

# THE PROPHECIES OF DANIEL

In the Light of  
PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE EVENTS

by

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST AND THE FALL OF BABYLON

Foreshadowing Gentile Godlessness and the Fall of **"Mystical Babylon"** **"in the Latter Time"**

THE STORY of Belshazzar's feast, with its gross sensuality, revelry, and blasphemy, is a significant picture of the godlessness and flagrant apostasy which will characterize the Gentile nations at the end of this age.

As Belshazzar's feast was a religious ceremony in the name of his heathen gods, even so that climax of human wickedness in the name of religion, called **"Mystical Babylon,"** will be the most daring sacrilege and insult to the God of Daniel that the world has ever seen. Moreover, as the fall of ancient Babylon came upon the very night of Belshazzar's blasphemous feast, so also will the fall of **"Mystical Babylon,"** **"the scarlet woman"** of the seventeenth and eighteenth chapters of Revelation, come upon her in the hour of her most flagrant blasphemies.

This is recorded in the fifth chapter of Daniel. And what a picture it is of the moral and religious conditions which will characterize the closing days of **"the times of the Gentiles"**!

### **"GREAT BABYLON"**

When Nebuchadnezzar walked upon the roof of his palace, exclaiming, **"Is not this great Babylon, that I have built?"** he was looking upon what was then the greatest city in the world, humanly speaking, and in some respects the greatest city the world has ever seen.

Historians tell us that it was surrounded by high walls which were so broad that on the top as many as three or four chariots could be driven abreast. To protect the city from the enemy, a moat was dug around the walls. One hundred and fifty ponderous gates of solid brass guarded the entrances to this capital of the empire, a veritable fortress, which was supposed to be impregnable.

The Euphrates River, which ran right through the city, was lined with brick; canals were dug; and a great reservoir was excavated outside the walls.

This metropolis was divided into six-hundred and seventy-six squares, each two and one-fourth miles in circumference. These squares were bordered by fifty streets, each one-hundred and fifty feet wide, every one of them straight and level and fifteen miles long.

It was a city of magnificent residences, beautiful parks and pleasure grounds. Every high school boy today knows that the “hanging gardens of Babylon” were one of the seven wonders of the ancient world; history tells us that these hanging gardens rose, tier upon tier, until they reached the height of the great wall itself.

We have seen in our former studies that Babylon was first called Babel; that it was founded by the rebel, Nimrod, of whom we read in Genesis 10:8-10; 11:1-9. We learned also that at Babel the world saw the beginning of the mystery religion which covered the ancient world, and which will flourish once more **“in the latter time.”**

In the days of Belshazzar two magnificent palaces and the temple of Bel were within the city walls. This heathen temple was one mile in circumference. Here all the mysteries of ancient astrology were practiced; here **“the queen of the heavens”** was worshipped; and here the sensual and idolatrous ceremonies of this mystery religion had their fountain-head.

Yet in spite of its beauty and wealth, in spite of its magnificence and luxury, Babylon was a city in which evil reigned supreme. To the inhabitants vice was a virtue; every form of sin and wickedness was indulged in without shame. Seated upon Babylon's throne was Belshazzar, a man profligate in character, sensual and selfish, as well as insulting to the God of heaven.

Little did Belshazzar realize that the River Euphrates, upon which this city depended, was to be the means leading to his own death and the overthrow of his kingdom, for about three months Cyrus, king of Persia, had unsuccessfully besieged Babylon. Then on the very night of Belshazzar's unholy debauchery, an annual feast to his heathen gods, this Cyrus, guided by two deserters, turned the Euphrates into a new channel and marched his army into the city by way of the old river-bed.

Although Cyrus was the real conqueror, all of this was done in the name of Darius, who was probably “of the seed royal not only of Media, but also of Persia.”

Therefore, only the name of Darius is mentioned in the record by Daniel (5:31). Later on, Cyrus became ruler over the empire. As God had foretold one hundred years before his birth, he permitted the faithful Jewish remnant to return to Jerusalem during his reign.

Read Isaiah 44:28—45:6 to see how God even named this ruler before he was born, declaring that He would raise him up for Israel's sake. Note especially Isaiah 44:28:

**Cyrus . . . is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.**

**“Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world”** (Acts 15:18)!

Nearly two hundred years before the fall of Babylon God had also foretold, in minute detail, the doom of this great city, when He inspired the prophet Isaiah to write the message. Again, more than half a century before Belshazzar met his death; God had used Jeremiah to foretell the same details. But Belshazzar cared nothing for the Word of God. He seems not to have known Daniel before the night of his impious feast, but there were devout Jews in his kingdom who could have told him of Daniel's God. And from our present chapter we read that Daniel reminded him of what he already knew concerning God's dealings with his grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar.

Belshazzar was without excuse!

However, we may be sure that Daniel knew and believed what Isaiah and Jeremiah had written. What a comfort it must have been to him to know that the Lord God was going to put it into the heart of Cyrus to let the faithful ones return to his beloved Jerusalem, to rebuild her temple and her walls! We may be sure that he knew also the doom that was to fall upon wicked Babylon, for he believed the Word of his God.

Let us read just a few of the many verses that foretold so minutely the destruction of that idolatrous city (Isaiah 13:17-22; cf. Jeremiah 51:11, 28, 37; 50:38-40); and let us remember that they were written by God's prophets long before they came to pass:

**Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them. . . And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwellingplace for dragons, an astonishment, and an hissing, without an inhabitant. A drought is upon her waters; and they shall be dried up [surely this is a graphic prophecy of the changing of the river bed in that fateful night!]: for it is the land of graven images, and they are mad upon their idols. Therefore . . . it shall be no more inhabited for ever.**

Let me call attention just here to the fact that these and similar prophecies definitely state that the city of Babylon shall never be rebuilt.

This is important to remember; for there are those who teach that “**Mystical Babylon**,” described in the seventeenth and eighteenth chapters of Revelation, has reference to the actual city which shall be rebuilt.

Later in this lesson we shall consider these chapters more closely.

Let us note here, in passing, that the prophecies which we have just read concerning the eternal desolation of ancient Babylon, together with all the prophetic Word of God, teach us that “**Mystical Babylon**” is that idolatrous religious system which had its beginning at Babel, and which will meet its awful doom when the Antichrist rules on earth.

Then “**the beast**” of Revelation will turn upon “**the scarlet woman,**” even “**Mystical Babylon,**” and devour her.

Thus God will permit one evil thing to destroy another.

### **BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST—AN ORGY OF REVELRY AND BLASPHEMY**

On the very night when the Persian army was turning the waters of the Euphrates into another channel, Belshazzar, all unconscious of what was going on outside those walls, was presiding at “**the feast of death.**” It was “**a great feast to a thousand of his lords**”; and he “**drank wine before them,**” his wives, and his concubines.

With a false sense of security they reveled in unholy mirth, praising and worshipping their “**gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.**” What a scene it must have been! Rich foods, fragrant wines, beautiful women, possibly entrancing music, delirious excitement, an atmosphere of sensuality, and a fearful worship of heathen gods! Neither the king nor his guests knew that the enemy was battering at their very doors, that an army was working its way beneath their walls.

Herodotus tells us that on the night when the Persian army turned the waters of the river, all the streets were filled with scenes of riotous revelry—in this annual feast to their heathen gods. Adultery was rampant, and the citizens wandered up and down the streets in a dazed, besotted condition. Even the guards upon the walls were intoxicated.

Then Belshazzar, in his drunken frenzy, did something that his grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar, would never have done. Nebuchadnezzar was “**father**” of Belshazzar in the Biblical sense, even as David is called “**father**” of Jesus (Luke 1:32).

Read verses 2-4 of our chapter to see the daring sacrilege which Belshazzar committed:

Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein.

**Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.**

Those sacred vessels from the house of the Lord in Jerusalem had been put by Nebuchadnezzar in “**the house of his god**” (1:2). But even in his idol worship he had enough respect for them and for the religious convictions of the captive Jews not to desecrate them by drinking wine from them!

That was an insult to God.

## THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL

In grace God withholds His hand up to a certain point; then He must act in judgment. He bears with the folly and sin of man to a degree, but there is such a thing as exhausting the patience of the patient God Himself. Thus will it be when our Lord Jesus, the smiting Stone of the second chapter of Daniel, falls upon godless, defiant Gentile world power to destroy it. And thus it was in the days of Babylon's wicked king, Belshazzar.

### 1. *“The King Saw the Part of the Hand That Wrote.”*

When Belshazzar called for the sacred vessels from the temple in Jerusalem, his sin reached its height. And **“in the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote”** (v. 5).

What a silence must have fallen upon that company as the **“fingers of a man's hand”** suddenly appeared and began to write upon the wall!

In the night as they reveled  
In a lordly palace hall,  
They were filled with consternation  
At the Hand upon the wall!

### 2. *“Then Was the King Greatly Troubled.”*

Horror and darkness filled Belshazzar's soul. He was paralyzed with fear (vv. 6-9).

**Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another. The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. And the king spake, and said to the wise men of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and shew me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom. Then came in all the king's wise men: but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof. Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished.**

Belshazzar's actions here remind us of the attitude of the average unsaved man in times of dire distress. It is easy to appear brave in the glare of things. Infidels are usually blatant until they face death.

I remember once preaching on the streets of a certain city in Iowa. In the crowd was a man who scoffed at the message of salvation by faith in the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. A few days later he was suddenly stricken with a serious illness. I called at the hospital to see him.

When I entered his room, his chin quivered and tears filled his eyes, as he told me, “I did not believe what I said the other night.”

Thank God! His grace saved even a man like that!

But sometimes the scoffer waits too long, and hardens his heart against God even to the last. It was so with Belshazzar. Like the foolish virgins who, after it was too late, tried to buy God's free gift—for oil in the Scriptures is a symbol of the Holy Spirit— like those foolish virgins, Babylon's blasphemous king looked back upon the fearful consequences of a misspent life.

Shocked and frightened by the supernatural occurrence, he called aloud for the heathen enchanters and soothsayers; he did not turn to the God of the Hebrews. He made extravagant promises of what he would do for any who would interpret the writing upon the wall. But they were just as helpless as he was, just as ignorant of the meaning of the mysterious message. How could they decipher it when they knew nothing of the things of God?

A man's godless friends cannot help him when he is face to face with death and eternity. He may gather them around him, and call upon them for aid, but he will go out into loneliness and despair if he depends on them. I Corinthians 2:14 says,

**The natural [unregenerate] man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.**

Only in the Lord Jesus Christ can one find help in such an hour.

*3. “The Queen . . . Spake and Said . . . Let Daniel Be Called.”*

Evidently the queen-mother had not been in sympathy with the feast; at least, she had not been present, for now “**by reason of the words of the king and his lords,**” she “**came into the banquet house**” (v. 10). She knew Daniel; and she knew what Daniel's God had done for Nebuchadnezzar.

History tells us that she was either the mother or the grandmother of Belshazzar; that is, she was either the wife of Nebuchadnezzar or of his son, Evil-merodach, also called Nabonidus, the father of Belshazzar. (See the questions in the concluding lesson of this series of studies for further information about Belshazzar's father, Nabonidus).

History also tells us that this queen-mother “completed the great works which Nebuchadnezzar had begun” and possibly had left unfinished at the time of his insanity.

“This accounts for the deference paid to her by Belshazzar.”

We have already intimated that Belshazzar evidently did not know Daniel up to this time.

That might easily have been the case, as it was the Oriental custom for a change in kings to mean also a change in the office of “**the master of the magicians.**”

Moreover, Belshazzar would hardly have wanted a godly man at his licentious court, nor would Daniel have sought such a position. Had he been there when the king called for the sacred vessels, from which to drink wine, surely Daniel would have protested against such an insult to His holy God! His very life would have been a rebuke to Belshazzar.

**And the queen spake and said, O king, live for ever: let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed: there is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods . . .**

Here the queen used the very same words as did the heathen Nebuchadnezzar, “. . . **the spirit of the holy gods.**” But let us note her words, “**There is a man . . .**”

My friends, apostasy is never complete in the earth. God always has His faithful witnesses, even in the dark days of sin and unbelief. May He ever be able to say of you and of me, “**There is a man . . .**”—one whose testimony for Him is certain and true! Surely our circumstances are not more difficult than were Daniel's.

In verses 11 and 12—

**There is a man . . . and in the days of thy father [or “grandfather”] light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers; forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and shewing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will shew the interpretation.**

4. *“Then Was Daniel Brought in before the King” (v. 13).*

**And the king spake and said unto Daniel, Art thou that Daniel, which art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry?**

Then Daniel listened while Belshazzar repeated what the queen had said about him; he listened to the king's command to interpret the writing; he listened to his promise of gifts and promotion in the kingdom to the place of “**the third ruler**”—Nabonidus, father of Belshazzar, was first ruler; Belshazzar, second, a joint-king, but subordinate to his father; whereas Daniel was made “**third ruler in the kingdom**” (v. 29).

Daniel listened to all the king had to say. Possibly at the same time his eyes caught sight of the sacred vessels, so dear to his own reverent heart. Then he answered the king in words that show the courage of his convictions.

I like the way he answered Belshazzar; there was no fawning; there was no self-seeking in his attitude. He had not answered Nebuchadnezzar so, for he had a certain respect for him.

Something about Nebuchadnezzar had appealed to Daniel, for he was “**troubled**” when he talked to him about the tree vision which foretold the king's madness and fall.

Moreover, Nebuchadnezzar had wanted the whole truth; you can do something for a man who wants the truth! Therefore, Daniel lovingly persuaded Nebuchadnezzar to turn from his evil ways, and escape the righteous judgment of God. But with Belshazzar it was quite different. Daniel had no respect for the profligate, blasphemous king. Evidently his righteous indignation was stirred. In verse 17,

**Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation.**

What the king promised meant nothing to Daniel. Was not “**the head of gold**” to pass away that very night? In his foolhardiness Belshazzar, even after the writing had been interpreted, went ahead, bestowing his gifts. But Daniel believed in the Word of God, and he did not want the king's gifts and honors. We need ministers and Christian laymen today who are not afraid to speak the truth to rich and poor alike, without adulterating it or softening its stern mandates.

### **THE INTERPRETATION OF THE WRITING**

In the interpretation of the handwriting on the wall Daniel brought three indictments against Belshazzar.

As we read them, let us note that these same indictments are also brought against apostate Christendom today:

#### *1. Belshazzar Rejected the God-given Light.*

Daniel rehearsed the story of God's chastening of Belshazzar's grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar. It should have been an object-lesson to the profligate king, but he ignored it completely, offering even greater insults to God. Therefore, Daniel drove home to him the lesson of his sin and folly, saying in verses 18-22:

**O thou king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour: and for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down. But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: and he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the Most High God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will. And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this.**



Let us note especially that last sentence, “**Thou . . . hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this.**”

God had given him light, but he had not profited by it; he had rejected the light. He had seen what God had done for his grandfather, yet he refused to humble himself.

If God held Belshazzar responsible, my friend, for the ray of light which shone across his pathway, what will He say to men living in the blaze of light which illuminates the world today? Every unconverted man in this country has more light than Belshazzar had. We have today the complete revelation of God to man in the Bible. We have the cross of Jesus—long ago a fact of history. It is a serious thing to reject God-given light, my unsaved friend.

With all our religious privileges, do we go on living the same old life? In many parts of the world Christian men and women cannot worship God unmolested, but in this country the radio takes the gospel into millions of homes. We can buy a New Testament or a whole Bible for only a few cents. We have our churches on almost every corner, street-preaching, tract-distribution. Think of our privileges! Think of our responsibilities! What will God say to us in that day when we stand before Him who is the “**Light of the world,**” to give an account of our testimony here?

## *2. Belshazzar Desecrated the Sacred Vessels of God's Temple.*

For this sin Daniel said in verse 23,

**Thou . . . hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them.**

How can we apply this scripture in the light of the teaching found in the New Testament? How do we desecrate the vessels of the temple of God? And what is the temple of God today? Not the John D. Rockefeller Church in New York City, not our great cathedrals.

When I was in Naples, I saw in a beautiful cathedral an altar of gold, studded with precious gems. Later I saw the glittering temples of Siam, one containing the Emerald Buddha. These buildings of brick and wood and stone are not the temples of God. Turn with me to I Corinthians 6:19; there we read, “**What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?**” [cf. I Corinthians 3:16 and other passages].

Since our bodies are God's temple, then, what are the vessels? Our hands, our feet, our voices, our minds, our hearts—all of these are vessels which we use either for honor or for dishonor. When we go to places where we cannot honor the Lord Jesus, when we think sinful thoughts, when we reach out for that which is not ours, when we seek our satisfaction in the things of the flesh, carnal delight and sensual pleasure—when we do all the things which our hearts tell us are dishonoring to God, then we are desecrating the vessels of His temple. They do not belong to us!

We are not our own; we are “**bought with a price,**” even the precious blood of Jesus. (See I Corinthians 6:20; I Peter 1:18, 19).

In Old Testament times God came down in the Shekinah Glory, to dwell in the midst in His people, Israel, in the Holy of Holies. Every devout Jew considered the vessels of the temple sacred. Nearly two thousand years ago, God came down to dwell in the midst of His people in the Person of His Son, our Saviour. When He went away, He sent His Holy Spirit to dwell in our bodies—our very hearts and lives. What a solemn thing it is for a child of God to “**defile the temple of God**”! And yet look at professing Christendom today. Surely the indictment God gave against Belshazzar through Daniel is being repeated even now against apostate Christendom. And “**in the latter time**” only the apostates in the professing church will be left on earth, after Christ calls all true believers Home. In that day these same indictments will surely apply to that false religious system.

### *3. Belshazzar Worshipped Idols.*

The third indictment (in verse 23) Daniel brought against the king was this:

**Thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified.**

Was that a sin peculiar to Belshazzar's day? Not at all! Men worship the golden calf today, just as they did in the time of Moses. The amount of gold a man has is of more moment to many people than the extent of his piety. God says that “**covetousness is idolatry.**”

Where are our thoughts? On stocks and bonds and business shares? Or on the things of God? Is our worship from the heart? Or is it lip-worship only? Can it be said of us, as it was of Belshazzar, “**The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified**”? Our Lord Jesus, in Gethsemane, could look up into the face of His Father in heaven and say, “**I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do**” (John 17:4).

May He teach us how to glorify His wonderful Name!

### *4. The Writing Interpreted.*

Having spoken these three indictments against the wicked king, Daniel then went on to give the interpretation of the writing. Having told Belshazzar that “**the part of the hand**” was “**sent from him**”; that is, from God, Daniel said, “**This is the writing**” and “**this is the interpretation of the thing**”:

“**MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it.**” “Mene” means “*numbered.*”

“**TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.**” “Tekel” means “*weighed.*”

**“UPHARSIN (or ‘PERES’); Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.”** “Upharsin” means “*dividers*”; “Peres” is another form of the same root-word, and means “*divided*.”

Even as Daniel was interpreting the writing, the waters of the Euphrates were being turned into another channel, and the enemy was marching into the city under the walls. Yet the misguided king, blind to the awful truth, commanded that Daniel be clothed with scarlet, that a chain of gold be put about his neck, and that a proclamation be issued, making Daniel the “**third ruler in the kingdom.**” But it was true then, as it is now, that “man proposes, but God disposes”; for “**in that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.**”

**“And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old” (vv. 29-31). The “head of gold” had run its course, and “the arms and breast of silver” and now come into being!**

### **GENTILE REVELRY AND BLASPHEMY “IN THE LATTER TIME”**

One day God will write “**numbered . . . and finished**” over “**the times of the Gentiles.**” And Gentile dominion, with all its false religious systems, will be “**found wanting,**” and will pass away. Just as ancient Babylon met her doom while she was in the midst of a false sense of security, indulging in every form of vice, so also will Gentile world power go headlong toward destruction and the righteous judgment of a holy God.

The signs of the end are multiplying daily, but humanity as a whole is blind to them. Engrossed in a mad search for pleasure and amusement, men have lost sight of the inevitable end of it all. When Paul said that men would be “**lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;**” he was talking about professing Christendom “**in the last days**” (II Timothy 3:1-5).

Christ told His disciples that, just prior to His second coming, there would be “**eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage**” (Matthew 24:38). Marriage is a divine institution, ordained of God. But “**giving in marriage,**” in the literal meaning here, *signifies a looseness of the marriage relationship, an exchanging of wives and husbands.* Is this prophecy not being fulfilled today, before our very eyes?

Appalling tragedies are shocking the consciences of men today—war, pestilence, famine, lawlessness, crime, human misery and suffering! Yet with millions going out into eternity, lost and undone, other millions are blindly seeking debasing pleasures. Surely “**perilous times**” are upon our own generation, while the great masses are following in the steps of Belshazzar, king of Babylon!

### **THE FALL OF “MYSTICAL BABYLON” “IN THE LATTER TIME”**

Just as ancient Babylon fell during an irreverent, religious feast, even so will “**Mystical Babylon,**” that false religious system which is to flourish once more, meet her certain doom “**in the latter time.**”

John describes that false religious system in the seventeenth and eighteenth chapters of Revelation. Let us turn to that portion of the Word of God to see something of what he says.

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he calls her “**the great whore that sitteth upon many waters**” (Revelation 17:1). “**The waters . . . where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues**” (Revelation 17:15).

In this same chapter “**the great whore**” is also called “**the scarlet woman.**” She is described as riding “**the beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns**” (vv. 3, 12). “**And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH**” (Revelation 17:5).

This “**scarlet woman**” is none other than apostate Christendom; and the beast upon which she will ride is none other than the Antichrist, who will rule over the last form of Gentile world power, even the revived Roman Empire, as indicated by the “**ten horns,**” which “**are ten kings.**”

All this dovetails with what Daniel and John and the Lord Jesus taught throughout their prophetic writings. We have seen something of the prophecy concerning the last form of Gentile world dominion in our study of the second chapter of Daniel.

We shall see more of the same prophecy in our consideration of chapter seven. And here it is before us in unmistakable language in this seventeenth chapter of Revelation.

Now after the true church has been translated to be with Christ; after every born-again soul in every branch of Christendom has been taken away; then godless, professing Christendom will form a great confederacy, and will link hands with the last form of Gentile world power. That will be a complete union of church and state.

In other words, “**the scarlet woman**” will ride “**the beast.**” In that day all the ceremonialism and modernism and cults; all the heathen practices that began at Babel; all the bloodless, Christless religions will make a great worldly show of riches and power. It will be “**a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof**” (II Timothy 3:5). Concerning this false system, this “**Mystery Babylon,**” the risen Christ will say, “**I will spue thee out of my mouth**” (Revelation 18:2).

God calls her “**the great whore . . . with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication**” (Revelation 17:1, 2). How different is His name for the true church—“**the bride of Christ,**” “**a chaste virgin**” (II Corinthians 11:2)!

John saw “**the great whore**” in “**the wilderness**” (Revelation 17:3); and no wonder, for a wilderness is a place where there is no new life in Christ.

There will be no real love in the heart of the Antichrist for “**Mystery Babylon**”; toward the end of the tribulation period, he will turn upon her and devour her.

Thus, as we have already observed, God will permit one evil thing to destroy another.

**“And the ten horns (ten kings) . . . these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire”** (Revelation 17:16); **“for strong is the Lord God who judged her”** (Revelation 18:8).

Read all of these two chapters in Revelation carefully, to get the graphic details, telling of that coming Day of Judgment upon apostate Christendom. We can well imagine something of what that judgment will be, even as we recall what has been done in Russia in our own time to oppose all forms of religion, and what Hitler did in Europe against God and His people.

However, today the true believers are suffering along with the deluded, false professors of Christianity. In the coming day, after the true church has been taken to be with the Lord, the whole system will be filled with heresy and unbelief.

In that day all those who accept the message of the coming King, through the preaching of the 144,000 Jews of the great tribulation period, will suffer persecution, and even martyrdom, but they will not be linked with this **“great whore.”** They will heed the word of the Lord, **“Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins”** (Revelation 18:4). What a judgment awaits apostate Christendom!

My unsaved friends, are you ready for the time when Christ will call the church Home?

Are you born again by faith in His precious blood, shed on Calvary for your sins?

You may think that our civilization cannot be overthrown. Do you suppose Belshazzar dreamed that his mighty empire would be destroyed?

With the ruthless dictators of our generation, it is not so difficult for us to imagine great and terrible changes in our own civilization! If you should go to the land of ancient Babylon today, you would find no trace of that once beautiful, mad city. It lies buried beneath the mounds of centuries. The earth is covered with the wreckage of other civilizations which have flourished only to fall because they forgot God. One day our own civilization, too, will pass away.

Where will you stand in that coming time?

If you die in your sins, your doom is certain. If Christ comes for His church and you are not saved, you will go into **“the great tribulation.”** From the Scriptures, we infer that all who are left in professing Christendom in that day will be so hardened toward God, so ready to accept Satan's **“delusion,”** that they will not heed the message of the 144,000 Jews, who will herald the coming Messiah and King, Jesus.

We cannot speak dogmatically on this point; but II Thessalonians 2:10-12, together with related passages, would indicate that those who shall have spurned Christ in this day of grace will not be willing to turn to Him through the ministry of His missionary servants, the Jews, in that coming day. God's light is shining upon your pathway now. If you deliberately turn your back upon it, if you deliberately choose to walk in darkness, that darkness will be your lot forever!

I beseech you, in His name, “**Hear his voice . . . Harden not your hearts**” (Hebrews 3:7, 8).

“**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house**” (Acts 16:31).

~ end of chapter 5 ~

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