

Who is Marduk in the Bible?

Marduk was a false god that was worshiped as the chief Babylonian deity. He had several titles, including Bel, which simply means “lord.” He was worshiped as the god of storms and fertility, much as the Baal of the Canaanites was.

The name Marduk is mentioned explicitly only once in Scripture, in Jeremiah 50:2, “Babylon will be captured; Bel will be put to shame, Marduk filled with terror. Her images will be put to shame and her idols filled with terror.” Jeremiah here predicts how the false god would be “put to shame” when God brought judgment upon Babylon. The downfall of Babylon would prove that nation’s deities as the false and useless gods they were. Marduk’s title of Bel is mentioned in Isaiah 46:1 and Jeremiah 51:44.

The Babylonian religious system was polytheistic—they worshiped many gods instead of just one. Early in the history of Babylon, Marduk was only worshiped as a local city god, not as a national deity. This changed over time, however, with the writing of the Enuma Elish, a Babylonian creation myth. The Enuma Elish helped raise Marduk to national deity status. In the Enuma Elish, Marduk is described as the hero of the story as he defeats “the goddess Tiamat, the primeval salt-water ocean, and [makes] heaven and earth out of her dead body” (Herbert Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch*, p. 104). Within the myth is the story of how Marduk killed Tiamat’s son/consort and used his blood to create mankind to be the laborers of the gods. It’s quite clear that the Enuma Elish creation story differs drastically from the truth of the Lord’s creation in Genesis 1–2.

In the ancient mythology, Marduk is credited with creating the zodiac: “He (Marduk) made the stations for the great gods; The stars, their images, as the stars of the Zodiac, he

fixed” (The Seven Tablets of Creation, Fifth Tablet, translated by L.W. King, London: Luzac and Co., 1902). The mythology associated Marduk himself with the planet Jupiter.

The Persian king Cyrus, who issued the decree allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 36:22-23), credited Marduk with his decision to do so: “Marduk, the great lord, established as his fate for me a magnanimous heart of one who loves Babylon, and I daily attended to his worship. . . . I returned the images of the gods, who had resided there [in Babylon], to their places and I let them dwell in eternal abodes. I gathered all their inhabitants and returned to them their dwellings” (from Fragment A, based on a translation by Mordechai Cogan, published in *The Context of Scripture*. Vol. II: *Monumental Inscriptions from the Biblical World*, Hallo and Younger, ed., Leiden: Brill, 2002).

Marduk is often pictured in ancient mosaics standing with a dragon. In fact, the Ishtar Gate that was present in Ancient Babylon features a striding, chimera-like dragon called “Mushussu,” associated with the god Marduk. It is interesting to see Marduk’s connection with a serpent-like animal, since the devil is often referred to as a serpent in the Bible (Genesis 3:1, 14-15; Revelation 12:9), and we know that demons are the focus of idol worship (Deuteronomy 32:16-17; 1 Corinthians 10:20). Jeremiah and Isaiah were correct in their condemnation of Marduk; the Lord did bring judgment on Babylon, proving Marduk and all the other Babylonian gods to be false. There is only one true God, and He is the only One worthy of our worship (Isaiah 45:5).