



Babylon Rising: The Secret on Ararat

By Tim LaHaye, Bob Phillips

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Tim LaHaye, creator of the phenomenally successful Left Behind® books, continues his newest top-ten New York Times bestselling series: Babylon Rising. The heroic Michael Murphy—“cool, brainy, sexy, and valiant”^{*}—hurtles into his second whirlwind adventure in pursuit of Biblical artifacts.

In Babylon Rising Tim LaHaye began an adventure series that he calls even more exciting than his 50-million-plus-copy bestselling Left Behind series. Readers agreed, as the novel debuted as a top-ten New York Times bestseller.

Now, in the second Babylon Rising novel, Biblical scholar, archaeologist, professor, and hero for our times Michael Murphy is in pursuit of one of the most mysterious and sought-after of all Biblical artifacts, Noah’s Ark. As Murphy undertakes his death-defying quest to ascend Mount Ararat, he will discover dramatic revelations of Biblical prophecies and be drawn even closer to the most terrifying evil about to be unleashed on all mankind.

With The Secret on Ararat following close on the heels of Glorious Appearing, the fastest-selling Left Behind novel ever, Tim LaHaye will further prove to be one of the most fascinating and popular storytellers of our time.

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Editorial Review

From the Inside Flap

Tim LaHaye, creator of the phenomenally successful Left Behind® books, continues his newest top-ten New York Times bestselling series: Babylon Rising. The heroic Michael Murphy—"cool, brainy, sexy, and valiant"*—hurtles into his second whirlwind adventure in pursuit of Biblical artifacts.

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About the Author

Dr. Tim LaHaye is a renowned prophecy scholar, minister, and author. His Left Behind® series is the bestselling Christian fiction series of all time. He and his wife, Beverly, live in southern California. They have four children and nine grandchildren.

Bob Phillips, Ph.D., is the author of more than eighty books. He is a licensed counselor and Executive Director for the Pointman Leadership Institute.

From the Hardcover edition.

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Breathe. He desperately needed to breathe. But he knew instinctively that if he opened his mouth to try and suck in a breath, he would die.

Gritting his teeth fiercely, Murphy opened his eyes instead. And a pair of yellow, animal eyes stared back. Then a wildly gaping jaw came into focus through the greenish gloom, pointed teeth bared in a silent snarl. Murphy reached out, expecting the teeth to clamp down on his hand, but the dog face had disappeared, sucked back into the watery darkness.

It was no good. He had to get some air into his lungs before they burst. He turned his face upward, toward the feeble light, and after an agonizing few seconds during which he had the horrifying sense that he was sinking, not rising, his head broke the surface.

He sucked in a huge, spluttering breath, simultaneously grabbing on to the narrow stone ledge that projected from the side of the pit. Resting his head against the jagged rock, he could feel something warm mingling with the freezing water. Blood. As the pain suddenly hit him, a wild carousel of thoughts started racing round his brain.

Laura. He would never see her again. She wouldn't even know he had died here, in this remote, godforsaken place. She would never know his last thoughts had been about her.

Then he remembered. Laura was dead. She'd died in his arms.

And now he was about to join her. With that thought, his body seemed to relax, accepting its fate, and he felt himself slipping back into the surging torrent.

No! He couldn't give up. He couldn't let the crazy old man win at last. He had to find a way out. But first he had to find those puppies.

Clutching the ledge with both hands, Murphy took a series of quick, deep breaths, hyperventilating to force as much oxygen as possible into his lungs. He'd done enough cave diving to know he could stay under a full two minutes if he had to. But that was under ideal conditions. Right now he had to contend with the effects of shock, blood loss, and bone-shaking cold—all the while trying to find two little dogs somewhere in a swirling maelstrom. As he let himself slip back under the freezing water, he wondered—not for the first time—how he managed to get himself into these messes.

The answer was simple. One word: Methuselah.

Murphy had been making his way carefully through the cave, fanning his flashlight across the dank black walls, when he found himself standing not on loose shale but what felt like solid wooden planks. Ever alert to tricks and traps, Murphy instinctively reacted as if he'd just stepped onto a tray of burning coals—but before he could leap aside, the trapdoor sprang open. As he felt himself plunging into the void, a familiar cackling laugh shattered the silence, echoing crazily off the rock walls.

“Welcome to the game, Murphy! Get out of this one if you can!”

As Murphy cartwheeled through space, his brain was still trying to come up with a suitable response. But all that came out was a grunt as he slammed into the ground like a bag of cement and the air was punched out of his lungs, before the impact flung him sideways and his head connected with a boulder. For a moment all was black, buzzing darkness. Then he raised himself up on his hands and knees and his senses returned one by one: He could feel the damp grit between his fingers; he could taste it in his mouth; he could smell stagnant water; he could dimly make out the shadowy walls of the pit he'd fallen into.

And he could hear the fretful whining of what sounded like two cold, wet—and very scared—little dogs. He turned toward the sound and there they were, shivering together on a narrow ledge. A pair of German shepherd puppies. Murphy shook his head: He always tried to prepare himself for anything where Methuselah was concerned, but what were a couple of puppies doing in the middle of an underground cave complex miles from anywhere? Could they have gotten lost and somehow wandered this far from the surface? He didn't think so. Much more likely they were there because Methuselah had put them there.

They were part of the game.

Fighting his natural instinct to gather the bedraggled pups tightly in his arms and tell them everything was going to be okay, he approached the ledge cautiously. They looked so helpless. But that didn't mean harmless. Nothing in Methuselah's games was harmless, and if he had put them there for Murphy to find, then something about the dogs was out of whack. He just had to figure out what.

Just then the steady dripping sound that had been nagging away at the back of Murphy's consciousness since he landed in the pit started to get louder. He turned in the direction of the noise and suddenly it became a roaring, as a huge wave of water surged through a narrow gap in the rocks. In a second a frothing tide was tugging at his ankles, pulling him off balance. Forgetting Methuselah's mind games, he pushed himself back toward the ledge, scooped up the puppies, and stuffed them under his jacket. His eyes darted round the walls of the pit, looking for anything that would help him find a way out, as the rising water swirled around his chest. The puppies were just a diversion, he thought bitterly, fighting to keep his footing. He hadn't spotted the real danger until it was too late. "Don't worry, fellas, I'll get you out of here," he assured them with more confidence than he felt. Then the torrent lifted him off his feet and the panicking dogs squirmed out of his jacket. Fighting to keep his head above the surface, he grabbed for them, but his fingers closed on icy water and then he too was engulfed, spinning out of control like a bunch of wet clothes in a Laundromat washer.

He closed his eyes, and even as his lungs started hungrily demanding air, he tried to find a calm place in his mind where he could think. He checked through his options. The water would soon reach the level of the trapdoor, which was no doubt secured against escape. So, search for another way out under the water, or look for the puppies again before they drowned? If he tried to find a way out on his own, the puppies would be dead by the time he found it. If he tried to save the puppies first, he'd probably wind up too exhausted to find a way out. If there was a way out.

So much for his options.

The only shred of hope he could cling to was the fact that this was a game. And a game, however deadly, still had rules.

But there was no way he could figure them out while his lungs were screaming and his thought processes were beginning to go fuzzy due to lack of oxygen.

Get some air. Then go after those puppies. If he was still alive after that, maybe God would give him some inspiration.

When Murphy walked into the lab, he was greeted by the sight of a young woman bent over a workbench, her jet-black hair, tied back in a ponytail, making a stark contrast with her crisp white lab coat as she scrutinized a sheet of parchment. She didn't look up as the door clicked shut behind him, and he stood for a moment, smiling at the expression of fierce concentration on her face.

"What are you grinning at, Professor?" she asked, her eyes never leaving the parchment.

"Nothing, Shari. Nothing at all. It's just nice to see someone so absorbed in their work, is all."

She gave a short "hmph," still not looking up, and Murphy's smile broadened. Shari Nelson was one of the top students in his biblical archaeology class at Preston University, and for almost two years she had been his part-time research assistant. In that time he'd come to appreciate her passion for the subject, her limitless capacity for hard work, and her sharp intelligence. But most of all, he valued her warm and generous spirit. She might be pretending to ignore him right now, but they'd been through enough tragedy and heartache

together in the past year, with the deaths of his wife and her brother still painful every hour of every day, for him to know that she would drop everything—even a fascinating ancient parchment like the one she was studying—if he needed her.

“So what’s up, Shari? Did the results from the carbon-dating tests on our little pottery fragment come in?”

“Not yet,” Shari replied, returning the parchment to the clear plastic container on the bench. “But something has definitely arrived for you.” She gestured toward a large white envelope with the purple and orange lettering of Federal Express.

Shari watched eagerly as Murphy picked up the package. Clearly she’d had a hard time containing her curiosity while she waited for Murphy to arrive at the lab.

“Strange,” he mused. “No return address. Just Babylon. Doesn’t look like it went through the usual FedEx mailing process.” He heard Shari gasp. Babylon, she knew all too well, could only mean one thing: a whole heap of trouble.

Murphy carefully opened the envelope and shook the contents—a smaller envelope with the words Professor Murphy printed in heavy marker and a xeroxed page from a map—out onto the workbench. He glanced at the map, then opened the second envelope. Inside was an index card with three words typed on it.

Chemar. Zepheth. Kopher.

He handed it to Shari while he examined the map. A route had been marked in pink felt-tip from Raleigh, moving west, across the border into Tennessee. Where the snaking line stopped, there were an X and four barely legible words written in a spidery scrawl:

“Cave of the Waters. Mean anything to you, Shari?”

“It sounds like somewhere you definitely don’t want to go,” she replied firmly. He winced. Exactly what Laura would have said. Same tone of voice, even.

“It’s coming back to me. I’ve heard of this place. It’s in the Great Smoky Mountains . . . past Asheville, somewhere between Waynesville and Bryson City.” If he remembered it right, the cave was discovered in the early 1900s but had never been fully explored, because the high water table in the area—not to mention at least three underground streams that ran through it—caused the chambers to flood periodically. It was supposed to contain a vast labyrinth of passageways, but no one knew how far they extended. Caving expeditions had been officially discouraged after three cavers were lost without a trace in the early seventies.

“Okay, so we’ve got directions to a cave. Now, what about the message on the card? What do you make of it, Shari?”

She repeated the words. “Chemar. Zepheth. Kopher. It’s Hebrew. No problem there. But beyond that it’s got me stumped. Does it have something to do with Babylon?”

“It wouldn’t surprise me,” he said, stroking his chin thoughtfully. “But right now it doesn’t mean any more to me than it does to you.”

“And there’s no signature anywhere, and no return address. So how can we find out who sent this?”
Murphy gave a half-smile. “Come on, Shari. A mysterious message in an ancient language? A set of directions to a remote spot? Babylon? He didn’t really need to sign it, did he?”

Shari sighed. “I guess not. I was just hoping . . . you know, that it might be something else. Something innocent. Not one of these crazy games where you—”

She could tell Murphy wasn’t listening anymore. He was studying the map intently, already halfway there. Her heart sank as she realized there was nothing she could do to stop him.

All she could do now was pray.

From the Hardcover edition.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Christopher Patton:

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Kelly Gomes:

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