

The Book of Revelation

By

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CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

COMMERCIAL BABYLON

"And he said, This is an ephah that goeth forth... And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead... and, behold, there came out two women, and the wind was in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork; and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven. Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah? And he said unto me, To build it an house in the land of Shinar: and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base" (Zechariah 5).

The ephah, like the bushel, is a standard of measure and the talent of lead is a weight for a scales. Here we have weights and measures; buying and selling; or business and commerce in general.

Prosperity

Today commerce has no head, but each nation does that which is right in its own eyes. There is a cry however for a superman; for a man to arise that can bring in peace and prosperity; a man to unite the nations, do away with war and put a backbone in industry.

The answer to all of this is found right here. Commerce must have a head; a great capitol city must be erected to lead all nations into prosperity. Here the ephah and the weight are carried to Shinar. The wind is in their wings; everything unites to make their journey both swift and prosperous as the kings of earth come together in this great endeavor.

All hatreds will be forgotten; wars and armament campaigns will cease; the golden age of man's making will have arrived and men will be crying "**Peace and Safety,**" and ascribing glory and honour to their great emperor whose wisdom has united the nations and brought this prosperity to the world.

A Famed City

This great city will arise on the banks of the mighty Euphrates, where once before the race began to build "**a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven**" (Genesis 11:4). Then, they built by mere force of man power; now men have brought on a machine age; an age of iron and steel; an age of steam shovels, great cranes and mighty engines.

Men will unite to build a city whose fame will reach to high Heaven; a city such as was never built before; a city of luxury and ease, of riches and wealth; a city whose miles of wharfs will be the goal of ships from every clime; a city whose fame will fill the mighty Euphrates with ocean going freighters and luxurious passenger vessels of every description.

Luxury and Finery

This city will be the mart of every costly merchandise; of every fine and dainty food. The great ships will steam up the mighty river, filled with "**gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, and cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men**" (vs. 12, 13).

It will be a city where musicians will congregate.

A city far famed for its orchestras, its bands and its symphony concerts. There will be the "**voice of harpers, and of musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters**" (vs. 22).

Costly Merchandise

It will be a city of every kind of fancy craftwork.

Carpenters turning out the fine furniture of "**thyine wood**" and most precious woods; with the world's greatest jewelers skilled in making necklaces of gold and silver, with broaches of precious stones and of pearls.

This will be the center of the world's most noted fashion experts to plan the garments of "**fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet.**" There will be famed artificers, inventing new and rare "**vessels of ivory... and of brass.**" Architects will plan and build great skyscrapers of "**iron, and marble.**" Apothecaries will concoct rare and unusual perfumes and flavors of "**cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense.**"

The world's greatest distillers will mix their malt and age their goods to supply the feasts and banquets with the most delicious and incomparable "**wines.**" Confectioners will build their great electric ovens and bake the finest pastries of "**fine flour, and wheat.**" Representatives of all the great slaughter houses will send in their choicest cuts of beef and mutton. It will be a market for fine and high bred race horses, and an outlet for the "**chariots**" of the automobile and aeroplane industry.

But alas! all is not freedom and joy and glamour, for to bring such luxury into being and keep it going, there must be just behind the scenes a mass of "**slaves, and souls of men**" to sweat and toil; to starve and suffer; bleed and die.

This new Babylon will be a far famed city; the goal of countless honeymoons and bridal tour as "**bridegroom and... bride**" journey thither to see the sights and enjoy the matchless wonders

(vs. 23).

This city must be unrivaled in every way, even by that ancient Babylon that once raised its proud head along the Euphrates and ruled over all the kingdoms of the world. That Babylon was "**the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency**" (Isaiah 13:19). This will be the cap-sheaf of man's wisdom, a city of riches and luxury, of glory and beauty. It will be a gathering place for the pleasure loving; a place of riotous joy and ceaseless feasting.

Babylon and the Second Coming

A question may arise. If there is to be such a city, how can CHRIST's coming be so near? The building of the area could begin before the true church is removed, then a few years only needed to complete the project. This would give ample time for such a city to appear.

I one time worked for a real estate firm in Detroit, Michigan. Eighty acres were purchased and I marveled as the great machinery moved through the field, reaching far down into the earth and making a pathway for the great sewer that was being constructed just behind, and the dirt being thrown back on top. Other great and marvelous machinery was in operation paving streets, as trucks hurried about with material and a great mixer poured out the cement into small cars on tracks.

Former Babylon

The former Babylon was grand beyond description.

Herodotus describes it as an exact square of fifteen miles around, and surrounded by a massive wall 87 feet thick and towering high into the air. In the wall were two hundred fifty towers and six chariots could drive abreast on its broad top.

Numerous magnificent avenues, 150 feet wide, ran across the city from north to south and the same number crossed them at right angles from east to west making several hundred great squares over half a mile, on a side. The Euphrates river flowed diagonally through the center.

A great tower with a winding stairway to its summit and filled with sacred utensils worth 200 million dollars, was known as the "Tower of Bel." The famous hanging gardens were one of the seven wonders of the world. They were raised in terraces one above another to a height of 350 feet, and were reached by staircases ten feet wide.

This great city was given over to banquetry and reveling. Belshazzar made a feast to a thousand of his lords "**and drank wine before the thousand**" (Daniel 5).

But soon; very soon there came a writing on the wall and "**that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.**" And so will history repeat itself and Babylon will rise to fall again.

Revival of Business

This will be a great city, but alas! "**in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints**" (vs.

24). It is ever true that the godly must suffer at the hands of worldly Babylon. This city will be the commercial center of the entire world. To build and maintain such a city will take the products of the entire industrial world and bring in such a boon to buying and selling that the great depression of former years will merely be a forgotten dream, and its inhabitants will work and cheat and deceive and scheme to get some of this new wealth.

The erection of this great city will break the depression and bring on a world wide revival of business and money will flow freely, for **"the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies"** (vs. 3). To supply the material of such a city and keep it going with all its luxury and pleasure going throngs will set the wheels of industry spinning and form an outlet for every kind of merchandise, and men will become drunk with covetous desire to get more and more and more.

Danger in Big Business

Buying and selling is not evil. Rightful commerce is not sinful, but nearby there lurks a danger so grave and temptation so subtil that few indeed are able to enter such a race and come out with garments unspotted by unrighteous gain. **"They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition."**

Money is not evil, but the **"love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."** So dangerous to spiritual health is the pursuit of riches that it is well for us that **"having food and raiment let us be therewith content"** for **"godliness with contentment is great gain"** (I Timothy 6).

"The love of money is the root of all evil" And so with Babylon, it becomes the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird (vs. 2). Not only is this the center of foul business but demonism and Spiritism will find expression as they give full vent to their fleshly lusts.

Heartless Commerce

The ephah contained wickedness and was carried to Shinar to be set upon her own base. Many a shady deal is excused by a "that's the way of business." Long has commerce ruled among mankind. It furnishes the principles and the ideals of war and peace. Let two nations go to war and a third gloats over the opportunity to ship in munitions to kill their fellowmen, and all in the name of commerce. Commerce claims to make the nations happy; it claims to tie them up in one great brotherhood. But underneath is selfishness and every evil work.

In this mad scramble for wealth, men will disregard truth and righteousness. The church is a killjoy; the Bible is nothing; commercialize Sunday; trample conscience in the dust; down with Christian scruples; away with anything that cannot bring in the cash.

The Godly Few

Although the world goes mad for gain and men sell their souls for wealth, yet there is still the faithful remnant whose joys are in their Lord and who turn their eyes from this mad rush and look for the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is GOD. Their very presence is a witness against the wisdom, the principles and the spirit of the worldly wise.

Although they are in the world they are not of it, and when the thunders of wrath are rumbling in the distance and Babylon's doom draws near, there is a mighty proclamation "**Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles, and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her**" (vs. 20).

Once before, another city reveled and sinned against the GOD of Heaven to her own destruction; and as the sins of Babylon "**have reached unto Heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities,**" her plagues shall come in one day, and she like Sodom shall be utterly burned with fire (vs. 5, 8).

Sodom and Babylon

There is much in common between the Sodom of the past and the Babylon of the future.

First

In their Merit of Destruction - Manner of Life

Sodom was exceeding wicked before the Lord, but we are surprised to learn that her iniquity runs in good society today, for it was "**pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness**" (Ezekiel 16:49).

The strikes, mobs and labor troubles of our day; the cry for less hours and more pay is but the iniquity of Sodom endeavoring to bring in abundance of idleness and eat, eat, eat. This will increase and head up in the great city Babylon which will live deliciously and "**sit [as] a queen**" (vs. 7).

In Sodom they also "**did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded**" (Luke 17:28). This is also most certainly the spirit of Babylon.

Sodom also gave herself "**over to fornication, and going after strange flesh**" (Jude 7). And Babylon will "**become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit**" (vs. 2).

Second

In Their Call from Destruction

Not one spark of GOD's fire fell upon Sodom until Lot was safe without its walls. And so before the thunders of GOD's wrath will break upon the doomed Babylon, there will ring out a call from Heaven, "**Come out of her, my people**" (vs. 4).

This is ever GOD's way. Not one drop of water until those eight souls were safe within the ark. And we can well thank GOD that no part of the great Tribulation will fall upon the head of any member of the church.

Third

In Their Preparation for Destruction

Sodom was built in a "**vale... full of slime pits**" (Genesis 14:10) (Bitumen and asphalt). Little did the men of Sodom know that just beneath their feet there lay the element of their destruction.

Babylon will also be built in a land rich with the same inflammable material. Once before, when men built upon this plain, they used brick for stone and found an abundance of "**slime**" (bitumen) for mortar (Genesis 11:3). The Pathfinder carried a late picture of a boat in that land, made waterproof by asphalt.

Fourth

The Manner of their Destruction

In the case of Sodom, all was in preparation for their destruction. When "**The Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven**" (Genesis 19:24), He need merely set fire to these rich deposits of bitumen and the fierce roar of those unquenchable flames filled the land with a horror no human tongue could tell.

Fifth

The Witness of their Destruction

When Sodom was destroyed "**Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the Lord: And he looked towards Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace**" (Genesis 19:27-28).

And so again when the "**smoke of her burning**" rolls high and Babylon seethes and smokes in fearful destruction, "**the kings of the earth...- standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more... And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city!**" (vs. 9-11, 17-18).

Sixth

In Their Total Destruction

When GOD burned out the great deposits of bitumen that underlaid the city of Sodom, the whole

country sank to rise no more and now nothing breaks the silence of that location but the desolate waves and monotonous splash of the bitter waters of the Dead Sea.

And so in like manner must great Babylon sink, for its destruction "**shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah**" (Isaiah 13:19). This prophecy has never been fulfilled, for in her former destruction Babylon did not fall LIKE Sodom. "**A mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all**" (vs. 21).

Throw a stone into the sea and there is a splash; a widening of ripples and its place is found no more at all. And so, like Sodom will this great city sink and so complete will be her destruction that "**they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations; but thou shalt be desolate forever**" (Jeremiah 51:26).

The stones of ancient Babylon made easy building material for the little towns that sprang up nearby. But so complete will be the fall of this future city that not one stone will ever be used for other construction.

But before the flames die down and ere the black smoke clears away, the world will awake in the grip of another depression. And so it has ever been and ever will be as men build for prosperity upon the sinking waves of human wisdom.

Real Prosperity

But not because there is no other, do men build on such a flimsy base. Rather let our rulers, like Jehoshaphat, lift up their hearts, "**in the ways of the Lord.**" Let them go "**about throughout all the cities**" of our land and teach the law of the Lord, and the result will be the same, "**he had MUCH business in the cities of Judah**" (II Chronicles 17).

But the proud heart of man will never learn and they will ever build to their own sorrow.

May the reader and writer of these notes, however, set their faces steadfastly toward that city which hath foundations, that city which will never be destroyed, because its builder and maker is GOD.

~ end of chapter 18 ~

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