

“BABYLON”—TYPICAL AND ANTI-TYPICAL

The item immediately below is a discourse by the Pastor from 1911 Convention Report, page 143.)

For centuries, Bible students have observed that many of the strong expressions of the Old Testament respecting Babylon found their parallels in the New Testament, used in respect to mystic Babylon. Many of these statements of the Old Testament seem far too vivid and too strong to be applied to literal Babylon. Hence it was surmised that mystic Babylon was more particularly referred to than the literal. It was noticed also that as Israel and Judah went into captivity to literal Babylon, so apparently the book of Revelation teaches that spiritual Israel would have drastic experiences in a captivity to mystic or symbolic “Babylon the great, the mother of harlots” (Revelation 17:5).

Within the past fifty years, under the blighting influence of the evolution theory and the destructive higher criticism of the Bible, these parallels have been lost sight of. Indeed, aside from international Sunday school lessons, Bible study has been very largely neglected, even in theological seminaries. And Sunday school lessons, under guidance of worldly wisdom, have sought to avoid everything except the “milk of the Word” (the simple doctrines) to avoid controversies.

Only very recently is true Bible study being revived in conjunction with the International Bible Students’ Association, a branch of which I have the honor to address today. We may well congratulate each other, dear friends, that in God’s providence we have escaped the faith-destroying influence of higher criticism and evolution. We may well congratulate ourselves also on the degree of liberty we have attained in the study of God’s Word—freedom from the confusion creeds manufactured for us in a darker age—freedom from some of the rank superstitions and false theories which, for a time, fettered our reason and made the divine plan to appear ignoble—unworthy of a just and loving man, much more of an all-wise, just and loving Creator.

GREAT BABYLON OF OLD

Briefly we remind you that ancient Babylon was built on the river Euphrates; that she had impregnable walls; that the river ran through the midst of the city, and the great gates of brass spanned the river as a protection against assaults of an enemy from that quarter. The name of the city was attached to a large area of country outside of it, for which it served as the capital. Indeed, at its zenith Babylon was mistress of the then civilized world—the first universal empire.

We remind you of the captivity, first of the ten tribes of Israel, and later on of the remaining two tribes or kingdom called Judah. The method of Babylon was to scatter the

Israelites among the Babylonians, and through their earthly interests to amalgamate them as part and parcel of Babylonia. This condition of things lasted until the fall of Babylon before its conqueror, Cyrus.

The general gained his victory in a remarkable manner, while the Babylonians, assured of their security, were reveling at a banquet. Although the crisis came suddenly, the preparation had been long in progress. The soldiers of Cyrus, under his direction had dugged a canal of considerable depth ready to drain off the water of the river as soon as the necessary connection was made. When the canal was in readiness the connection with the river was speedily made and the water flowed rapidly into the new channel, leaving the bed of the river under the great brazen gates, on both sides of the city, an open roadway, through which marched the army of Cyrus. Suddenly, at an unexpected moment, the boastful city, the proud Babylon, was captured.

Then it was that Cyrus, the victorious general, gave the command which granted liberty to every Israelite carried captive thither, to return to his own land. Additionally, assistance was rendered to all who desired to return, and the golden vessels pertaining to the worship of God in the temple were sent back. But strange to say out of all the millions who had constituted Israel and Judah before the captivity, only about fifty-three thousand of all the tribes were anxious to avail themselves of the privilege of returning to the land of promise.

ANTI-TYPICAL OR MYSTIC BABYLON

The Book of Revelation, the book of symbols, the last message of our ascended Redeemer to his church through the apostle John, was written long centuries after literal Babylon perished. Its references to Babylon, therefore, can be viewed only in the light of symbolism. As already suggested, many of the prophetic utterances seem far too strong to be applied to literal Babylon and her fall. Indeed, while speaking directly of Babylon and her fall at the hands of the Medes and Persians under Cyrus, the prophecies speak of the end of this age and of world-wide calamities incidental to the overthrow of every institution contrary to the divine will, preparatory to the inauguration of Messiah's kingdom.

I request that at your convenience you read Isaiah 13:1-19, in confirmation of what I have said. I recommend further that you compare Jeremiah 50:15-29, with Revelation 18:6, and Jeremiah 50:38 with Revelation 16:12, and the 46th verse with Revelation 18:9. Compare also Jeremiah 51:6-9 with Revelation 18:4, and verse 13 of Jeremiah 51 with Revelation 17:1-5, and verses 37, 63 and 64 with Revelation 18:2-4, 21.

No one can make these comparisons, I believe, and not feel fully convinced that the Holy Spirit dictating through Isaiah and Jeremiah was the same Holy Spirit which guided St.

John through the apocalyptic vision. Nor can such students escape the conclusion that the force of the prophecies apply specially to mystic Babylon rather than to the literal city and country. As one section of literal Babylon fell before another, so Revelation predicts it will be with mystic Babylon. As literal Babylon ruled over the whole world, so mystic Babylon is represented as ruling the civilized world, and hence the entire world.

As the lords of Babylon were made drunk by wine which they drank from the golden vessels captured from the temple at Jerusalem, so mystic Babylon, represented by a woman, is said to make all nations drunk with the wine, or doctrine, which she gives them out of the golden cup which she holds in her hand. As literal Babylon fell by the drying up of the waters of the Euphrates, so Revelation tells us that mystic Babylon sits upon the symbolic Euphrates, and that the way of the kings of the East shall be prepared by the drying up of those waters (Rev. 16:12).

Similarly, we are assured, mystic Babylon's end shall come suddenly, "in one hour." Like a great millstone she shall be cast into the sea to rise no more. As the literal Israelites were invited to leave Babylon the literal and were helped so to do, but only a few responded, so spiritual Israelites are urged to leave mystic Babylon in which they have been in captivity, but only a comparatively small number have a sufficiency of courage, love and zeal to respond at the first—others will be delivered after her collapse. Now, however, the message is, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen [sentenced to fall]. Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." (Revelation 18:2-5)

WHERE IS MYSTIC BABYLON?

No student can examine the records without astonishment and a realization that mystic Babylon must be some great, influential system of great power in the world during this Gospel age, and especially at its close. The very prominence given to Babylon, both in prophecy and in Revelation, warns God's people that if they have not yet found Babylon they should seek for her. For so great an institution as made all nations drunk with her false doctrine must be very prominent, indeed, to those who were so under the influence of the stupefying draft from her cup.

Indeed, the intimation is that the whole civilized world will be so intoxicated with the false teaching of Babylon as to be completely under her influence. And when she fails it is particularly explained that all the great, the rich, the mighty, the influential of earth will mourn the catastrophe of her fall. Only the saintly few will recognize its true import and rejoice, as we read, "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 naught... 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!”
Revelation 18:16-19.

But, on the contrary, another class rejoices, as we read: “Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy prophets, for God hath avenged you on her. And I heard a voice of much people in heaven saying, Alleluia! Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God, for true and righteous are his judgments, for he hath judged the great harlot which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.” (Rev. 18:20 and 19:1, 2)

It seems very clear, my dear brethren, that many of us were once a part and parcel of this great Babylon—this great system of confusion, by which the divine character has been so traduced through misinterpretations of the divine Word. I am aware that Catholics declare that Protestants are this Babylon, and I am aware that Protestants claim that Catholics are this Babylon system.

To my understanding of the divine Word, both are right! Babylon is the mother system and the various sects of Protestants are the daughters, and the name Babylon is a family name. It belongs to the mother system first, and to all the daughters of the system now, as well. Improper association with the world, its governments and systems, is a crime to which they are parties. The “daughters” have followed the example of the “mother,” and more or less are coming back into sympathy with her in all particulars. None of them have maintained the proper attitude of virginity and separateness from the world.

“I SPEAK UNKINDLY.”

Do not misunderstand me. I believe that there are true saints of God in all the various parts of Christendom—mother and daughters. I do not even charge nor believe that those who have upheld and are upholding the various sections of Babylon have an evil intention. I believe that they are thoroughly “drunk,” intoxicated with their own erroneous theories. The fall of their present institutions will be a startling blow to them, for they verily believe them to be Christ’s kingdom—and style them such Christendom.

The fall of Babylon will astonish the entire world, so complete is the illusion that Christendom represents the throne and government of messiah among men. And, be it remembered, the vast majority in all the various sects and denominations of Christendom are worldly people who have no conception whatever of the true church and her cause. Their ambition is to approximate righteousness and a form of godliness, but no more than this seems to them necessary, since they have not been begotten of the Holy Spirit and therefore cannot appreciate things from the divine standpoint.

To them the fall of Babylon at first is astounding, a perplexity, but will work no real injury, because the reign of Babylon over the earth will be superseded by the reign of the New Jerusalem—the kingdom of God’s dear Son. The most saintly of God’s people will hear the voice of divine command, “Come out of her, my people,” and will obey it before the fall comes, but a large number, even of the Lord’s people, lacking courage, will share with Babylon the troubles of that hour. [Comment: Quite a number of the Lord’s people seem not to have grasped the Pastor’s thought gleaned from the Scriptures. We suggest a careful consideration of Isa. 66:7 and 8, and reprint article entitled “THERE SHALL BE SHOWERS OF BLESSING”, particularly the paragraphs under the subheading TWO CLASSES BORN OUT OF ZION, column two, page 5574; and a careful restudy of Item #154 entitled QUOTES AND COMMENTS ON GREAT COMPANY, dated 1973, January 3.]

Subsequently, however, they will rejoice and be glad when they realize the justice of the divine execution against Babylon, and to them will come, as an inferior company, an invitation to attend the “marriage supper of the Lamb.” Their honorable position will be that of bridesmaids to the still more faithful and courageous “little flock,” who will be accounted worthy to be the bride class and to sit with the Redeemer in his throne. Then speedily will follow the long-promised times of restitution to the world of mankind, for which we pray, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven.”

“THY KINGDOM COME”

As God and his glory and honor are to be first in the minds of his children, so their next thought should be for the glorious kingdom, which he has promised shall bless the world. However much our personal interests and affairs may be pressing upon us, and however much we may desire to have the Lord’s blessing and guidance, our appreciation of his beneficent arrangements which he has so clearly promised in his Word, we are to remember that the kingdom, when it shall come, will be a panacea for every ill and every trouble, not only for us, but for the whole world of mankind. We are not, therefore, to permit our own personal needs to be too prominent, but are to remember that the whole creation is groaning and travailing in pain together, waiting for this glorious kingdom and the blessing upon all the families of the earth, which our heavenly Father has promised shall yet come through the seed of Abraham.

This thought respecting the kingdom, its necessity, and the blessings that it will bring will keep prominently before our minds our own high calling to joint-heirship with our Lord in this kingdom. And in proportion as that hope is clearly before our minds it will be, as the apostle explains, as “an anchor to our souls, sure and steadfast, entering into that which is within the vail.” This anchorage of hope in the future, in the kingdom, will enable us to pass safely, and with comparative quiet, through the trials and storms and difficulties of this present evil world. More than this, our thoughts respecting the

kingdom will remind us that if we are to be heirs of the kingdom it will be necessary that we have the appropriate discipline and training.

“THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH, AS IT IS DONE IN HEAVEN.”

This petition offered from the heart implies that the one offering it has made a full consecration of his will, his heart, to the Lord, and that as he hopes for the kingdom by and by to come and subdue all unrighteousness and to establish the divine will from sea to sea, and from pole to pole, so now, the petitioner, being thus in accord with the Lord’s will, and thus wishing that it might be universally in control, will see to it that this will is ruling in his own heart—that in his own affairs God’s will is done to the best of his ability in his earthly condition, even as he hopes to have it perfected in the kingdom. No one can intelligently and honestly offer this petition and not desire and endeavor to have the Lord’s will done in himself while on earth. Thus a blessing comes to the one who offers this petition before he has asked any special blessing upon himself or others. The mere thought of the divine arrangement brings a blessing, a peace, a rest, a sanctification of heart.

GOD’S BURDENS

I long had borne a heavy load
Along life’s rough and thorny road,
And often-times had wondered why
My friend walked burdenless, while I
Was forced to carry, day by day,
The cross which on my shoulders lay:
When, lo, one day the Master laid
Another cross on me. Dismayed
And faint and trembling and distressed,
I cried, “Oh, I have longed for rest
These many days. I cannot bear
This other heavy load of care.
I pray thee, Lord, behold this one—
Shall I bear both while he has none?”
No answer came. The cross was laid
On my poor back, and I was weighed
Down to earth. And as I went
Trailing along and almost spent,
Again I cried, “Lord, have I been
Untrue to thee? Is it for sin

That I have done, that I must still
Carry this cross against my will?"
"My child," the Master's voice returned,
"Hast thou not yet the lesson learned?
The burden thou hast borne so long
Hath only made thee grow more strong,
And fitted thee to bear for me
This other load I lay on thee,
The brother is too weak as yet
To have a cross upon him set.
God's burden rests upon the strong.
They stronger grow who bear them long,
And each new burden is a sign
That great power to bear is thine."
So now no longer I repine,
Because a heavy cross is mine,
But struggle onward with the prayer
"Make me more worthy, Lord, to bear."

1911 Convention Report, page 141.