[Template:Other uses](/wiki/Template:Other_uses" \o "Template:Other uses) [Template:Pp-semi-indef](/wiki/Template:Pp-semi-indef) [Template:Pp-move-indef](/wiki/Template:Pp-move-indef) [Template:Infobox ancient site](/wiki/Template:Infobox_ancient_site)

**Babylon** ([Template:Cuneiform](/wiki/Template:Cuneiform) [Template:Lang-akk](/wiki/Template:Lang-akk) or [Template:Lang](/wiki/Template:Lang); [Template:Lang-ar](/wiki/Template:Lang-ar), *Bābil*) was a significant city of ancient [Mesopotamia](/wiki/Mesopotamia) in the fertile plain between the [Tigris](/wiki/Tigris) and [Euphrates](/wiki/Euphrates) rivers. The city was built upon the Euphrates and divided in equal parts along its left and right banks, with steep embankments to contain the river's seasonal floods. Babylon was originally a small [Semitic](/wiki/Semitic_people) [Akkadian](/wiki/Akkadian_language) city dating from the period of the [Akkadian Empire](/wiki/Akkadian_Empire) c. 2300 BC.

The town attained independence as part of a small [city-state](/wiki/City-state) with the rise of the First [Amorite](/wiki/Amorite) Babylonian Dynasty in 1894 BC. Claiming to be the successor of the more ancient [Sumero-Akkadian](/wiki/Sumero-Akkadian) city of [Eridu](/wiki/Eridu), Babylon eclipsed [Nippur](/wiki/Nippur) as the "holy city" of Mesopotamia around the time Amorite king [Hammurabi](/wiki/Hammurabi) created the first short lived [Babylonian Empire](/wiki/Babylonian_Empire) in the 18th century BC. Babylon grew and South Mesopotamia came to be known as [Babylonia](/wiki/Babylonia).

The empire quickly dissolved after Hammurabi's death and Babylon spent long periods under [Assyrian](/wiki/Assyria), [Kassite](/wiki/Kassites) and [Elamite](/wiki/Elam) domination. After being destroyed and then rebuilt by the Assyrians, Babylon became the capital of the [Neo-Babylonian Empire](/wiki/Neo-Babylonian_Empire) from 609 to 539 BC. The [Hanging Gardens of Babylon](/wiki/Hanging_Gardens_of_Babylon) was one of the [Seven Wonders of the Ancient World](/wiki/Seven_Wonders_of_the_Ancient_World). After the fall of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, the city came under the rule of the [Achaemenid](/wiki/Achaemenid), [Seleucid](/wiki/Seleucid_Empire), [Parthian](/wiki/Parthian_Empire), [Roman](/wiki/Roman_Empire), and [Sassanid](/wiki/Sasanian_Empire) empires.

It has been estimated that Babylon was the largest city in the world from c. 1770 to 1670 BC, and again between c. 612 and 320 BC. It was perhaps the first city to reach a population above 200,000.<ref name=Chandler>Tertius Chandler. *Four Thousand Years of Urban Growth: An Historical Census* (1987), St. David's University Press ([Template:Wayback](/wiki/Template:Wayback)). ISBN 0-88946-207-0. See [Historical urban community sizes](/wiki/Historical_urban_community_sizes).</ref> Estimates for the maximum extent of its area range from 890<ref name=mieroop>[Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)</ref> to [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert).<ref name=boiy>[Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)</ref> The remains of the city are in present-day [Hillah](/wiki/Hillah), [Babil Governorate](/wiki/Babil_Governorate), [Iraq](/wiki/Iraq), about [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) south of [Baghdad](/wiki/Baghdad), comprising a large [tell](/wiki/Tell) of broken mud-brick buildings and debris.

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## Name[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]

The English *Babylon* comes from [Greek](/wiki/Ancient_Greek) *Babylṓn* ([Template:Lang](/wiki/Template:Lang)), a transliteration of the [Akkadian](/wiki/Akkadian_language) [*Template:Lang*](/wiki/Template:Lang).[Template:Sfnp](/wiki/Template:Sfnp) The Babylonian name in the early 2nd millennium BC had been [*Template:Lang*](/wiki/Template:Lang) or [*Template:Lang*](/wiki/Template:Lang), which appears to be an adaption of an unknown original non-Semitic placename.[[1]](#cite_note-1) By the 1st millennium BC, it had changed to [*Template:Lang*](/wiki/Template:Lang) under the influence of the [folk etymology](/wiki/Folk_etymology) which traced it to [*Template:Lang*](/wiki/Template:Lang) ("Gate of [God](/wiki/El_(deity))" or "Gateway of the [God](/wiki/God)").[[2]](#cite_note-2) The 'Gate of God' or Gate of El being from the Aramaic Hebrew Bab for Gate and El for God, hence Babel. This being similar to the Hebrew word for confusion Balal.[[3]](#cite_note-3) In the [Bible](/wiki/Bible), the name appears as **Babel** ([Template:Lang-he](/wiki/Template:Lang-he), *Bavel*, [Tib.](/wiki/Tiberian_vocalization) [Template:Lang](/wiki/Template:Lang), *Bāvel*; [Template:Lang-syc](/wiki/Template:Lang-syc), *Bāwēl*), interpreted in the [Hebrew Scriptures'](/wiki/Hebrew_Scriptures) [Book of Genesis](/wiki/Book_of_Genesis) to mean "[confusion](/wiki/Confusion_of_tongues)",[[4]](#cite_note-4) from the verb *bilbél* ([Template:Lang](/wiki/Template:Lang), "to confuse"). The modern English verb, to "babble", or to speak meaningless words, is popularly thought to derive from this name, but there is no direct connection.[[5]](#cite_note-5) [Template:Anchor](/wiki/Template:Anchor)

## Geography[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]

[thumb|Plan of Ruins of Babylon, 1905](/wiki/File:Plan_of_Ruins_of_Babylon_1905.jpg) [thumb|right|Babylon in 1932](/wiki/File:Babylon,_1932.jpg) The remains of the city are in present-day [Hillah](/wiki/Hillah),[Template:Sfnp](/wiki/Template:Sfnp) [Babil Governorate](/wiki/Babil_Governorate), [Iraq](/wiki/Iraq), about [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) south of [Baghdad](/wiki/Baghdad), comprising a large [tell](/wiki/Tell) of broken mud-brick buildings and debris. The site at Babylon consists of a number of mounds covering an area of about [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert), oriented north to south,[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) along the [Euphrates](/wiki/Euphrates) to the west. Originally, the river roughly bisected the city, but the course of the river has since shifted so that most of the remains of the former western part of the city are now inundated. Some portions of the city wall to the west of the river also remain.

Remains of the city include:

* Kasr—also called Palace or Castle, it is the location of the [Neo-Babylonian](/wiki/Neo-Babylonian) ziggurat Etemenanki and lies in the center of the site.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)
* Amran Ibn Ali—the highest of the mounds at 25 meters, to the south. It is the site of [Esagila](/wiki/Esagila), a temple of [Marduk](/wiki/Marduk) which also contained shrines to [Ea](/wiki/Ea_(Babylonian_god)) and [Nabu](/wiki/Nabu).[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)
* Homera—a reddish colored mound on the west side. Most of the [Hellenistic](/wiki/Hellenistic) remains are here.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)
* Babil—a mound about 22 meters high at the northern end of the site. Its bricks have been subject to looting since ancient times. It held a palace built by Nebuchadnezzar.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

Although occupation of the site dates back to the late 3rd millennium, almost nothing from that period has been recovered from prior to the Neo-Babylonian period, for various reasons. The water table in the region has risen greatly over the centuries and artifacts from the time before the [Neo-Babylonian Empire](/wiki/Neo-Babylonian_Empire) are unavailable to current standard archaeological methods. Additionally, the Neo-Babylonians conducted significant rebuilding projects in the city, which destroyed or obscured much of the earlier record. Babylon was pillaged numerous times after revolting against foreign rule, most notably by the [Hittites](/wiki/Hittites) and [Elamites](/wiki/Elamites) in the 2nd millennium, then by the [Neo-Assyrian Empire](/wiki/Neo-Assyrian_Empire) and the [Achaemenid Empire](/wiki/Achaemenid_Empire) in the 1st millennium. Much of the western half of the city is now beneath the river, and other parts of the site have been mined for commercial building materials. [thumb|left|The](/wiki/File:Queen_of_the_Night_(Babylon).jpg) [Queen of the Night](/wiki/Burney_Relief) relief. The figure could be an aspect of the goddess [Ishtar](/wiki/Ishtar), Babylonian goddess of sex and love.

## Ancient history[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]

A tablet describing the reign of [Sargon of Akkad](/wiki/Sargon_of_Akkad) (c. 23rd century BC [short chronology](/wiki/Short_chronology)) alludes to the city of Babylon. The so-called *Weidner Chronicle* states that Sargon had built Babylon "in front of [Akkad](/wiki/Akkadian_Empire)" (ABC 19:51). Another later chronicle likewise states that Sargon "dug up the dirt of the pit of Babylon, and made a counterpart of Babylon next to [Akkad](/wiki/Akkad_(city))". (ABC 20:18–19). Van de Mieroop has suggested that those sources may refer to the much later Assyrian king [Sargon II](/wiki/Sargon_II) of the [Neo-Assyrian Empire](/wiki/Neo-Assyrian_Empire) rather than Sargon of Akkad.[[6]](#cite_note-6) Linguist [I.J. Gelb](/wiki/Ignace_Gelb), has suggested that the name *Babil* is in reference to an earlier city name. Herzfeld wrote about *Bawer* in Ancient Iran, and the name *Babil* could refer to Bawer. [David Rohl](/wiki/David_Rohl) holds that the original Babylon is to be identified with [Eridu](/wiki/Eridu). [Joan Oates](/wiki/Joan_Oates) claims in her book *Babylon* that the rendering *Gateway of the gods* is no longer accepted by modern scholars. The [Book of Genesis](/wiki/Book_of_Genesis) claims that a biblical king named [Nimrod](/wiki/Nimrod_(king)) was the original founder of Babel (Babylon).

By around the 19th century BC, much of southern Mesopotamia was occupied by [Amorites](/wiki/Amorites), nomadic tribes from the northern [Levant](/wiki/Levant) who were [Northwest Semitic](/wiki/Northwest_Semitic) speakers, unlike the native [Akkadians](/wiki/Akkadian) of southern Mesopotamia and [Assyria](/wiki/Assyria), who were [East Semitic](/wiki/East_Semitic_languages) speakers. The Amorites at first did not practice agriculture like more advanced Mesopotamians, preferring a semi-nomadic lifestyle, herding sheep. Over time, Amorite grain merchants rose to prominence and established their own independent dynasties in several south Mesopotamian city-states, most notably [Isin](/wiki/Isin), [Larsa](/wiki/Larsa), [Eshnunna](/wiki/Eshnunna), [Lagash](/wiki/Lagash), and later, founding Babylon as a state.

### Classical dating[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]

[Ctesias](/wiki/Ctesias), quoted by [Diodorus Siculus](/wiki/Diodorus_Siculus) and in [George Syncellus's](/wiki/George_Syncellus) *Chronographia*, claimed to have access to manuscripts from Babylonian archives, which date the founding of Babylon to 2286 BC, under the reign of its first king, [Belus](/wiki/Belus_(Babylonian)).[[7]](#cite_note-7) A similar figure is found in the writings of [Berossus](/wiki/Berossus), who according to Pliny,[[8]](#cite_note-8) stated that astronomical observations commenced at Babylon 490 years before the Greek era of [Phoroneus](/wiki/Phoroneus), indicating 2243 BC. [Stephanus of Byzantium](/wiki/Stephanus_of_Byzantium) wrote that Babylon was built 1002 years before the date given by [Hellanicus of Lesbos](/wiki/Hellanicus_of_Lesbos) for the siege of Troy (1229 BC), which would date Babylon's foundation to 2231 BC.[[9]](#cite_note-9) All of these dates place Babylon's foundation in the 23rd century BC; however, more recent translation of cuneiform records have not been found to correspond with these classical (post-cuneiform) accounts.

### Old Babylonian period[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]

[thumb|right|Map showing the Babylonian territory upon Hammurabi's ascension in 1792 BC and upon his death in 1750 BC](/wiki/File:Hammurabi's_Babylonia_1.svg) [thumb|left|Old Babylonian](/wiki/File:Cylinder_Seal,_Old_Babylonian,_formerly_in_the_Charterhouse_Collection_03.jpg) [Cylinder Seal](/wiki/Cylinder_Seal). [hematite](/wiki/Hematite). This seal was probably made in a workshop at [Sippar](/wiki/Sippar) (about 40 miles north of Babylon on the map above) either during, or shortly before, the reign of [Hammurabi](/wiki/Hammurabi).[[10]](#cite_note-10) It depicts the king making an animal offering to the Sun god [Shamash](/wiki/Shamash). [thumb|left|Old Babylonian](/wiki/File:Cylinder_Seal,_Old_Babylonian,_formerly_in_the_Charterhouse_Collection_09.jpg) [Cylinder Seal](/wiki/Cylinder_Seal). [hematite](/wiki/Hematite). Linescan camera image of seal above (reversed to resemble an impression).

The [First Babylonian Dynasty](/wiki/First_Babylonian_Dynasty) was established by an [Amorite](/wiki/Amorite) chieftain named [Sumu-abum](/wiki/Sumu-abum) in 1894 BC, who declared independence from the neighboring city-state of [Kazallu](/wiki/Kazallu). The Amorites were not native to Mesopotamia, but were semi nomadic [Canaanite](/wiki/Canaanite_language) [Northwest Semitic](/wiki/Northwest_Semitic) invaders from the northern [Levant](/wiki/Levant). They (together with the [Elamites](/wiki/Elamites) to the east) had originally been prevented from taking control of the Akkadian states of southern Mesopotamia by the intervention of powerful [Assyrian](/wiki/Assyria) kings of the [Old Assyrian Empire](/wiki/Old_Assyrian_Empire) during the 21st and 20th centuries BC, intervening from northern Mesopotamia. However, when the Assyrians turned their attention to expanding their colonies in [Asia Minor](/wiki/Asia_Minor), the Amorites eventually began to supplant native rulers across the region.

Babylon was initially a minor city state, and controlled little surrounding territory, and its first four Amorite rulers did not even assume the title of king of the city. It remained overshadowed by older and more powerful states such as [Assyria](/wiki/Assyria), [Elam](/wiki/Elam), [Isin](/wiki/Isin) and [Larsa](/wiki/Larsa) until it became the capital of [Hammurabi's](/wiki/Hammurabi) short lived [Babylonian Empire](/wiki/Babylonian_Empire) about a century later. Hammurabi (r. 1792–1750 BC) is famous for codifying the laws of Babylonia into the [*Code of Hammurabi*](/wiki/Code_of_Hammurabi). He conquered all of the cities and city states of southern Mesopotamia, including [Isin](/wiki/Isin), [Larsa](/wiki/Larsa), [Ur](/wiki/Ur), [Uruk](/wiki/Uruk), [Nippur](/wiki/Nippur), [Lagash](/wiki/Lagash), [Eridu](/wiki/Eridu), [Kish](/wiki/Kish_(Sumer)), [Adab](/wiki/Adab_(city)), [Eshnunna](/wiki/Eshnunna), [Akshak](/wiki/Akshak), [Akkad](/wiki/Akkad_(city)), [Shuruppak](/wiki/Shuruppak), [Bad-tibira](/wiki/Bad-tibira), [Sippar](/wiki/Sippar) and [Girsu](/wiki/Girsu), coalescing them into one kingdom, ruled from Babylon. Hammurabi also invaded and conquered [Elam](/wiki/Elam) to the east, and the kingdoms of [Mari](/wiki/Mari,_Syria) and [Ebla](/wiki/Ebla) to the north west. After a protracted struggle with the powerful Mesopotamian king [Ishme-Dagan](/wiki/Ishme-Dagan) of [Assyria](/wiki/Assyria), he forced his successor to pay tribute late in his reign, spreading Babylonian power to Assyria's [Hattian](/wiki/Anatolia) and [Hurrian](/wiki/Hurrian) colonies in [Asia Minor](/wiki/Asia_Minor).

After the reign of Hammurabi, the whole of southern Mesopotamia came to be known as [Babylonia](/wiki/Babylonia), whereas the north had coalesced centuries before into [Assyria](/wiki/Assyria). From this time, Babylon also became the major religious center of Mesopotamia, supplanting the more ancient cities of [Nippur](/wiki/Nippur) and [Eridu](/wiki/Eridu). Hammurabi's empire destabilized after his death. Assyrians defeated and drove out the Babylonians and Amorites. The far south of Mesopotamia broke away, forming the [Sealand Dynasty](/wiki/Sealand_Dynasty), and the Elamites appropriated territory in eastern Mesopotamia. The Amorite dynasty remained in power in Babylon, which again became a small city state.

In 1595 BC[[11]](#cite_note-11) the city was overthrown by the [Hittite Empire](/wiki/Hittite_Empire) from [Asia Minor](/wiki/Asia_Minor). Thereafter, [Kassites](/wiki/Kassites) from the [Zagros Mountains](/wiki/Zagros_Mountains) of north western [Ancient Iran](/wiki/Ancient_Iran) captured Babylon, ushering in a dynasty that lasted for 435 years, until 1160 BC. The city was renamed Karanduniash during this period. Kassite Babylon eventually became subject to the [Middle Assyrian Empire](/wiki/Middle_Assyrian_Empire) (1365–1053 BC) to the north, and [Elam](/wiki/Elam) to the east, with both powers vying for control of the city. The Assyrian king [Tukulti-Ninurta I](/wiki/Tukulti-Ninurta_I) took the throne of Babylon in 1235 BC.

By 1155 BC, after continued attacks and annexing of territory by the Assyrians and Elamites, the Kassites were deposed in Babylon. An Akkadian south Mesopotamian dynasty then ruled for the first time. However, Babylon remained weak and subject to domination by Assyria. Its ineffectual native kings were unable to prevent new waves of foreign West Semitic settlers from the deserts of the Levant, including the [Arameans](/wiki/Arameans) and [Suteans](/wiki/Suteans) in the 11th century BC, and finally the [Chaldeans](/wiki/Chaldea) in the 9th century BC, entering and appropriating areas of Babylonia for themselves. The Arameans briefly ruled in Babylon during the late 11th century BC.

### Assyrian period[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]

[thumb|Sennacherib of Assyria during his](/wiki/File:Sennacherib.jpg) [Babylonian war](/wiki/Battle_of_Halule), relief from his palace in Nineveh During the rule of the [Neo-Assyrian Empire](/wiki/Neo-Assyrian_Empire) (911–609 BC), Babylonia was under constant [Assyrian](/wiki/Assyria) domination or direct control. During the reign of [Sennacherib](/wiki/Sennacherib) of Assyria, Babylonia was in a constant state of revolt, led by a [Chaldean](/wiki/Chaldea) chieftain named [Merodach-Baladan](/wiki/Marduk-apla-iddina_II), in alliance with the [Elamites](/wiki/Elamites), and suppressed only by the complete destruction of the city of Babylon. In 689 BC, its walls, temples and palaces were razed, and the rubble was thrown into the Arakhtu, the sea bordering the earlier Babylon on the south. Destruction of the religious center shocked many, and the subsequent murder of Sennacherib by two of his own sons while praying to the god [Nisroch](/wiki/Nisroch) was considered an act of atonement. Consequently, his successor [Esarhaddon](/wiki/Esarhaddon) hastened to rebuild the old city and make it his residence during part of the year. After his death, Babylonia was governed by his elder son, the [Assyrian](/wiki/Assyria) prince [Shamash-shum-ukin](/wiki/Shamash-shum-ukin), who eventually started a civil war in 652 BC against his own brother, [Ashurbanipal](/wiki/Ashurbanipal), who ruled in [Nineveh](/wiki/Nineveh). [Shamash-shum-ukin](/wiki/Shamash-shum-ukin) enlisted the help of other peoples subject to Assyria, including [Elam](/wiki/Elam), [Persia](/wiki/Persia), [Chaldeans](/wiki/Chaldea) and [Suteans](/wiki/Suteans) of southern Mesopotamia, and the [Canaanites](/wiki/Canaanites) and [Arabs](/wiki/Arabs) dwelling in the deserts south of [Mesopotamia](/wiki/Mesopotamia).

Once again, Babylon was besieged by the Assyrians, starved into surrender and its allies were defeated. Ashurbanipal celebrated a "service of reconciliation", but did not venture to "take the hands" of [Bel](/wiki/Bel_(mythology)). An Assyrian governor named [Kandalanu](/wiki/Kandalanu) was appointed as ruler of the city. After the death of Ashurbanipal, the Assyrian empire destabilized due to a series of internal civil wars throughout the reigns of Assyrian kings [Ashur-etil-ilani](/wiki/Ashur-etil-ilani), [Sin-shumu-lishir](/wiki/Sin-shumu-lishir) and [Sin-shar-ishkun](/wiki/Sin-shar-ishkun). Eventually Babylon, like many other parts of the near east, took advantage of the anarchy within Assyria to free itself from Assyrian rule. In the subsequent overthrow of the Assyrian Empire by an alliance of peoples, the Babylonians saw another example of divine vengeance.[[12]](#cite_note-12)

### Neo-Babylonian Chaldean Empire[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]

[Template:Refimprove section](/wiki/Template:Refimprove_section) [Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [right|thumb|Detail of the Ishtar Gate reconstruction](/wiki/File:Babylon_relief.jpg) [left|thumb|A reconstruction of the blue-tiled](/wiki/File:Ishtar_Gate.gif) [Ishtar Gate](/wiki/Ishtar_Gate) which was the northern entrance to Babylon. It was named for the goddess of love and war. Bulls and dragons, symbols of the god [Marduk](/wiki/Marduk), decorated the gate. Under [Nabopolassar](/wiki/Nabopolassar), a previously unknown Chaldean chieftain, Babylon eventually escaped Assyrian rule, and in an alliance with [Cyaxares](/wiki/Cyaxares), king of the [Medes](/wiki/Medes) and [Persians](/wiki/Persian_people) together with the [Scythians](/wiki/Scythians) and [Cimmerians](/wiki/Cimmerians), the Assyrian Empire was finally destroyed between 612 BC and 605 BC. Babylon thus became the capital of the Neo-Babylonian (sometimes and possibly erroneously called [Chaldean](/wiki/Chaldean_(disambiguation))) Empire.[[13]](#cite_note-13)[[14]](#cite_note-14)[[15]](#cite_note-15) With the recovery of Babylonian independence, a new era of architectural activity ensued, particularly during the reign of his son [Nebuchadnezzar II](/wiki/Nebuchadnezzar_II) (604–561 BC).[[16]](#cite_note-16) Nebuchadnezzar ordered the complete reconstruction of the imperial grounds, including the [Etemenanki](/wiki/Etemenanki) [ziggurat](/wiki/Ziggurat), and the construction of the [Ishtar Gate](/wiki/Ishtar_Gate)—the most prominent of eight gates around Babylon. A reconstruction of the Ishtar Gate is located in the [Pergamon Museum](/wiki/Pergamon_Museum) in [Berlin](/wiki/Berlin).

Nebuchadnezzar is also credited with the construction of the [Hanging Gardens of Babylon](/wiki/Hanging_Gardens_of_Babylon)—one of the [seven wonders of the ancient world](/wiki/Seven_Wonders_of_the_Ancient_World)—which is said to have been built for his homesick wife [Amyitis](/wiki/Amyitis). Whether the gardens actually existed is a matter of dispute. Excavations by German archaeologist [Robert Koldewey](/wiki/Robert_Koldewey) are thought to reveal its foundations, though many historians disagree about the location, and some believe it may have been confused with gardens in the Assyrian capital, [Nineveh](/wiki/Nineveh).[[17]](#cite_note-17) Chaldean rule of Babylon did not last long; it is not clear whether [Neriglissar](/wiki/Neriglissar) and [Labashi-Marduk](/wiki/Labashi-Marduk) were Chaldeans or native Babylonians, and the last ruler [Nabonidus](/wiki/Nabonidus) (556–539 BC) and his co-regent son [Belshazzar](/wiki/Belshazzar) were [Assyrians](/wiki/Assyrians) from [Harran](/wiki/Harran).[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

### Persian conquest[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=8)]

In 539 BC, the Neo-Babylonian Empire fell to [Cyrus the Great](/wiki/Cyrus_the_Great), king of [Persia](/wiki/Persia), with a military engagement known as the [Battle of Opis](/wiki/Battle_of_Opis). Babylon's walls were considered impenetrable. The only way into the city was through one of its many gates or through the Euphrates River. Metal grates were installed underwater, allowing the river to flow through the city walls while preventing intrusion. Cyrus (or his generals) devised a plan to enter the city via the river. During a Babylonian national feast, Cyrus' troops diverted the Euphrates River upstream, allowing Cyrus' soldiers to enter the city through the lowered water. The Persian army conquered the outlying areas of the city while the majority of Babylonians at the city center were unaware of the breach. The account was elaborated upon by Herodotus[[18]](#cite_note-18) and is also mentioned in parts of the Hebrew Bible.[[19]](#cite_note-19)[[20]](#cite_note-20) According to [2 Chronicles](/wiki/Books_of_Chronicles) 36 of the [Hebrew Bible](/wiki/Hebrew_Bible), Cyrus later issued a decree permitting captive people, including the [Jews](/wiki/Jews), to return to their own lands. Text found on the [Cyrus Cylinder](/wiki/Cyrus_Cylinder) has traditionally been seen by biblical scholars as corroborative evidence of this policy, although the interpretation is disputed because the text only identifies Mesopotamian sanctuaries but makes no mention of Jews, Jerusalem, or Judea.

Under Cyrus and the subsequent Persian king [Darius the Great](/wiki/Darius_the_Great), Babylon became the capital city of the 9th Satrapy (Babylonia in the south and Athura in the north), as well as a center of learning and scientific advancement. In [Achaemenid](/wiki/Achaemenid) Persia, the ancient Babylonian arts of [astronomy](/wiki/Astronomy) and [mathematics](/wiki/Mathematics) were revitalized, and Babylonian scholars completed maps of constellations. The city became the administrative capital of the [Persian Empire](/wiki/Achaemenid_Empire) and remained prominent for over two centuries. Many important archaeological discoveries have been made that can provide a better understanding of that era.[[21]](#cite_note-21)[[22]](#cite_note-22) The early Persian kings had attempted to maintain the religious ceremonies of [Marduk](/wiki/Marduk), but by the reign of [Darius III](/wiki/Darius_III), over-taxation and the strain of numerous wars led to a deterioration of Babylon's main shrines and canals, and the destabilization of the surrounding region. There were numerous attempts at rebellion and in 522 BC ([Nebuchadnezzar III](/wiki/Nebuchadnezzar_III)), 521 BC ([Nebuchadnezzar IV](/wiki/Nebuchadnezzar_IV)) and 482 BC (Bel-shimani and Shamash-eriba) native Babylonian kings briefly regained independence. However these revolts were quickly repressed and Babylon remained under Persian rule for two centuries, until [Alexander the Great's](/wiki/Alexander_the_Great) entry in 331 BC.

### Hellenistic period[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=9)]

In October of 331 BC, [Darius III](/wiki/Darius_III), the last [Achaemenid](/wiki/Achaemenid) king of the Persian Empire, was defeated by the forces of the [Ancient Macedonian](/wiki/Ancient_Macedonians) [Greek](/wiki/Greece) ruler [Alexander the Great](/wiki/Alexander_the_Great) at the [Battle of Gaugamela](/wiki/Battle_of_Gaugamela). A native account of this invasion notes a ruling by Alexander not to enter the homes of its inhabitants.[[23]](#cite_note-23) Under Alexander, Babylon again flourished as a center of learning and commerce. However, following Alexander's death in 323 BC in the palace of [Nebuchadnezzar](/wiki/Nebuchadnezzar), his empire was divided amongst his generals, the [Diadochi](/wiki/Diadochi), and [decades of fighting](/wiki/Wars_of_the_Diadochi) soon began. The constant turmoil virtually emptied the city of Babylon. A tablet dated 275 BC states that the inhabitants of Babylon were transported to [Seleucia](/wiki/Seleucia_on_the_Tigris), where a palace and a temple ([Esagila](/wiki/Esagila)) were built. With this deportation, Babylon became insignificant as a city, although more than a century later, sacrifices were still performed in its old sanctuary.[[24]](#cite_note-24)

### Renewed Persian rule[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=10)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) Under the [Parthian](/wiki/Parthian_Empire) and [Sassanid Empires](/wiki/Sassanid_Empire), Babylon (like Assyria) became a province of these [Persian Empires](/wiki/Persian_Empire) for nine centuries, until after AD 650. It maintained its own culture and people, who spoke varieties of [Aramaic](/wiki/Aramaic), and who continued to refer to their homeland as Babylon. Examples of their culture are found in the [Babylonian Talmud](/wiki/Babylonian_Talmud), the [Gnostic](/wiki/Gnostic) [Mandaean](/wiki/Mandaeism) religion, [Eastern Rite](/wiki/East_Syrian_Rite) [Christianity](/wiki/Christianity) and [the religion](/wiki/Manichaeism) of the prophet [Mani](/wiki/Mani_(prophet)). Christianity was introduced to Mesopotamia in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, and Babylon was the seat of a Bishop of the [Church of the East](/wiki/Church_of_the_East) until well after the Arab/Islamic conquest.

### Muslim conquest[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=11)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) In the mid-7th century, Mesopotamia was invaded and settled by the expanding [Muslim](/wiki/Muslim) Empire, and a period of [Islamization](/wiki/Islamization) followed. Babylon was dissolved as a province and [Aramaic](/wiki/Aramaic) and [Church of the East](/wiki/Church_of_the_East) Christianity eventually became marginalized.

## Modern history[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=12)]

### Hussein regime[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=13)]

[World Monuments Fund](/wiki/World_Monuments_Fund) video on conservation of Babylon|thumb In 1983, [Saddam Hussein](/wiki/Saddam_Hussein) began rebuilding the city on top of the old ruins. (Consequently, artifacts and other finds may be under the city.) Hussein invested in both restoration and new construction in Babylon, as well as [Ninevah](/wiki/Ninevah), [Nimrud](/wiki/Nimrud), [Assur](/wiki/Assur) and [Hatra](/wiki/Hatra), to demonstrate the magnificence of Arab achievement.[[25]](#cite_note-25) He installed a portrait of himself and [Nebuchadnezzar](/wiki/Nebuchadnezzar) at the entrance to the ruins, and reinforced the Processional Way—a large boulevard of ancient stones—and the Lion of Babylon, a black rock sculpture about 2,600 years old. Hussein inscribed his name on many of the bricks, in imitation of Nebuchadnezzar. One frequent inscription reads: "This was built by Saddam Hussein, son of Nebuchadnezzar, to glorify Iraq". These bricks became sought after as collectors' items after Hussein's downfall.

When the [Gulf War](/wiki/Gulf_War) ended, Hussein wanted to build a modern palace called Saddam Hill over some of the old ruins, in the pyramidal style of a [Sumerian](/wiki/Sumerian_architecture) [ziggurat](/wiki/Ziggurat). In 2003, he intended the construction of a [cable car](/wiki/Cable_car) line over Babylon, however plans were halted by the [2003 invasion of Iraq](/wiki/2003_invasion_of_Iraq).

### Present-day[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=14)]

[thumb|right|US Marines in front of the rebuilt ruins of Babylon, 2003](/wiki/File:Babylon_Ruins_Marines.jpeg) US forces under the command of General [James T. Conway](/wiki/James_T._Conway) of the [1st Marine Expeditionary Force](/wiki/1st_Marine_Expeditionary_Force) were criticized for building the military base "Camp Alpha", with a [helipad](/wiki/Helipad) and other facilities on ancient Babylonian ruins following the [Iraq War](/wiki/Iraq_War). US forces have occupied the site for some time and have caused irreparable damage to the archaeological record. In a report of the [British Museum's](/wiki/British_Museum) Near East department, Dr. John Curtis described how parts of the archaeological site were levelled to create a landing area for helicopters, and parking lots for heavy vehicles. Curtis wrote that the occupation forces: [Template:Blockquote](/wiki/Template:Blockquote)

A US Military spokesman claimed that engineering operations were discussed with the "head of the Babylon museum".[[26]](#cite_note-26) The head of the Iraqi State Board for Heritage and Antiquities, Donny George, said that the "mess will take decades to sort out".[[27]](#cite_note-27) In April 2006, Colonel John Coleman, former Chief of Staff for the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, offered to issue an apology for the damage done by military personnel under his command. However, he also claimed that the US presence had deterred far greater damage by other looters.[[28]](#cite_note-28) An article published in April 2006 stated that UN officials and Iraqi leaders have plans to restore Babylon, making it into a cultural center.[[29]](#cite_note-29)[[30]](#cite_note-30) In May 2009, the provincial government of [Babil](/wiki/Babil) reopened the site to tourism.

### Modern research[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=15)]

[thumb|](/wiki/File:Babylon_(1).JPG)[Lion of Babylon](/wiki/Lion_of_Babylon_(statue)) While historical knowledge of early Babylon must be pieced together from epigraphic remains found elsewhere, such as at [Uruk](/wiki/Uruk), [Nippur](/wiki/Nippur), and [Haradum](/wiki/Haradum), information on the Neo-Babylonian city is available from archaeological excavations and from classical sources. Babylon was described, perhaps even visited, by a number of classical historians including [Ctesias](/wiki/Ctesias), [Herodotus](/wiki/Herodotus), [Quintus Curtius Rufus](/wiki/Quintus_Curtius_Rufus), [Strabo](/wiki/Strabo), and [Cleitarchus](/wiki/Cleitarchus). These reports are of variable accuracy and some of the content was politically motivated, but these still provide useful information.[[31]](#cite_note-31) [thumb|Mušḫuššu (sirrush) and aurochs on either side of the processional street. Ancient Babylon, Mesopotamia, Iraq](/wiki/File:Mušḫuššu_(sirrush)_and_aurochs_on_either_side_of_the_processional_street._Ancient_Babylon,_Mesopotamia,_Iraq.jpg)

The first reported archaeological excavation of Babylon was conducted by [Claudius James Rich](/wiki/Claudius_James_Rich) in 1811–12 and again in 1817.[[32]](#cite_note-32)[[33]](#cite_note-33) Robert Mignan excavated at the site briefly in 1827.[[34]](#cite_note-34) [William Loftus](/wiki/William_Loftus) visited there in 1849.[[35]](#cite_note-35) [Austen Henry Layard](/wiki/Austen_Henry_Layard) made some soundings during a brief visit in 1850 before abandoning the site.[[36]](#cite_note-36) [Fulgence Fresnel](/wiki/Fulgence_Fresnel) and [Julius Oppert](/wiki/Julius_Oppert) heavily excavated Babylon from 1852 to 1854. Unfortunately, much of the result of their work was lost when a raft containing over forty crates of artifacts sank into the Tigris river.[[37]](#cite_note-37)[[38]](#cite_note-38) [thumb|Original tiles of the processional street. Ancient Babylon, Mesopotamia, Iraq.](/wiki/File:Original_tiles_of_the_processional_street._Ancient_Babylon,_Mesopotamia,_Iraq..jpg)

[Henry Creswicke Rawlinson](/wiki/Henry_Creswicke_Rawlinson) and [George Smith](/wiki/George_Smith_(assyriologist)) worked there briefly in 1854. The next excavation was conducted by [Hormuzd Rassam](/wiki/Hormuzd_Rassam) on behalf of the [British Museum](/wiki/British_Museum). Work began in 1879, continuing until 1882, and was prompted by widespread looting of the site. Using industrial scale digging in search of artifacts, Rassam recovered a large quantity of cuneiform tablets and other finds. The zealous excavation methods, common at the time, caused significant damage to the archaeological context.[[39]](#cite_note-39)[[40]](#cite_note-40) A team from the [German Oriental Society](/wiki/Deutsche_Orient-Gesellschaft) led by [Robert Koldewey](/wiki/Robert_Koldewey) conducted the first scientific archaeological excavations at Babylon. The work was conducted annually from 1899 until 1917. Primary efforts of the dig involved the temple of [Marduk](/wiki/Marduk) and the processional way leading up to it, as well as the city wall. The [Ishtar Gate](/wiki/Ishtar_Gate), along with hundreds of recovered tablets were sent back to Germany.[[41]](#cite_note-41)[[42]](#cite_note-42)[[43]](#cite_note-43)[[44]](#cite_note-44)[[45]](#cite_note-45)[[46]](#cite_note-46) Further work by the [German Archaeological Institute](/wiki/German_Archaeological_Institute) was conducted by Heinrich J. Lenzen in 1956 and Hansjörg Schmid in 1962. Lenzen's work dealt primarily with the [Hellenistic](/wiki/Hellenistic) theatre, and Schmid focused on the temple ziggurat [Etemenanki](/wiki/Etemenanki).[[47]](#cite_note-47) More recently, the site of Babylon was excavated by G. Bergamini on behalf of the Archaeological Excavations and Research Centre of Turin and the Iraqi-Italian Institute of Archaeological Sciences. This work began with a season of excavation in 1974 followed by a topographical survey in 1977.[[48]](#cite_note-48) The focus was on clearing up issues raised by re-examination of the old German data. After a decade, Bergamini returned to the site in 1987–1989. Work at that time concentrated on the area surrounding the Ishara and [Ninurta](/wiki/Ninurta) temples in the Shu-Anna city-quarter of Babylon.[[49]](#cite_note-49)[[50]](#cite_note-50) During the restoration efforts in Babylon, excavation and clearing has also been undertaken by the Iraqi State Organization for Antiquities and Heritage, however wider publication of these archaeological activities has been limited.[[51]](#cite_note-51)[[52]](#cite_note-52)

## Cultural importance[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=16)]

[Template:Unreferenced section](/wiki/Template:Unreferenced_section) Due to Babylon's historical significance as well as references to it in the [Bible](/wiki/Bible), the word "Babylon" in various languages has acquired a generic meaning of a large, bustling diverse city. Examples include:

* [Babilonas](/wiki/Babilonas) ([Lithuanian](/wiki/Lithuanian_language) name for "Babylon")—a real estate development in [Lithuania](/wiki/Lithuania).
* *Babylon* is used in [reggae](/wiki/Reggae) music as a concept in the [Rastafari](/wiki/Rastafari_movement#Zion_vs._Babylon) belief system, denoting the materialistic [capitalist](/wiki/Capitalist) world.
* [*Babylon 5*](/wiki/Babylon_5)—a [science fiction](/wiki/Science_fiction) series about a multi-racial futuristic [space station](/wiki/Space_station).

### Biblical narrative[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=17)]

[Template:Details](/wiki/Template:Details) In Genesis 10:10, Babel (Babylon) is described as a neighboring city of [Uruk](/wiki/Uruk), [Akkad](/wiki/Akkad_(city)) and Kalneh, in [Shinar](/wiki/Shinar).[[53]](#cite_note-53) Babylon appears throughout the [Hebrew Bible](/wiki/Hebrew_Bible), including descriptions of the [Babylonian Captivity](/wiki/Babylonian_Captivity), and also features prominently in several prophecies. The [New Testament](/wiki/New_Testament) [Book of Revelation](/wiki/Book_of_Revelation) refers to Babylon many centuries after it ceased to be a major political center, which some scholars of [apocalyptic literature](/wiki/Apocalyptic_literature) believe to be a [dysphemism](/wiki/Dysphemism) for the [Roman Empire](/wiki/Roman_Empire).[[54]](#cite_note-54)

## See also[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=18)]

* [Cities of the ancient Near East](/wiki/Cities_of_the_ancient_Near_East)
* [Etemenanki](/wiki/Etemenanki)
* [Jehoiachin's Rations Tablets](/wiki/Jehoiachin's_Rations_Tablets)
* [List of Kings of Babylon](/wiki/List_of_Kings_of_Babylon)
* [Tomb of Daniel](/wiki/Tomb_of_Daniel)
* [Tower of Babel](/wiki/Tower_of_Babel)
* [Lion of Babylon (statue)](/wiki/Lion_of_Babylon_(statue))

## References[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=19)]

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[Template:Reflist](/wiki/Template:Reflist)

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* [Joan Oates](/wiki/Joan_Oates), *Babylon*, Thames and Hudson, 1986. ISBN 0-500-02095-7 (hardback) ISBN 0-500-27384-7 (paperback)
* [The Ancient Middle Eastern Capital City — Reflection and Navel of the World](http://prelectur.stanford.edu/lecturers/maul/ancientcapitals.html) by Stefan Maul ("Die altorientalische Hauptstadt — Abbild und Nabel der Welt," in *Die Orientalische Stadt: Kontinuität. Wandel. Bruch.* 1 Internationales Kolloquium der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft. 9.–1 0. Mai 1996 in Halle/Saale, Saarbrücker Druckerei und Verlag (1997), p. 109–124.
* [Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)

## External links[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=22)]

[Template:Wikivoyage](/wiki/Template:Wikivoyage) [Template:Commons category](/wiki/Template:Commons_category)

* [Template:In Our Time](/wiki/Template:In_Our_Time)
* [Ancient Babylon](http://www.ancientcityofbabylon.com)
* [Iraq Image – Babylon Satellite Observation](http://www.iraqimage.com/pages/browse/Babylon.html)
* [Site Photographs of Babylon – Oriental Institute](http://oi.uchicago.edu/gallery/asp_meso_babylon/)
* [Encyclopædia Britannica, Babylon](http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9011618/Babylon)
* [1901–1906 Jewish Encyclopedia, Babylon](http://jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=51&letter=B)
* [*Beyond Babylon : art, trade, and diplomacy in the second millennium B.C.*](http://libmma.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/p15324coll10/id/57688), Issued in connection with an exhibition held Nov. 18, 2008-Mar. 15, 2009, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Iraq war

* [Babylon wrecked by war, The Guardian, January 15, 2005](http://www.guardian.co.uk/Iraq/Story/0,2763,1391042,00.html)
* [Mirosław Olbryś, *The Polish contribution to protection of the archaeological heritage in central south Iraq, November 2003 to April 2005*, Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites, Volume 8, Number 2, 2007 , pp. 88–104(17)](http://www.ingentaconnect.com/search/article?option1=tka&value1=The+Polish+contribution+to+protection+of+the+archaeological+heritage+in+central+south+Iraq%2c+November+2003&pageSize=10&index=1)[Template:Dead link](/wiki/Template:Dead_link)
* [Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)
* [UNESCO Final Report on Damage Assessment in Babylon](http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001831/183134e.pdf)

[Category:Babylon](/wiki/Category:Babylon) [Category:Babil Governorate](/wiki/Category:Babil_Governorate) [Category:Amorite cities](/wiki/Category:Amorite_cities) [Category:Archaeological sites in Iraq](/wiki/Category:Archaeological_sites_in_Iraq) [Category:Former populated places in Iraq](/wiki/Category:Former_populated_places_in_Iraq) [Category:Hebrew Bible places](/wiki/Category:Hebrew_Bible_places) [Category:Historic Jewish communities](/wiki/Category:Historic_Jewish_communities) [Category:Populated places on the Euphrates River](/wiki/Category:Populated_places_on_the_Euphrates_River) [Category:Articles containing video clips](/wiki/Category:Articles_containing_video_clips)