Studies in the book of the Revelation Section VIII

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STUDIES IN THE BOOK
OF THE REVELATION

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The Revelation of Jesus Christ

After God has spoken to the earth in judgment in connection with the breaking of the seven seals, He pauses in order to give to the world a message. He sends forth the 144,000, and they preach that message; it is a call to the world to repent. But the nations continue to repudiate "the gospel of the kingdom," which these witnesses preach; and God then begins to mete out the seven judgments connected with the blowing of the trumpets. When they have been consummated, God sends another message to this world—a warning to be given by the two strange men that will appear in Jerusalem, the two witnesses, probably Moses and Elijah. They will perform miracles in order to demonstrate that their message is of divine origin. But we find that the nations, instead of being convicted by the preaching of those men, turn around after their message has been given and kill the witnesses. Thus the call of God to the nations of the earth to turn from sin to God again falls upon deaf ears; the hearts of men are hardened.

Then you find that, just before the seven vials of wrath are poured out upon the earth, and God expresses for the last time His eternal hatred of sin, He warns the nations of the earth again. This time He sends an angel flying through the heavens and preaching to the nations of the earth "the everlasting gospel," reminding them of the fact that there is one God, and calling them to turn from sin unto Him.

I want to say just this—if any man finds himself in eternity unsaved and lost, that man will have no one to blame but himself. In every age, and even in the days of tribulation, God is, as it were, trying to blockade the way to judgment.

Several years ago, I saw a fearful sight. I was walking along a street in the city of Chicago, toward a place where there were some railroad tracks. As I walked, I could see those tracks, and in the distance a train approaching. I saw the signal arms come down and block the way, to make known the fact that the train was coming. There was a man just ahead of me. He was walking in a leisurely fashion. There was nothing about him to indicate that he was desperate, or that he was going to do anything unusual. You can imagine my astonishment and horror when I saw that man reach the blockade, throw it up, and cast himself right in the pathway of that oncoming train! In a spiritual sense, every man in this day, as well as in the tribulation period, who goes on to the judgment bar of God unprepared, does that very thing.
WHATSOEVER A NATION SOWS, THAT SHALL IT ALSO REAP

Before we consider what these judgments are, I want to say this to you: There is no use trying to comfort yourself with the thought that the judgments that we read about in this book will never be allowed to come to pass, just because God is so kind. God is allowing many things to take place in the world today; and the only way you can explain this fact is that God hates sin, and He shows us just how much He hates it by the terrible things that He associates with it. There is one thing, my dear man, that you and I can never deny, and that is God’s inexorable law that “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7). Whatsoever a nation soweth, that shall it also reap; and in the day about which we are studying, Almighty God is going to speak to the nations of the earth that have steeled their hearts against His Son and against the Gospel of His Son.

Those who think that, just because these judgments, long predicted, have not yet fallen, they will never fall, will one day wake up to the awful reality of these things. God is withholding judgment, only because He is “longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (II Pet. 3:9). It is a serious matter to close our eyes to the “Thus saith the Lord” of this closing book of His Word. Even some ministers and some theological seminaries do this very thing. But God’s Word shall never be broken. And the nations that defy His, as well as the individuals who reject Him, will learn the meaning of His wrath. “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

“THE SONG OF MOSES . . . AND THE SONG OF THE LAMB”

“And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only

This great company, pictured as standing on the “sea of glass,” is not the church of this age. The song they sing, called “the song of Moses” and “the song of the Lamb,” clearly designates them as Israelites. They are the great company that will be martyred during the reign of the beast. They sing the “song of Moses” and “of the Lamb” because their note of victory will be similar to the one that Moses and the nation of Israel sounded when God marvelously delivered them from the hosts of Pharaoh. You will remember how Israel gathered on the wilderness side of the Red Sea after the waters had closed in on the oppressors, and how they sang that song of victory and praise to God for their marvelous deliverance in that hour. That song of deliverance is recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Exodus. In like manner, that same God will put His protecting care about those who will suffer martyrdom during the reign of the beast, and in glory they will sing of the sustaining grace of God that has enabled them to triumph during the earth’s darkest period. The “song of the Lamb,” of course, is the song of redemption. Thus their song is described as the “song of Moses” and “of the Lamb.”

They are seen standing upon a “sea of glass mingled with fire.” The “sea of glass” was typified by the brazen laver in the court of the tabernacle. It was called the “brazen sea” in connection with the worship in Solomon’s temple. It was the place where all defilement was washed from the hands and the feet of the priests as they went in to worship, and as they came out to serve. It is a type of the Word of God, through which the Lord Jesus is now washing His church from daily defilement, contracted during this earthly pilgrimage. Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might cleanse it through the “washing of water by the word” (Eph. 5:25, 26).

The laver here is solidified into a “sea of glass.” This means that, for those here mentioned, the pilgrimage journey is over. Never again will their walk be defiled. But the sea is represented as being in glory, just to remind believers of the marvelous provision God made for them while they were here upon the earth.
The Revelation of Jesus Christ

God's Covenant with Abraham Fulfilled

"And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: and the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles. And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from His power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled" (15:5-8).

Why is it that these seven angels that pour out the seven last plagues are represented as coming out of the temple, or the tabernacle? The temple and the tabernacle remind one of Israel; and the event refers to the time when the "man of sin," the Antichrist, is upon the earth attempting to persecute to death the Jewish remnant. No person can do that without bringing judgment upon himself, for God made a covenant with Abraham, saying, "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee" (Gen. 12:3). The latter portion of this covenant will be the part the enemies of Israel will bring upon themselves. Consequently the angels who are to execute those judgments are portrayed as coming out of the temple and out of the tabernacle, which represent the covenants of God with Israel. In other words, here is a picture of the fulfilling of the covenants that God made with Abraham.

Rome, Spain, Germany, France, Russia, and all the other nations that have persecuted the children of Israel have, in consequence, suffered sorrow and national shame. And the end is not yet. These seven last plagues are judgments that will be meted out, mainly because of the persecution that will be directed against Israel.

The First Vial

"And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth. And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image" (16:1, 2).

Whether the fulfillment of these words will be spiritual, or physical, the fact remains that the judgments which they describe will be terrible. I want to say that I believe, when you come to the study of the seven last plagues, you will find a great deal connected with them, the meaning of which only those living upon the earth at the time will ever know. But it seems to me that, while there is a great deal in this book that is symbolical, yet, when you come to this portion, you find that it is so like that section in Exodus wherein we find described plagues that we know were physical, that the reasonable conclusion is that these things are not spiritual, but physical, and that the bodies of men in that day will actually be smitten with an awful sore.

You will remember that, when the children of Israel were down in Egypt, Almighty God, through Moses, meted out the plagues upon their enemies, and all cattle and all men were smitten in their bodies with boils. In our day, the hearts of men have been steeled against God; they have rejected His Word; and it will be more so in that coming day. Under such circumstances, there is always a let-down of the morals of men. When you take the fear of God away from the eyes of men and women, when God goes out of the life, in nine out of every ten cases morals go as well. The Lord Jesus said, "As it was in the days of Noah, so also shall it be when the Son of man cometh." In the days of Noah corruption and violence filled the earth. Surely our own civilization is rushing headlong toward that same state of affairs.

The Second Vial

"And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea" (16:3).

Whether that is physical, or spiritual, my friends, the desolation is terrible. Yet I do not see any reason why it could not be physical. There in Egypt, God not only smote the
bodies of those men, but He turned the waters of Egypt into blood. In like manner, it seems that in this day when God speaks to the nations, He is going to turn the great seas of the world into blood like “the blood of a dead man.” In that time of God’s righteous judgment of sin, it will be made known to men, angels, and demons that “he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36).

THE THIRD VIAL

“And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments” (16:4-7).

After the first angel metes out judgment upon the bodies of men, the second angel smites the sea and it becomes blood; then the third strikes all the rivers and the fountains and they become blood. Immediately, a great company in heaven sings of the righteousness of God, saying, “Righteous and holy, O God, are all thy ways.”

Those of you who are without the Lord Jesus Christ tonight may say that it is unjust of God to banish every unbeliever from His presence simply because he refuses to take Christ as his Saviour. But the day is going to come, after the judgment of God has been meted out upon you, when you, too, will say, “Just and holy, O God, are all thy ways.” No one in hell will ever accuse God of injustice. In that day every mouth will be stopped, and all the world will become guilty before God. (See Rom. 3:19.)

THE FOURTH VIAL

“And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory” (16:8, 9).

If this is physical, and if God in that day causes the very sun to be intensified so that the heat will scorch the bodies of men, I want to say that there was a day when God dealt with them in another way altogether, a day when His kindness did not affect them. Now the judgment of God which will come upon them during the tribulation period will not cause sorrow for sin either; for the Word of God says, “They repented not to give him glory, and they blasphemed the name of God.”

That is why I know, my dear friends, that when a man goes out of this world and goes to hell, he will never repent down there. If the grace of God does not change a man, all the fires of a purgatory, if there were such a place, would not cause him to repent. All the darkness in the next world will not change him. God stated this truth clearly when He said, concerning the eternal state of the ungodly, “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still” (Rev. 22:11).

THE FIFTH VIAL

“And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds” (16:10, 11).

The fifth plague centers on the very throne of that man who is going to rule the revived Roman Empire from the city of the once proud Cæsars. I do not know in what way the Antichrist’s throne is going to be smitten, but I believe the Spirit of God will at that time operate against this man to goad him on, with a view of bringing about the battle of the nations. When a man hardens his own heart, it is only a matter of time until God comes along and finishes the job.

 Darkness—pain—blasphemy! What a terrible time of anguish of soul and body awaits the godless world! If men would only read these solemn warnings, and turn to the “God
of all grace” before it is too late! But Satan sees to it that, for the most part, Revelation is a closed book to the children of men.

THE SIXTH VIAL

“And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared” (16:12).

In Rev. 9:14 we found another reference to the River Euphrates. This river marks the dividing line between the East and the West, and its drying up evidently refers to the removal of certain influences, in order to make way for the advance of the “kings of the east.”

Who are the “kings of the east”? They are the kings of Japan, China, Mongolia, India, and all eastern Asia. When the day arrives for the Battle of Armageddon, no skilled statesman in Europe will be able to settle the eastern question. The barrier that now keeps all the countless hordes of the East out of the West will be removed in that coming day.

In the fourteenth chapter of Zechariah it is prophesied that in the day of the Lord all the armies of the nations are to be gathered around Palestine. The armies of the East will have a part in that great final struggle. What light the prophetic Word of God throws upon all the turmoil that is going on in the world today!

Many Bible students wonder if the eastern nations will consolidate under Japan to resist western influences. In this connection, it is significant to note that in Rev. 16:12 the words “the east,” literally translated, are “the sun-rising.” Japan has long been known as “The Sun-rising Kingdom.” Her people are educated, ambitious, crafty. She is thrifty, energetic, apace with the times. She is a military nation, seeking to keep up with the western countries in preparedness for war. However, only God knows what nation or nations will weld together the great eastern confederacy that will meet the beast and the “king of the north” (Russia) on the plains of Megiddo for the last great war, the Battle of Armageddon.

A PARENTHETICAL VISION

“And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon” (16:13-16).

Just as there is a parenthetical vision between the sixth and seventh seals and between the sixth and seventh trumpets, so we find here such a vision between the sixth and seventh vial judgments. “Three unclean spirits” are symbolized in the form of frogs coming out of the mouths of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. As a result of their influence, the kings of the earth are prepared for “the battle of that great day of God Almighty.” We find the miraculous element coupled with their satanic ministry. Doctrines of seducing spirits and demons, like Christian Science, Spiritism, and Theosophy, are already in the world; and we know something about their devastating effect. But when the “three unclean spirits” named here come forth, it will be far worse. Their influence will culminate in the Battle of Armageddon, the fullest description of which is given in chapter nineteen.

Again God faithfully sounds the warning of verse fifteen:

“Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.”

THE SEVENTH VIAL

“And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air: and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings: and there was
a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail: for the plague thereof was exceeding great" (16:17-21).

These are solemn words, predicting the utter collapse of all that man has built up, in the way of government, education, science, art, culture. All the godless civilization, of which men boast today, will be thrown down. Instead, anarchy, chaos, confusion will fill the earth. And man will see that the world needs its rightful King, "the Prince of Peace." He alone is able to rule in righteousness, and He will reign "from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth."

What a disappointment awaits the twentieth century civilization! Men boast about their education, their civilization, their ecclesiastical refinements: but the day is coming when everything that is not built upon the one foundation that Jesus Christ laid will be like chaff before a summer threshingfloor. Every tree that is not of the Lord’s planting shall find the axe laid to the root and shall be cast down.

Again, in verse 19, Babylon is mentioned: but as our next lesson, covering chapters seventeen and eighteen, deals with that subject in detail, we shall pass over it here.

My friend, if you do not know Christ as your Saviour, if you persist in rejecting Him as your only hope, you will have a part in that overwhelming judgment described in chapters fifteen and sixteen of the book of Revelation. Do not reject the best Friend in all the universe, God’s only begotten Son and Calvary’s Lamb. He loves you, and He longs to have your love. Look unto Him, and "be ye saved."
them. Then may He send us out, as flaming evangels, to warn
men to flee from the wrath to come.
In Rev. 14:8 and 16:19 we have found two brief refer­
cences to this false system and her coming doom:

"And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon
is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all na­
tions drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."

"And great Babylon came in remembrance before
God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness
of his wrath."

These two references state in summary what the Holy
Spirit enlarges upon in chapters seventeen and eighteen and
in the first four verses of chapter nineteen. In these chapters it
would seem that the Spirit of God draws aside the veil and
shows us the doom toward which all the godless systems that
have come in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ are rushing
headlong, what their end is going to be, and how God is
finally going to judge them just prior to the personal, visible,
body return of our Lord to the earth.
Now let us read 17:1-19:4 carefully, prayerfully, more
than once. The repeated reading of this portion of the book,
as a unit, will show us that chapter seventeen describes the
corruption and the fall of Babylon; chapter eighteen enlarges
upon the same theme, revealing further the lamentations of
"the kings" and "the merchants of the earth" for the loss of
their gains in the fall of "the great whore"; while 18:20 and
19:1-4 add the truth that, when God sends desolation upon
Babylon, this false religious system. He will not only be deal­
ing with her in righteous judgment, but He will also be aveng­
ing "the blood of his servants at her hand."

"A WOMAN . . . UPON A SCARLET COLOURED BEAST"

Chapter seventeen describes her as "a woman . . . upon a
scarlet coloured beast." First we see her riding the beast in all
her ungodly pride and vainglory. Then we see the beast
turning upon her with hatred (verses 16, 17). We see that
"the ten horns . . . upon the beast . . . shall hate the whore,
and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh,
and burn her with fire."

And what does the beast represent, with the seven heads
and the ten horns? Without a question, it is the same beast
that we have seen in the thirteenth chapter of this book. We
have already found that it represents the Roman Empire in
her last glory, as she is to be revived by the "man of sin" who
will appear in Europe after the true church has been trans­
lated. (See II Thess. 2:1-10.) When he appears, he will con­
solidate those nations that now occupy the territory once
belonging to the old Roman Empire. The seven heads repre­
sent seven forms of government. John tells us that five were,
one was, and one is yet to be. History tells us that up to the
time when John was living, five forms of government had
passed away, and the imperial form was then in existence.
The form that is yet to come will be the revival of the empire
under the "man of sin," the Antichrist. The ten horns repre­
sent those ten confederated kingdoms that will be under his
jurisdiction.

"And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet
colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and
pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abomina­
tions and filthiness of her fornication: and upon her fore­
head was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON
THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND
ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the
woman drunken with the blood of the saints. and with
the blood of the martyrs of Jesus" (verses 4-6).

We are not surprised that John "wondered with great
wonder" (verse 6, R. V.)! The woman represents a religious
system—that system which prevails officially in those nations
that now occupy the Roman Empire, a system that is ever
grasping for the reins of government in Europe. The head of
it has been made temporal sovereign, numbered among the
sovereigns of the earth; he has his principality; he has his own
coinage, his own mint. This speaks of the time when that
system, at least temporarily, will dominate.
We shall consider the significance of the name that with­
out doubt makes known to us the identity of this woman.
But if the name were not known, the very description of her
would make clear just what is in the mind of the Spirit of God
The Revelation of Jesus Christ regarding her. She is bedecked with silver and gold; she has in her hand a cup which is full of abominations; she is called "a whore," which means, in the spiritual sense, one who gives herself to idols. This woman is drunken with the blood of the saints, the martyrs of Jesus. She not only represents the Roman papacy as it is yet to be, but she also represents all the systems of Protestantism that are going to be "spewed out" of the mouth of the Lord when the true church is taken away. (See Rev. 3:16.) At that time, just as there will be a great union of nations under the coming "man of sin," so there will be a union of all the religious movements that are godless, Christless, bloodless. They are going to be "spewed out" of the mouth of the Lord when He takes away His true bride. In that day when the Antichrist reigns, there will be a union of church and state.

NIMROD—THE FOUNDER OF ANCIENT BABYLON

The name, "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT," takes one back in thought to the apostasy of the human race at Babel, as recorded in the tenth chapter of Genesis. There you have a picture of the man who was an apostate in the eyes of God, who was the founder of the city that is called Babylon—a man named Nimrod. The Word of God tells us some definite facts about this man. Genesis 10:9, the Authorized Version, reads: "He was a mighty hunter before the Lord." We do not get the true meaning from this translation. The ancient rabbis tell us that this statement means that Nimrod went out from the presence of the Lord, and became "a hunter of souls," seeking to turn multitudes of men away from God and unto himself. The Lord declared to the people of the earth that they were to scatter abroad, but Nimrod went out to defy God and call the multitude that he had gathered unto himself to consolidate. Thus he was the first to conceive the principle abroad in the world today—that in unity there is strength. So he banded the men together, that they might build a city and a tower which was to reach unto heaven.

As we read the account in Gen. 11:1-9, we note that the words "may reach" in verse 4 are in italics, meaning that they were not in the Hebrew manuscripts. They were put in by the translators. It is likely, therefore, that the "top" of the tower was a design of the heavens, a spherical dome marked with the signs of the zodiac, setting forth the position of the heavenly bodies. The zodiac has been used by the mystery religions through the ages past. Such a stone has been found in Mexico recently among the Aztec Indians. The probable thought is that the zodiac was used in connection with the tower of Babel, and that this tower, with the mysteries that began there, they dared to call "Babel."

According to this interpretation, the audacity of Nimrod and his followers is seen in the fact that the word "Babel" means the "Gate of God." The syllable "el" is one of the names of Jehovah; that is the reason why there are so many names in the Word of God that end with "el." "Immanuel" means "God with us"; "Israel," "a prince with God." "El Shaddai" is one of the names of God. When Nimrod's followers had the temerity to name their city the "Gate of God," they implied that in this way man could approach Jehovah and be brought into a right relationship with Him on other grounds than the altar and the sacrifice which pointed on to Calvary.

Mystery Babylon

It was in the city of Babel, later called Babylon, that all the mystery religions began—those religions that were destined to cover the earth one thousand years later. Let me give you an outline of what the mystery religions were. This is necessary if one is to understand how it came to pass that certain forms and ceremonies have been preserved in the Roman Catholic Church, as well as in some Protestant churches.

The founder of Babel was Nimrod, but the foundress of the mystery religion connected with Babylon was Semiramis, the wife of Nimrod. The central mystery was this: The wife of Nimrod claimed that she gave birth to a child whom she called Tammuz, declaring that her son had no father—that he was conceived by the great spirit above. As we study further, we shall see in this central mystery how the devil has sought to bring to naught all the purposes of God that were going to come to pass through the "seed of the woman" (not the seed of the man) by presenting a counterfeit.

Thus the wife of Nimrod presented Tammuz to the people, claiming that he had a mother, but that he did not have a human father. The figure that was used in connection with the mystery of Babylon was that of the wife of Nimrod with a
crown on her head, with a little baby in her arms—Tammuz. Archa!ologists who have gone to India, to Egypt, to Greece, and to ancient Phænicia, have found that a thousand years after Babel was erected this mystery religion had spread all over that part of the world. Isis and Horus in Egypt, Aphrodite and Eros in Greece, Venus and Cupid in Italy, are some of the designations of this religion adopted by different nations and systems. If you go to any museum, you will find statues that have been dug out of the earth from all these countries, images of a woman with a crown on her head, having a baby in her arms. Connected with this central mystery, there are hundreds of lesser mysteries; for instance, sanctification through purgatory, the use of holy water, the eating of the wafer that was presented to the Queen of the Heavens. If you turn to Jer. 44:16-22, you will find that this particular mystery, the presentation of the wafer to the Queen of Heaven, had gotten into the nation of Israel in the time of Jeremiah. You will find, moreover, that Jeremiah pronounced the curse of God upon those who took part in this rite.

A remarkable story about Tammuz was this: His mother declared that he had been slain by a boar, and that he arose from the dead on a certain day, which was always thereafter celebrated as the feast of Istar. This feast celebrating the resurrection of Tammuz from the dead was preceded by forty days of weeping and sorrowing. This mystery also had corrupted Israel. (See Ezek. 8:14.) But the feast day itself was one of great rejoicing.

When Nebuchadnezzar became the king of Babylon and built that great city, there was a temple unit dedicated to these mystery religions, called the Temple of Bel. It was a mile and a half in circumference. There were the priests that gave themselves to services; there were the virgins that were dedicated to Tammuz; and there was the symbol above it, the sign of the cross. The cross was used as symbolizing the life-giving principle and as the first letter in the name of Tammuz. The sign of the cross, therefore, did not originate with Christianity. It originated with the ancient mystery religion at Babel. The sacred symbol of the egg that we use at Easter time was also prominent.

When the Medo-Persian empire overthrew Babylon, the city was destroyed; but the mystery religion did not die. When Alexander the Great overthrew the Medo-Persian empire, that empire came to a close; but the mystery religion did not; only its center was changed. Fifty years before the birth of Christ, Rome became the mistress of the world, and the city of Rome became the center of all the ancient mysteries. All the Roman emperors were initiated into this mystery religion. When Julius Cæsar was initiated, he took unto himself a title, Pontifex Maximus, which means “the greatest high priest,” and was a declaration that Cæsar became the leader, the high priest, of those Babylonian mysticisms which began back there in the twilight of history. When Christ was born in Bethlehem, Augustus Cæsar ruled over the Roman Empire. (See Luke 2:1.) Like the Cæsars before him, he bore the title, “Pontifex Maximus.” And the pagan religions of Greece and Rome covered the vast domain of his possessions—all permeated with the mystery religion that came from ancient Babylon.

THE UNION OF THE MYSTERY RELIGION AND CHRISTIANITY

Early in the Christian era Nero and other Cæsars cruelly persecuted the Christians. Many were martyrs, including Paul, the apostle. Then in the fourth century, Constantine came to the throne. He professed conversion. With the eye of a politician, he saw that those first Christians had made wonderful strides; and instead of persecuting them—they now numbered about four million—he thought it would be to his advantage to favor them. But he was never saved, was never a real Christian. If you should go to the British Museum, you would be shown coins that were put into circulation at the time of Constantine. On one side there is a cross; on the other side, a picture of the Temple of Bel and one of the sacred symbols of Tammuz.

This is what Constantine did when he came to the throne, thus bringing about a union of the mystery religion and the professing church of Jesus Christ. The pope of Rome, the first bishop of Rome, was given the title “Pontifex Maximus,” and every pope from that day to this has borne that name upon his mitre. To quote Dr. H. A. Ironside: “The very fact that he bears that title is a declaration that he is not a successor to Simon Peter, but is rather the successor to the high priest of the heathen mysteries that began away back there in Babel. When Constantine came to the throne and the first
pope assumed the title, "Pontifex Maximus," all those heathen associations and ceremonies that had their beginning with Nimrod—the worship of the Queen of the Heavens, the eating of the wafer, the doctrine of purgatory, the wearing of vestments, and the observance of a thousand and one lesser mysteries—all these were brought into the church, and for a thousand years they pervaded all Europe." Thus the Roman Catholic Church as it is now known, with all its God-dishonoring doctrines and practices, came into existence.

Then men like Luther and Wycliffe began to study the Word of the living God. They could see that there was no harmony between what they were teaching and what God had revealed in His Word. They began to preach in their cathedrals, on the streets, in their homes, what God had recorded in Paul's Epistle to the Romans; and as a result, the Reformation began. But mysticism did not end there. It still continues in that part of Christendom that has rejected the truth of the reformers. Go to Latin America today; that is to Mexico, Central America, and South America; and you will find superstition and ignorance and fear comparable only to the wretchedness of the Dark Ages—all in the name of Roman Catholicism. The Catholic Church as we know it in our own country has been influenced by the open Bible, has been held in restraint, so far as such evils as the sale of indulgences and certain superstitions are concerned. But that is the result of the Protestant Reformation.

The Reverend Harry Strachan, zealous missionary to Latin America, once told the story of how the drunken, immoral, ignorant Catholic priests of a certain South American city sought to kill a young native evangelist because he was teaching his people to read the Bible. Suddenly the lights in the tent where the young man was preaching were put out, and a would-be assassin struck at him with a dagger. But, by the grace of God, the native Christian saw the raised weapon, by a faint glimmer of light from without. Just in time he jumped aside, but the deadly weapon fell upon his open Bible, which lay upon the pulpit. Mr. Strachan had this Bible in his possession, the torn pages a solemn witness to the bitterness of the papacy toward the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

It was this same system that persecuted John Wycliffe because he gave to the English people the first complete translation of the Bible in their own tongue. It was this system that strangled and burned at the stake William Tyndale because he gave to the world the first printed Bible. I am glad to admit that there are born-again souls in this system; but theirs is not the Catholicism that would be, except for the open Bible of the Protestants. And even though they are saved because they put their faith in the crucified and risen Son of God, yet they are bound by error that has been handed down through the centuries; they are kept in ignorance of many of the blessed truths of the Gospel of the grace of God.

The day will come when every child of God, Catholic and Protestant, will be caught away from this earth, when the Son of God returns and takes away the church. At that time there will be, upon the authority of God's Word, a great union of all the godless, Christless, bloodless sects and divisions of Christendom. All those in Protestant churches who deny the deity of Christ, His virgin birth, His vicarious atonement, His bodily resurrection, and all the fundamentals of our faith, will doubtless return to the Church of Rome. In that day there will be in full bloom all the mysticisms that had their beginning in Babylon. This union will doubtless be the channel through which the mysteries of Babel will continue.

When John, in his vision, was shown "the great whore" in her final form, he was taken to a wilderness. You know what a wilderness is—a place where there is no water. If you want to see a spiritual wilderness, go to the countries to which we referred a moment ago, Mexico, to Central America, to South America, or wherever this woman, Rome, dominates. Again, I repeat it: I believe there are some, born-again Christians in the Roman Catholic Church; I have come in contact with some of them. These, however, are saved in spite of the system, rather than because of it. In spite of its paganism, they have heard that Christ died for sinners, and are trusting in Him for salvation.

In the wilderness John saw a woman, bedecked with silver and gold and pearls. Everything about her would emphasize the fact that she was not only wealthy, but that she was also wicked. When John saw her, the Word of God says he wondered with a great admiration. That word "admiration" gives
a wrong impression. He did not “admire” this woman; he stood in wonderment, and this word is so translated in the Revised Version. He was amazed to see that the system, with which he himself was connected (for he was living in the first century of the Christian era, when the Christians were filled with the power of the Holy Ghost) would end in such discord.

I do not want to say anything unkind; but if you read history, you will find that, as a result of the blending of the mystery religion with Christianity, a system was formed which was responsible for the Spanish Inquisition and the atrocities that were put into operation during the Dark Ages to stop men from reading the Word of God, especially during the Reformation. As a result of it, literally hundreds of thousands of men and women were put to death. When the Huguenots were slaughtered, it is estimated that 35,000 men and women were killed in one night.

Dr. William Lamb truly says, “This awful system of religion has fearfully darkened the thought of God for vast multitudes. When we remember its teaching concerning indulgences and penances for sin, the salvation of the dead through priestly prayers, how the unbaptised must be damned, and other unscriptural doctrines, we cannot help declaring how false the conception of God given to the world by this system has been.

“And when also we look at its fearful history, with the awful tortures of the Inquisition, a name which still makes us shudder, we are filled with horror. We are told that tens of millions were cruelly martyred and done to death in the name of Christ by this Church. These were shot, stabbed, stoned, drowned, beheaded, hanged, quartered, impaled, burned, or buried alive, roasted on spits, baked in ovens, thrown into furnaces and put to death by hundreds of other fiendishly conceived methods. Many were tortured in the most abominable ways. The history of Christendom was one huge horror for centuries because of these dreadful things.

“Then again we consider its fearful power. The persistent aim of the popes was universal dominion, and for a time they seemed almost to have it. Great kings, and among them, the King of England, we are told, came to recognize it as a supreme honor to receive their crown from the feet of the pope. What could all this mean but that the mystery of iniquity was already working? It was the power of ancient Babylon revived.”

BABYLON’S DOOM PREDICTED

“And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfill His will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled” (Rev. 17:16, 17).

These words refer to the beginning of the latter half of the seventieth week of Daniel. The man who will bring about a confederation of civil power is also going to bring about a confederation of religious power. There will be a union of church and state of which we see foregleams on the pages of history. In that day it will reach its fruition. Probably at the beginning of the latter half of the seventieth week of Daniel, the last three and one-half years before the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, this man in Rome, the Antichrist, will announce that he is God, and that no man dare worship any other God or make petition to any divine person. History has shown that since the days of Nebuchadnezzar, God often times uses one evil thing to destroy another; and just before God overthrows the Antichrist, He will put it into the hearts of the Antichrist and his ten subordinate kings to wipe this imitation of the bride of Christ from the earth.

The nations in that day will take the very same attitude toward all religion that Russia has taken toward Christianity in our own generation. During recent years literally hundreds of churches have been closed. The plan was to put a certain magazine called “The Journal Godless” into every home. “The Journal Godless” began to be printed in 1927. It has published millions of copies, not only in Russia, but in other countries also. By means of it, the godless leaders in Russia, expected to wipe the church from the earth. It rapidly gained in favor, not only in Russia, but also in Spain. It is even in Mexico. God has been giving to us a little taste of what this world is going to see in the coming time.

A paper of reliable source printed the following statement
a few years ago, under the title, "New Anti-religious Move in Russia":

"Press reports from Moscow on April 8, 1937, stated that the Communist Party of the Ukraine had announced a systematic plan designed to stamp out religion. A school for training anti-religious teachers will be opened at Dnepropetrovsk in Central Ukraine by the party provincial committee as part of the scheme. Sixty persons will be given three months' instruction there, then sent out to the villages to organize anti-religious work. Anti-religious leaders have been concerned recently, it is stated, over the decline in membership of the Atheist League and the reported revival of religious influences. The newspaper 'Izvestia,' organ of the government, asserted an 'alarming decline' had been noted in the forces organized to stamp out religion in Soviet Russia."

In the day when the political powers of the best turn upon "the great whore" and "make her desolate," then and not until then this system, which is an abomination to God, will be judged. But her doom is certain, "for God hath put in their hearts (the hearts of the evil rulers of the tribulation period) to fulfill his will" (17:17).

My dear brother, you say that you are a Christian. If I should ask you how you know you are a child of God, you would have to give a better answer than to say that you were born in a Christian home or that you had been baptized or had gone to the Lord's table. If that is all you can give—as a basis for your profession, you are going to be a sadly disappointed man one of these days. You can belong to a hundred churches; and if that is all, in the day when the saints of God go marching home, you will be left here upon the earth. I cannot think of a disappointment greater than this—that a man or woman should be associated with church and religion and forms and ceremonies all of his or her life, and in that day be among those who shall say, "Open unto me," and to have Him reply, "Depart from me, I never knew you." Has there ever been a time, when you have knelt at the pierced feet of the Son of God and said to him, "Lord Jesus, Thou hast died for me. I want to take Thee into my own life; and I now believe that Thy blood washes me of all sin"? Do you know the Lord, my dear brother? Is your religion real? Is it a Person? Have you received the Lord Jesus Christ?

FURTHER DESCRIPTION OF THE FINAL APOSTASY OF MYSTERY BABYLON

As we have seen already, chapter eighteen goes into further detail concerning the corruption and the fall of apostate Christendom, adding to what has been outlined in chapter seventeen. Let us read verses 1-3:

"And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of her fornication, and 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."

The verses just quoted set forth a condition which is an excellent picture of the past and present history of the papacy. As we saw in our study of chapter seventeen, we need only turn to the annals of the Roman Catholic Church to read of fiendish deeds committed in the name of the Lord. We saw that the Inquisition was established by the papacy. With its torture chambers, its deeds of unspeakable cruelty, its slaying of men, sparing not even helpless women and children, yet they called it "The Holy Office"! When we read these things, we may well believe that the description of Babylon, which God's Word says "has become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird," refers to that system!

Coupled with this description is the charge that she has committed fornication with the kings of the earth. In the Old Testament, spiritual fornication is idolatry, and in the New Testament, it is friendship with the world. History shows that nations have often sent their representatives to the Vatican. The purpose of the Church of Rome in creating this diplomatic corps is to bring all the kings, presidents, and countries over which they rule, under the domination of the head of
that system, who claims to be the vicar of Christ and the ruler of kings.

"COME OUT OF HER, MY PEOPLE"

"And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (verse 4).

In these words of warning God calls His born-again children to "come out of her." It is the call to separation from this God-dishonoring system. The pathway of separation must be walked if the church of Christ is to exercise an influence for Christ in the midst of this perverse generation. This has been true of God's people all through the ages. The men who have exercised an influence for Him have been men separated from the corruptions of the world, including the corrupt religious systems of their day. The call from heaven to "come out of her" was heard during the Reformation period, and during the tribulation period there will also be a warning given, lest men be deceived by her pretensions.

This system is today making every effort to bring Protestantism under its influence and thus destroy the work of the reformers. The Anglo-Catholic movement and similar organizations within the professing Protestant bodies, bring one to a realization of the need of more "Protest-ants" with real courage and conviction to stem this awful tide. If we should ever retrogress; that is, if a union of Protestantism and Romanism should ever be formed, at that moment we should be compelled to give up the Bible, because Rome has not changed one whit in her attitude toward liberty of conscience and freedom to study God's Word. Not only that, but we should also be compelled to exchange the great doctrine of justification by faith and all that it includes for the mysteries that were invested in the wife of Nimrod, the consort of one of the mightiest apostates who ever lived in Old Testament days. Men like Luther, John Huss, John Knox, called mightily to the people to come out from the system and be separated from it. Let us lift high the torch which they have put in our hands, and magnify the grace of God, which alone brings salvation. We need to contend earnestly for the faith in this day when
tens of thousands are wending their way back to spiritual bondage, from which the Gospel of the Reformers delivers men.

"STRONG IS THE LORD GOD WHO JUDGETH HER"

In verses 5-8, the Spirit of God gives a further description of the pride and the arrogance of "the great whore," and the terrible judgments that will come upon her:

"For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double. How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her."

The language of this prayer for the destruction of the enemy of God's truth is in harmony with the character of the period of time in which the events will take place. God will be dealing in righteous judgment, and it will be perfectly proper for the tribulation saints to pray according to God's ways with the people at that time. The language used here reminds us of Psalm 137:8:

"O daughter of Babylon, who are to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us."

It is the language not of the people of God living during this dispensation, for God is showing grace to men now, and consequently Christians are exhorted not to recompense evil for evil. The words refer, rather, to the Jewish remnant, and belong to those petitions that are known as the Impractical Psalms. The people of God are to take the attitude that God takes with respect to everything, and should pray according to the character of the dispensation in which they are living.
"THE KINGS . . . AND THE MERCHANTS OF THE EARTH SHALL . . . LAMENT FOR HER"

Verses 9-13 present Babylon, "the great whore," as a commercial system, and the lamentation that shall be made over her by kings and merchants:

"And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, 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: the merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silks, and scarlet, and all thine 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."

From these verses many Bible teachers have concluded that Babylon, the ancient city, will be rebuilt, and will become the commercial center during the tribulation period. They think they see, in chapters seventeen and eighteen, the picture of two Babylons, the first Babylon the great religious system; the second, the city of Babylon, rebuilt on the shore of the River Euphrates, the commercial center of the world. I cannot accept this interpretation. To me, it is very clear that the ancient city of Babylon has fallen, never to rise again. This is very clear from the content of Jeremiah, chapters 50 and 51.

The Babylon described in the passage we are now considering is ecclesiastical Babylon in her fullest character. We must ever bear in mind that the papacy is a commercial system as well as a religious system. All through the centuries, commerce has flourished under the patronage of the popes, and the papacy is more interested in merchandise and political power than she is in religion. To this history bears witness.

And now please note in the quotation given the long list of things in which this system traffics. They are found in verses 12 and 13. This list ends with "... sheep, and horses, and chariots, and bodies, and souls of men." Here we used the Revised Version, which correctly translates the word "bodies"—not "slaves," as in the Authorized Version. Trafficking in the bodies and souls of men! What a terrific indictment! No wonder the wrath of heaven is to descend upon the system that practices such evil! I think we can see the meaning of this reference in the practice of the priests who, under the guise of prayers for the dead and doctrines concerning purgatory, pour literally millions of dollars every year into the coffers of the Vatican. TRAFFICKING IN THE BODIES AND SOULS OF MEN! May God keep every Protestant minister from ever having a charge like this laid against him! It is a serious thing for a man to be able to say, "I am set as a watchman." The moment such a man lapses into professionalism and uses his high office to make himself rich in this world's goods, he traffics in the bodies and souls of men! Please pray for every true preacher of the Gospel, that he may be kept faithful to his charge and more concerned in caring for the flock of God than for his own selfish interests.

The wailing of the merchants, because of the destruction of this system by the ten kings, is recorded in verses 15-19:

"The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, and saying, Alas, alas that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. 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! And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate."

God will put it into the hearts of the ten kings, associated with the Antichrist, to wipe out this wicked and abominable
system. In our study of the previous chapter, we saw how that is to be accomplished. As we said before, God oftentimes uses one evil thing to destroy another; and when His time for doing so has come, He will use those God-defying rulers to accomplish His purpose concerning Babylon. When that destruction has been accomplished, the merchants will see that the commercialism of the Roman world has been destroyed: and then there will rise from their hearts the wail which is recorded in the verses quoted above.

The events portrayed in chapters seventeen and eighteen will occur just prior to the Battle of Armageddon and the return of our Lord Jesus in glory. Linked with this religious system, is the city where the system has its center. It is possible that the city is Rome, where the Vatican now stands. Read again verse 16, which seems to be a description of that city.

"WITH VIOLENCE SHALL ... BABYLON BE THROWN DOWN"

Before the return of our Lord Jesus in glory, when the confederated kings destroy this system, there will take place the overthrow of the city itself. How it will be destroyed, I do not know; but it would seem that a great earthquake will shake the very foundations of the city where the woman has her seat of power. The description in verses 21-23 is graphic, indeed:

"And 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. And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee: and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; and the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for thy sorceries were all nations deceived."

"REJOICE, THOU HEAVEN!"

In 18:20 and again in 19:1-4 we read the account of the concluding vision in connection with the fall of Babylon. The redeemed in heaven will rejoice over the judgment which God shall mete out upon "the great whore," "which did corrupt the
earth with her fornication." Moreover, there will be rejoicing over the righteous judgment of God in avenging "the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth" at the hands of this counterfeit religion. "Much people in heaven" will praise the only true God, saying, "Alleluia: Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments ... Alleluia."

"And the four and twenty elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia" (Rev. 19:4).

My friend, does your heart echo this "Amen. Alleluia"? Can you say, "Let it be so. Praise ye the Lord," because He will one day appear to put away sin, and to reign in righteousness and peace? You must know Him as your Saviour if you would share with Him His glory. "Without the shedding of blood is no remission" of sin. And Calvary's Lamb is the Judge of all the earth. Look unto Him and "be ye saved"—for time and for eternity.