

Nimrod - The Rebellious Panther

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CHAPTER TEN -

THE BABYLONIAN RIVER

The Mississippi river is one of the greatest rivers in the world. It is 2,350 miles long. It is the "main stem" of a vast system that drains an area of 1,244,000 square miles. The Mississippi is a part of the life of two provinces of Canada and 31 states. The Mississippi draws to itself rivers from east and west: from the east, the St. Croix, the Chippewa, the Wisconsin, the Rock, the Illinois, the Kaskaskia, the Ohio, the Yazoo, and the Big Black; from the west, the Minnesota, the Iowa with the Cedar, the Skunk, the Des Moines, the Missouri, the St. Francis, the White, the Arkansas, and the Red.

The Mississippi becomes muddy and turbulent when it swallows up the muddy Missouri. Something definitely happened there above St. Louis. It changed the whole character of the Mississippi. The Missouri is called the Mighty Mo. It is angry, muddy, rebellious.

For 200 years we have been wrestling with the Mississippi river in an effort to restrain it from devouring lives and property. It has always devoured and destroyed. To appease its anger and gratify its demoniacal whims, the Mississippi has often, without warning, cut itself a new channel. The French built a levee at New Orleans in 1717. Since then an almost continuous line of levees have been built from New Orleans to Memphis. But this made the muddy river angrier than ever; and in 1927 his pent up wrath broke out into a flood of national disaster.

We now think that we have the Mississippi under control. But he knows that an earthquake at the right place at the right time, will show the world whether or not he is under control. The Mississippi will have its muddy turbulent, destructive climax. It knows that floods and earthquakes in divers places will someday unite their hellish strength and destructive powers with his. In that day, his beastly mouth will be a thing of great wonder.

The seventeenth and eighteenth chapters of Revelation are two of the greatest chapters in the Bible. They are not two chapters, but one chapter. They are climacteric chapters. They are the mouth of the great Babylonian river of religion, politics, and commerce. Having its source in the Garden of Eden, this river gathered to itself at ancient Babylon the foul, muddy waters of Nimrod's organized rebellion against GOD.

For these hundreds of years it has gathered to itself tributaries from all lands and tongues. Roman Catholicism flows into it. Corrupt Protestantism flows into it. All the cults flow into it. All the "Father Divines" and "Prophet Joneses" flow into it. All the streams of Machiavellian politics enter into it. All the streams of heartless, soulless commerce enter into it.

The seventeenth and eighteenth chapters of Revelation are the mouth of the great Babylonian river. It is the Mystery river, the Whore river.

This river has always devoured and destroyed. For these centuries continuous efforts have been made to restrain it. Abraham, Moses and the prophets built levees to control it. The Apostolic Church, the Reformation, the revivals under the Wesleys, the Great Awakening, the great modern revivals, the foreign mission enterprise, the American Bible Society, the tract societies, the thousands of local churches - Despite it all, this Babylonian river, aided by war and famine and fear, is today devouring the earth. Today it is wider, deeper, angrier, more mysterious and more vicious than ever before. It is approaching its great and vast and awful climax described in the seventeenth and eighteenth chapters of Revelation.

This is a Babylonian river, not a Roman river. This is a universal stream, not a Roman stream; Rome is a tributary, not the main stream. The whole world is involved, not just the Roman world.

The Harlot is the universal Babylonian harlot, not her Roman Catholic daughter - whose influence is not universal, but confined to 400 million people. The "**great city**" of the Harlot is the universal (rebuilt) city of Babylon, not the Catholic city of Rome.

Why is it that we have had, and are now having so many awkward, conflicting interpretations of these two chapters? As an example, listen to the words of that remarkable expositor and orator, J.A. Seiss, on the thirteenth chapter of Revelation:

"Who and what is this Beast (in Rev. 13), with two horns like a lamb; Carrying it to the leading commentators for solution, very confused and contradictory are the answers given. Out of some forty whom I could name, one-half say this Beast is the Pope, or the papacy, or the papal kingdom, or the Roman clergy, or the spiritual Roman Empire, or the various orders under the papacy; whilst no one of them is able to define just exactly what he does mean; for the theory falls so short of the record that it is continually breaking down in the hands of its defenders. The other half give nearly as many different applications as there are writers. Sir Isaac Newton thinks the Greek Church is that beast. Galloway thinks the French Republic is intended. Fysh thinks it means the Jesuits. Mulerius thinks it refers to the Roman theologians. Hengstenberg thinks it means the earthy carnal wisdom, including the heathen philosophies, false doctrines, and the like. Waller says it is 'the evil which arises in the Church of CHRIST.' Stuart says it is the heathen priesthood. A nameless writer maintains that it is none other than the principles of the inductive philosophy, the mechanical arts, the mechanical forces. Gebhardt holds that witchcraft and soothsaying, the heathen religion as divination and magic, is meant. Whilst a large number of writers interpret both these Beasts, as well as the image which the second causes to be made of the first, as really one and the same thing, denoting only different aspects of the Romish Church, or the papal system."

We have all this trouble with these chapters because men try to make of Rome the main stream instead of a tributary. They regard the mouth of these two chapters as the mouth of Rome instead of Babylon. You simply cannot localize the thirteenth and seventeenth and eighteenth chapters of Revelation. The language will not permit you to do it.

I think one of the chief reasons why some expositors have such a limited interpretation to these two chapters, especially the seventeenth, is because of the limited interpretation they give to Daniel's prophecy of the fourth Beast (kingdom). Here are Daniel's familiar words:

"And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise.

And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay.

And as the toes of the feet were part of iron and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken.

And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever."

Some expositors limit this prophecy to the Roman Empire. When you ask them at what stage of the empire's history they mean when they say the Roman Empire, they generally - and not very positively - say that as the empire was in the days of Trajan. Why the empire of Trajan? Why not that of an earlier stage? or later?

They say that Daniel's prophecy, that the fourth Beast will ultimately be organized into a ten-fold kingdom, peremptorily implies that the Roman empire as it existed under the Caesars will be revived and organized into that ten-fold form.

They say that in Revelation 13 we have a further prophecy of the revival of the Roman Empire. **"And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast"** (Revelation 13:3).

That beast is not a man, but a state, so they say. To be sure, it is pretty vague; but anyhow, so we are told, this resurrection means the resurrection of the Roman Empire, not the resurrection of a man.

With all this emphasis on the Roman Empire, anybody can see with what prejudices and preconceived notions such expositors will come into the seventeenth and eighteenth chapters of Revelation. Anybody can easily see how these expositors, when they come to these chapters, will be unable to see anything but the Roman Catholic church and the city of Rome. That is the reason why out in California a good man is still chasing Benito Mussolini, although the scoundrel was hung up dead by his heels to a steel girder of an unfinished filling station in Milan. This interesting man practically says that unless he can get Mussolini back to life, Daniel's fourth Beast is going to be without a head. As a matter of fact, this California expositor

has already got Mussolini back to life; to hear him tell it, the bull-necked Italian is already in South America. In just what form, the brother is not too positive; probably in the form of some kind of modern gas.

And they say that Bible expositors are dull!

Now I am convinced beyond any doubt that Daniel's fourth Beast BEGAN with the Roman Empire. I am further convinced that the Roman Empire minutely fulfilled Daniel's prophecies of this Beast clear down to the division - symbolized by the two legs of Nebuchadnezzar's image - between east and west. But from there on, my mind is impressed with universality.

I believe all of Daniel's prophecies will be fulfilled, and in detail. I believe that when the LORD comes to establish His own kingdom, the world will be politically organized, as Daniel says it will.

But I do wonder if this fourth Beast of Daniel is necessarily limited to the Roman Empire. I know of no sound reason to believe that the Roman Empire must be "revived" before these prophecies can be completely fulfilled.

In the first place, it is well to remember the simple fact that Daniel did not call this fourth Beast the Roman Empire; he called it the fourth Beast.

In the second place, the whole western world is a part of this fourth Beast. This Beast has never yet died, and you can't resurrect something that hasn't died. From where did we get our classics?

From where did we get our basic ideas? We got them from Rome. (Rome got them from Greece, and Greece got them from Babylon.) If you should delete from our law books all Latin phrases, you couldn't try a bootlegger before a magistrate in the Georgia hills.

In the third place, this fourth Beast, it is true, is symbolized by iron. But in the context literal iron is incidental; it is the iron of totalitarianism that is emphasized.

In the fourth place, this fourth Beast is not only symbolized by iron, it is also symbolized by clay. Clay is not much of a symbol of the empire of the Caesars - even in the days of Trajan.

In the fifth place, clay is a symbol of democracy. Democracy doesn't very well fit as a symbol of the empire of the Caesars even in the days of Trajan.

In the sixth place, the language of this fourth Beast (as in the two chapters of Revelation) is universal and cannot be confined to the Roman Empire:

(a) Iron and clay (totalitarianism and democracy) are not confined to the territory of the ancient Roman Empire; they are universal. All over the world iron is crushing to pieces, and clay is breaking to pieces. Was Rome ever the totalitarian power that Soviet Russia is?

(b) " . . . **they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men . . .**" That is certainly universal.

(c) "**they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.**" You will have a job on your hands if you try to confine such a universal idea as that to the territory of the ancient Roman Empire.

Nebuchadnezzar's image begins with Babylon; it includes Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. But I raise the question of whether Rome (the fourth Beast) is necessarily limited to the territory of ancient Rome.

I should say in this connection that I believe that there are going to be three great confederations of nations in the last days of this age. I think one of them will include most of the states of the ancient Roman Empire; but I know of no reason for excluding from that confederation other states, including the naive United States. I believe there is going to be a mighty confederation headed up by Soviet Russia, which will include, before it is all over, all of Germany. I believe there will be an Asiatic confederation.

But I believe there is going to be, ultimately one world, with one master, with one city - BABYLON. A greater than Nimrod is coming to town, and he is going to build a greater Babylon than Nimrod built, and he is going to become master of a greater area than Nimrod's Babylonian-Assyrian world.

~ end of chapter 10 ~
