they every one discoursed with such of the Syrians as were formerly their acquaintance, and promised they would be at peace and friendship with them. Accordingly, they gladly agreed so to do; and when this was done by the principal men of both nations, they soon agreed to a reconciliation; and when they were so agreed, they both knew that the great design of such their union would be their common hatred to the Jews. Accordingly, they fell upon them, and slew about fifty thousand of them; nay, the Jews were all destroyed, excepting a few who escaped, either by the compassion which their friends or neighbors afforded them, in order to let

them fly away. These retired to Ctesiphon, a Grecian city, and situate near to Seleucia, where the king [of Parthia] lives in winter every year, and where the greatest part of his riches are repositied; but the Jews had here no certain settlement, those of Seleucia having little concern for the king's honor. Now the whole nation of the Jews were in fear both of the Babylonians and of the Seleucians, because all the Syrians that live in those places agreed with the Seleucians in the war against the Jews; so the most of them gathered themselves together, and went to Neerda and Nisibis, and obtained security there by the strength of those cities; besides which their inhabitants, who were a great many, were all warlike men. And this was the state of the Jews at this time in Babylonia."

----- End Quote -----

Considering then that there wouldn't have been much left to Babylon at the time that Peter would have theoretically made such a journey, as well as the terrible massacre which had taken place in nearby Seleucia seventy-five to one hundred years prior to that time, I honestly don't know that Peter would have been motivated to go there. We also need to keep in mind that the Jews weren't exactly greatly loved in that part of the world. Furthermore, travelling across over five hundred miles of potentially hostile territory -- that is, if one were to travel in a straight line -- might not have been particularly appealing to the Apostle.

Well, six years ago, while conducting some Biblical research for a new article which I was working on at the time, I made an interesting discovery which I found rather surprising. At the time, this discovery seemed to shed some light regarding the possible identity of Peter's Babylon. In fact, I became quite convinced that I had finally figured out from where the Apostle Peter had written his first Epistle. What my research revealed is that during the early part of the First Century, when Christ walked the Earth, and His Apostles were still alive, there existed another city named Babylon. It was located in the northeastern corner of Egypt, in the Nile Delta area. The Wikipedia website states the following about this ancient city:

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"Babylon . . . was a fortress city or castle in the Delta of Egypt. It was situated . . . upon the right (eastern) bank of the Nile . . . and near the commencement of the Pharaonic Canal (also called Ptolemy's Canal and Trajan's Canal), from the Nile to the Red Sea. It was the boundary town between Lower and Middle Egypt, where the river craft paid tolls when ascending or descending the Nile . . . Josephus, with greater probability, attributes its structure to some Babylonian followers of Cambyses, in 525 BC. In the age of Augustus, the Deltaic Babylon became a town of some importance, and was the headquarters of the three legions which ensured the obedience of Egypt."

----- End Quote -----

Please notice the final part of the previous description. We are told that it was an important town during the age of the Caesars, or more specifically, Augustus Caesar, and was used as a strategic fortress to ensure Egypt's obedience to Rome. This was precisely at the time of Jesus Christ, when Roman forces occupied Israel as well. As I said, by this point, I was becoming convinced that this Egyptian town may have been the Babylon that the Apostle Peter had possibly visited, and not some kind of mysterious Babylon/Rome, as certain Roman Catholic supporters -- and detractors -- like to believe.

However, my surprise did not end there. As I continued my research concerning this Babylon Fortress, I discovered that today it is known as Coptic Cairo, or Old Cairo, being as it is the oldest section of that ancient city. In fact, some of the ancient remains of the Roman fortress can still be seen there. But that is not all. As it turns out, it is commonly believed by the Coptic Christians of Egypt -- who are some of the oldest known Christians in the world -- as well as by other Christians, that Joseph, Mary and the baby Jesus spent some time in Babylon, Egypt, after Joseph was warned by God in a dream to flee to Egypt, in order to escape persecution from evil King Herod, as we see by the following verses:

"And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: And was

there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son."

Matthew 2:13-15, KJV

Concerning these events, the Wikipedia website states the following:

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"It is traditionally held that the Holy Family visited the area during the Flight into Egypt, seeking refuge from Herod . . . Egypt was a logical place to find refuge, as it was outside the dominions of King Herod, but both Egypt and Palestine were part of the Roman Empire, making travel between them easy and relatively safe"

----- End Quote -----

But perhaps the most compelling reason I found to possibly accept Babylon, Egypt as the Apostle Peter's destination, is that it's also directly associated with Mark the Evangelist, the author of the Gospel of Mark. According to the Wikipedia website -- and this information can be confirmed by a number of other websites as well -- Mark became the first Patriarch of Alexandria, Egypt. This seems to indicate that the Babylon fortress city -- which was located some one hundred and forty miles to the southeast of Alexandria -- would have been under his jurisdiction. Please consider the following Wikipedia excerpts taken from several different pages:

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Further it is held that Christianity began to spread in Egypt when St. Mark arrived in Alexandria, becoming the first Patriarch, though the religion remained underground during the rule of the Romans.

Under the Romans, St. Mark and his successors were able to convert a substantial portion of the population, from pagan beliefs to Christianity."

According to ancient tradition, Christianity was introduced to the Egyptians by Saint Mark in Alexandria, shortly after the ascension of Christ and during the reign of the Roman

emperor Claudius around 42 AD. The legacy that Saint Mark left in Egypt was a considerable Christian community in Alexandria. From Alexandria, Christianity spread throughout Egypt within half a century of Saint Mark's arrival in Alexandria, as is clear from a fragment of the Gospel of John, written in Coptic, which was found in Upper Egypt and can be dated to the first half of the 2nd century, and the New Testament writings found in Oxyrhynchus, in Middle Egypt, which date around the year 200 AD. In the 2nd century, Christianity began to spread to the rural areas, and scriptures were translated into the local language, today known as the Coptic language (which was called the Egyptian language at the time). By the beginning of the 3rd century AD, Christians constituted the majority of Egypt's population, and the Church of Alexandria was recognized as one of Christendom's four Apostolic Sees, second in honor only to the Church of Rome. The Church of Alexandria is therefore the oldest church in Africa.

Saint Apostle Peter wrote his first epistle from Babylon (north of Old Cairo), when visiting Mark (1 Peter 5:13). When Mark returned to Alexandria, the pagans of the city resented his efforts to turn the Alexandrians away from the worship of their traditional Hellenistic gods. In AD 68 they placed a rope around his neck and dragged him through the streets until he was dead.

----- End Quote -----

A word of caution: Please realize that some of the previous information is based on Coptic Church traditions, and Roman Catholic Church traditions, and finds no actual support in the Scriptures. This is one of the main reasons -- but not the only reason -- why I continue to have some reservations regarding this ancient fortress town being the actual Babylon to which the Apostle Peter refers at the end of his Epistle. Yet at the same time, if the previous information is accurate and true, you'll notice that the final paragraph does confirm what I suggested earlier; that is, that Peter would have to have been physically with Mark in Babylon, Egypt at the time that he wrote his first Epistle. We also cannot overlook the fact that in this particular case, the historical record appears to agree with the Biblical record. Let me share that verse with you one more time:

"The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son."

1 Peter 5:13, KJV

So to reiterate, this verse makes it evident that if Peter was physically in Babylon, Egypt at the time that he wrote his first Epistle, Marcus was with him as well. It does not seem likely, in my view, that Peter would even mention Mark, unless he was with him at that time. Also, please note that the phrase "my son" does not necessarily mean that Mark was Peter's biological son. Peter could have been speaking in a spiritual sense, just as we find the Apostle Paul referring to Timotheus as his son as well, as we see in this verse:

"For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church."

1 Corinthians 4:17, KJV

In other words, the word "son" was likewise used as a way to express brotherly affection between fellow Christian believers during the First Century. What you may also find interesting is the fact that in his first Epistle to his "beloved son" Timothy, Paul asks Timothy to bring Mark with him, because he can use him in the ministry, as we see by this verse:

"Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry."

2 Timothy 4:11, KJV

So Mark was apparently a very beloved, trusted and reliable Apostle, evangelist and brother in the Lord.

I noted earlier that the distance from Jerusalem to Babylon in Babylonia -- the ruins of which are today located in the city of Hillah, Babylon Province -- was over five hundred miles. This would have made it a long, potentially-dangerous journey for Peter. While the distance by land from Jerusalem to Babylon, Egypt -- or Coptic Cairo as it is known today -- is a little less at about four hundred and eighty miles, if one travels via Eilat on the coast of the Gulf of Aqaba, we need to bear in mind that a large part of such a journey would have been through Israel itself. Furthermore, both

Israel and Egypt were controlled by Rome, which would have made it a much safer journey for the Apostle Peter to make.

So, considering all of the evidence which I have shared with you by way of this article, I have abandoned the idea that Peter may have travelled to Babylon, Babylonia, and I embrace the possibility that Peter may have gone to Babylon, Egypt, where he then proceeded to write his first Epistle. Regarding Mark the Evangelist, I propose that if this is indeed what happened two thousand years ago, either Peter met up with him there, or maybe Mark even accompanied Peter on his trip to Babylon, Egypt. Of course, these thoughts are merely personal speculation, which is based on the evidence which I have been able to uncover.

Before closing, let me emphasize again that I do hold some reservations regarding what I have proposed in this article, because not only is this possibility based on extra-biblical information -- that is, information obtained from outside of the Bible -- but as I more fully explain in my series called "Revelation's Babylon the Great", there is also substantial Biblical information which points to Babylon being a very different place indeed. Either that, or Peter's Babylon is one place, while Revelation's Babylon the Great is quite another. Please refer to that article for more details.

With these thoughts, I will bring this article to a close. I pray that it has been informative, and a blessing to many. If you happen to have a user account with Facebook, Twitter or Google+, I would also very much appreciate if you would take the time to click on the corresponding link that is found on this page. Thanks so much, and may God bless you abundantly!

For additional information, I encourage you to study the list of reading resources below which were also mentioned in this article, or which are related to this article, and which are likewise located on the Bill's Bible Basics web server:

Revelation's Babylon the Great  
Lies and Deceptions of the Roman Catholic Church  
Pontifex Maximus: Pagan High Priest to Roman Catholic Pope  
Article: "Cardinal Ratzinger's Rebellion"  
Have You Read the New Scriptures Yet?  
Mary Worship, Christianity and Roman Catholicism

Roman Catholicism, Water Baptism and the Trinity  
To Pray or Not to Pray? That is the Question  
Lying Wonders of the Endtime  
Our Pagan World: The Easter (Ishtar Goddess) Myth Exposed!  
History of the Authorized KJV Bible  
The Misguided End of the World Predictions of Harold Camping

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