



THE SPIRIT OF
BABYLON

Daniel Botkin

"I came upon a wedding
That old families had contrived:
Bethlehem the Bridegroom,
Babylon the Bride." -Leonard Cohen in "Last Year's Man"

We see the beginning of Babylon in Genesis, in the story of the Tower of Babel. (Babel is taken from the Hebrew form; Babylon from the Greek form.) We see the final fall of Babylon in Revelation, the last book of the Bible. Rev. 17:1-5 gives a description of Babylon:

"And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters, with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication. And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."

Babylon, pictured here as a filthy whore, is a stark contrast to the true Church, which is spoken of as the spotless virgin Bride of the Messiah. Babylon and the Bride appear in the Bible as two contrasting women. This should alert us to the fact that Babylon is the devil's counterfeit of the true Church. This passage from Revelation should also alert us to some other things. First, Babylon is called a "MYSTERY." It is not real easy to define exactly what Babylon is or is not. Its identity is, to a certain degree, a mystery, hidden from man's understanding. Unless the Holy Spirit draws aside the veil, Babylon's identity remains hidden to those who are a part of her.

We know Babylon is something God hates and commands his people to leave (Rev. 18:4). When Babylon is finally judged and destroyed (Rev. 18), we hear "a great voice of many people in heaven, saying [for the first time in the NT], 'Halleluyah!'" Then, in the next verse, the true Bride is revealed in fine linen, clean and white, ready for the marriage supper of the Lamb. In view of these facts, we should make some effort to identify spiritual Babylon, and make sure that we have come out of Babylon, and that Babylon has come out of us.

Between Genesis and Revelation we see Babylon mentioned several times. The literal, physical Babylon of the Old Testament was the place of Israel's exile and captivity when they were carried out of their Land because of their sins and the sins of their forefathers. The spiritual Babylon of the NT is a system of worship that is a counterfeit of Biblical worship. Simply put, it is an erroneous view of Bible-based worship, and it keeps God's people in exile and captivity. It keeps the Church in exile from the Promised Land of God's Kingdom, that realm of victory we see chronicled in the Book of Acts. The Church began to decline after the Apostolic age, and there has never been a time in history when the Church came near to walking in such power and glory, despite fantastic, exaggerated claims that occasionally surface. Like Babylon of old, NT Babylon keeps God's people in captivity because of their sins and the sins of their forefathers.

The history of Israel's Babylonian Captivity and subsequent return to the Land is important, because it parallels the history of the Church's spiritual Babylonian Captivity, when God's NT people were, because of their sins, carried away into those centuries which historians now call the Dark Ages.

Israel was eventually freed from her Babylonian Captivity, led by men such as Ezra and Nehemiah, and encouraged by prophets such as Haggai and Zechariah.

The Church, too, has been given the opportunity to be freed from her captivity. Unfortunately, many Christians are not aware of the fact that the call has gone forth to "Come out of her, My people," and consequently they make no effort to separate themselves from Babylonian forms of worship. Like the Israelites in Babylon of old, the majority of Christians prefer to remain in the comfortable, familiar surroundings they have always known.

For those who wish to identify spiritual Babylon for the purpose of coming out of her, the Bible offers some clues. In Rev. 17, the first thing Babylon is called is a whore. What is it that makes a woman a whore? It is more than just sexual immorality, for there are many sexually immoral women who are not whores. The thing that makes a sexually immoral woman a whore is this: She renders a service to the customer, giving him what he wants, but she has no commitment, no concern, no relationship with the customer beyond the time of the service. And, of course, she expects to be paid. Does this description of a harlot not describe the way many churches and pastors operate? They render a service ("Sunday morning service" "Sunday evening service" etc.), but the pastor and members of the congregation have no commitment to one another, no concern for one another, no relationship with one another outside the times of the service. And, of course, the hireling expects to be paid. The Bible teaches financial support for elders, "especially those who labor in the Word and teaching" (1 Tim. 5:17), but not for hirelings who have no concern for the flock under their care.

Rev. 17 gives us another clue to Babylon's identity. The whore sits on seven hills (v. 9) and is "that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth" (v. 18). Protestants have said, "Rome was built on seven hills, and was the only city that 'reigned over the kings of the earth' in John's time. Therefore the whore of Babylon must be the Roman Catholic Church." Books and pamphlets have been written on this subject by Protestants, the most famous being Alexander Hislop's *Two Babylons*, written in the 1850s. For those willing to wade through 300 pages of small print, I highly recommend the book. Those who prefer a condensed, easy-to-read book on the subject can try Ralph Woodrow's *Babylon Mystery Religion*.

One significant fact that seems to be overlooked or ignored by many Protestants who identify the harlot of Babylon as Roman Catholicism is this: The whore is called "the Mother of Harlots." If the harlot system known as Roman Catholicism is, indeed, the Mother of Harlots, then who are the smaller harlot systems that bear the image of the Mother they came out of? A casual look at just about any Protestant denomination will reveal that elements of paganism/Roman Catholicism are still welcome in Protestantism. "As is the mother, so is her daughter" (Ezek. 16:44).

Genesis 11 gives us another clue to identify Babylonian forms of worship. Those who built the Tower of Babel "had brick instead of stone." The contrast between counterfeit and true worship can be illustrated by the differences between brick and stone. A blind man feeling the surface of a brick and of a stone will get the same feeling from both objects. If our spiritual eyes are closed, we can experience the same religious feelings from Babylon that we experience from the Bride. Many people say, "This experience feels right" or "This church just seems to be the right one." But if our spiritual eyes are open and in focus, we no longer need to rely on our undependable feelings, for we can now see the difference between the brick and the stone/ Babylon and the Bride.

The shape reveals the source. Bricks are man-made and geometric, formed by man's Ideas and man's ability to manipulate clay. Bricks are made by pressing clay into the same mold, then burning it so it will be hardened and guaranteed not to change shape. ("Let us burn them thoroughly," said Babel's builders.) Then the bricks are laid with other bricks of the same size and shape to form a tower. This whole process describes the way many of our seminaries operate. They manipulate the students, press them into the denominational mold so there is no variety, keep them there until they are hardened and set in their (i.e., the denomination's) ways, then lay them atop one another, generation after generation, and watch the tower rise. Unfortunately for them, such towers are destined to fall.

Stones, unlike bricks, are organic in shape. Man cannot duplicate a stone. The mark of God's hand is on a stone, and a ministry which is not part of Babylon will have the mark of God's hand upon it. It will have an anointing upon it that man cannot duplicate. Man may imitate the anointing of the Spirit (and many do a great imitation), but man cannot duplicate the anointing, any more than he can create a real stone. And unlike bricks, which all come from the same mold, stones come in a wide variety of shapes, sizes, colors, and textures, thus expressing the great variety of all the unique people who make up the Bride, the true Body of Messiah. Peter writes, "Ye also, as living stones [not dead bricks!] are being built up into a spiritual house [not a man-made tower destined to fall], a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Yeshua the Messiah" (1 Pet. 2:5).

Some believers who find themselves in a church system that is Babylonish think they should stay and try to bring revival and healing to the church. People can be revived and healed, but the Babylonian system cannot, as it is written, "We would have healed Babylon, but she cannot be healed; let us leave her and each go to his own land" (Jer. 51:9).

Those who are captives in Babylon may have a hard time coming out, for it is written of the Babylonian captors that "they held them fast; they refused to let them go" (Jer. 50:33). "Stay in our denomination," the captors say, "and let yourself be molded and hardened into a brick like the rest of us." Those who truly belong to the Lord will, sooner or later, know that they are living stones and that their place is in the spiritual house which is being built to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God.

For more literature, contact:

Gates of Eden
PO Box 2257 East Peoria
IL 61611-0257