

23T04b What's in a Name? Kingdoms

Hello my friends. Thanks for joining me today for an @ the PUNLA coffee table.

What's in a name? Names. Names are important, they help us picture the person we are talking about. The Bible is full of names, many of these names we struggle to pronounce. Belief it or not, most of these names have meaning which is important to their story. Over the past couple years, I have discussed some of these, but more questions keep coming in.

In this series, I'm going to look at many prominent names to determine how the name matches the behavior, are there other names used for this character, why is the name so important. Then we will ask the tough question. Is this really their name or maybe only a title or description? Should be interesting.

Today, I want to take a look at names of Kingdoms. The Bible has many kingdoms Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Israel, even places like Gog and Magog and Sodom and Gomorrah.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father please guide our discussion today. Help me to stay out of the way, so you can use me. If I say anything wrong, please don't let them remember my errand words but remember what you want them to hear regardless of my words. We trust you and we know you have promised the wisdom we need to understand your word in the Bible. Help us to let the Holy Spirit lead us and guide us. Bless our time together and I pray all these things in your name Lord Jesus. Amen.

Okay, Kingdoms. First order of business. These kingdom names are the name of real historical kingdoms but the question that often comes up, is every place these names are used in the Bible talking about that specific real kingdom. The simplest answer to this is no. No not everyplace in the bible when a name of a real kingdom is used, is the author really talking about that kingdom. Many times the author is using the name of the kingdom to represent a feeling or behavior, not necessarily that actual kingdom.

Okay, This is sounding complicated. How can an average reader understand this? Well there are some easy rules to help us.

First, kingdoms rise and fall. What I mean is a kingdom rises in power and influence but then they always fall or are conquered by another kingdom. And generally, those kingdoms are history, they don't rise again. Sometimes another empire will grow out of the same area, but typically the empire is named something else. The only exception is if the region is called by a name, then multiple empires may rise from that area. They may be all called by the name of the region like Egypt.

Let me give you a couple examples. Babylon. Babylon was a real ancient empire, one the first major world empires in the Bible. King Nebuchadnezzar conquered most of the

known world from Egypt to the south, North and east to Euphrates River valleys and beyond. Babylon destroyed the kingdom of Judah. But Babylon was conquered and destroyed by the Medes and Persians around 539BC. This Babylon empire was gone long ago but Babylon is talked about in presentence in the New Testament. So when new testament authors use Babylon, they are usually referring to an actual kingdom but the feeling the word Babylon invokes in the minds of the readers.

Let’s look at one of these, 1 Peter 5:12b-14 (NLT) ... *My purpose in writing is to encourage you and assure you that what you are experiencing is truly part of God’s grace for you. Stand firm in this grace. Your sister church here in Babylon sends you greetings, and so does my son Mark. Greet each other with a kiss of love. Peace be with all of you who are in Christ.*

The literalist says, well Peter must be in Babylon. While it is possible that Peter could have been, it is not likely. It is more likely he is in Rome and just referring to Rome as Babylon. Some even speculate that Babylon is actually Peter referring to Jerusalem. Whatever it is, Peter is probably not talking about the literal kingdom of Babylon but using the term to invoke a reaction from his reader.

Babylon is mentioned several times in Revelation, Rev 14:8, Rev 16:19, Rev 17:5, Rev 18:2.

Revelation 14:8 (NLT) *Then another angel followed him through the sky, shouting, “Babylon is fallen—that great city is fallen—because she made all the nations of the world drink the wine of her passionate immorality.”* When John wrote this down, Babylon had already fallen. Babylon was no longer a power. Could this be some future time. Well to John it was, but is it yet future, that is for another conversation. But almost everyone accepts that this is not really Babylon but some world power that will face some sort of destruction during the events recorded in Revelation.

Revelation 16:19 talks about a future destruction of Babylon, Revelation 17:5 the name Babylon is written on the great prostitutes forehead, and Revelation 18:1-2a (NLT) *After all this I saw another angel come down from heaven with great authority, and the earth grew bright with his splendor. He gave a mighty shout: “Babylon is fallen—that great city is fallen!*

So, Babylon has fallen again. Once in 539 BC by the Persians, Once in Rev. 14:8 and again in Rev. 16:19, again in Rev. 18:2. It’s also a name on the great prostitute. So is this literally the kingdom of Babylon? Well probably not. It is far more likely John is using Babylon to invoke an emotional response from the reader. This is a bad place, an ungodly place. Many say this is actually Rome, maybe Jerusalem or the Jewish leaders, some even imagine it is the United States. I don’t know. But what we need to understand is John wants us to understand this very prominent city or kingdom or country will face judgement from God for its ungodly behavior.

Another one of these is Sodom or Sodom & Gomorrah. In Genesis 19, God destroys Sodom & Gomorrah for their ungodly behavior. Then throughout the rest of the Bible Sodom is used to describe the type of destruction the city or kingdom will face from God. Destruction like Sodom in Isaiah 1:9-10 (NLT) *If the LORD of Heaven’s Armies had not spared a few of us, we would have been wiped out like Sodom, destroyed like Gomorrah. Listen to the LORD, you leaders of “Sodom. Listen to the law of our God, people of “Gomorrah.”* Isaiah is talking to Israel and calling them both Sodom and Gomorrah, he is not talking about a literal Sodom or Gomorrah. Again in Isaiah 3:9, Isaiah compares his people Israel to Sodom.

In Deuteronomy 32:32, Moses talks about ungodly behavior as being from the *“vine of Sodom, from the vineyard of Gomorrah” (NLT)*

Ezekiel uses Sodom & Gomorrah many times to represent destruction and guilt. Ezekiel even calls Israel and Judah, Sodom and Gomorrah. In Ezekiel 16, Ezekiel is talking about the sister kingdoms, the split kingdoms of Israel and Judah which have been judged by God, using the names Sodom and Gomorrah as the names of the sisters.

Even John using this symbolism in Revelation 11:8 (NLT) *And their bodies will lie in the main street of Jerusalem, the city that is figuratively called “Sodom” and “Egypt,” the city where their Lord was crucified.* John is using Sodom and Egypt as names for Jerusalem. So, you can see from these examples, the name of a kingdom is not always talking about that literal specific kingdom, the name can be used to represent behavior or pending judgement or as pseudonym for the real name to make a point.

The last one I’d like to mention is Gog and Magog. Revelation 20:8 and Ezekiel 38-39 talk about Gog and Magog. And the eventual destruction of this evil kingdom. In fact, Magog is listed as one of the sons of Japheth in both Genesis 10 and 1 Chronicles 1. Gog is listed as one of the sons of Joel in 1 Chronicles 5. We don’t know much about Gog or Magog, but it is very possible one or both of these may have become a kingdom. But no one knows. But either way, Ezekiel depicts three different times that Gog and Magog are destroyed. So, it is probably not literal. These destructions are probably symbolic and even the names Gog and Magog are probably not literal places but references a fierce and wicked people being judged by God.

Later in Revelation 20:8, John again uses this symbolism. Revelation 20:7-8 (NLT) *When the thousand years come to an end, Satan will be let out of his prison. He will go out to deceive the nations—called Gog and Magog—in every corner of the earth. He will gather them together for battle—a mighty army, as numberless as sand along the seashore.* Will there really be a Gog and Magog at the end of times. Maybe, may not. Does it matter, well no. The name is not the point. In each of these bible passages, Gog and Magog are used to describe a wicked group of people who rebel against God, fight against God and are completely defeated by God.

Let’s Pray

Father God, thank you for giving us the resources and sources to answer these tough questions. We know you know all things. When we see how things fit perfectly in your plan. Wow. Only with God is this possible Thank you for giving us the Holy Spirit to guide us and help us. Help us to open the Bible and look into history to answer our questions. I pray these things in your name Lord Jesus, Amen

Okay. So what is in a name? Well, a lot actually. A name can convey location, reference to a group of people or a specific person. A name can also be used to symbolize a behavior of a person or group of people. The name is used to evoke emotion because that name brings to mind things from history. People relate to that name.

So why is this important. We need to be aware that names are used not only to identify a specific person or group but can and are used to describe behavior or future events that will be like what happened to the group or person we associate with that name.

So next time you read a name in the Bible, take the time to find out what it means and consider is it a name or is it a description. Thank you for joining me @ the PUNLA Coffee Table today, I hope you'll join us for the rest of the series What's in a Name?

If you liked the message, please share the link with a friend. Send me comments, my email should be on the screen.

Until next time @ the PUNLA Coffee Table. God bless.