

BABYLON, A CITY CALLED CONFUSION

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There is significance in the fact that the popular churches rejected the first angel's message. "Another angel followed [the first], saying, 'Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.'" Revelation 14:8. Heaven is greatly concerned about earth's attitude toward the sacrifice of God's Son. He literally redeemed the world from destruction. God has raised up the church for the express purpose of telling the world the good news about His Son. If any group on earth ought to recognize and appreciate the leading of the Holy Spirit, it should be the church! The principle is that wherever the everlasting gospel is disregarded, or its advancing light is not followed, even by those who believe it, there is a moral fall and confusion as the sure result.

The ancient meaning of "Babel," from which comes "Babylon," was "Gate of God;" and because of the pride and exaltation of those who were of this "Babel," confusion overtook them; and that which originally meant "Gate of God," then meant only "confusion."

Now the church is "the body of Christ" in this world; and he says: "I am the way," "I am the door." The church of Christ is the Lord's appointed agency through which He would call people unto Himself, that they may find in Him deliverance from this present evil world. The church is the "Gate of God" to mankind; and the faith of Jesus is that which gives access through this gate, to all the fullness of God.

If the church should become proud and self-exalted, then comes in confusion. The Scriptures tell that there would come "a falling away" from the truth of the gospel; that there would come a self-exaltation in the church, through men arising, from the very midst of her trusted ones, who would speak "perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." 2 Thess. 2:3, 4; Acts 20:28, 30.

Now the church in Rome was, in the beginning, pre-eminently a church of Christ. Paul gave thanksgiving, of her faith, that it was "spoken of throughout the whole world." Rom. 1:8.

By this "faith" that church was clothed with the beautiful garments of salvation and the robe of the Lord's righteousness; she was endued with the power of God and of godliness, before the eyes

of all the nations. The beauty of the Lord God was upon her, and she prospered, and her renown went forth to all the world for her beauty, for its was perfect, which he had put upon her. But not satisfied with the exaltation that the Lord gave, which could remain only through her own humility and purity of faith, the church grew haughty, and exalted herself. She prided herself upon her own beauty. Instead of trusting in Him for her beauty, she trusted in herself.

Trusting in herself, satisfied with her own sufficiency,—this was in itself to put herself in the place of God. Then it was natural enough that she should seek to draw disciples to herself, rather than to the Lord. So came the apostasy. Instead of remaining the church of Christ, manifesting to the world the mystery of God and of godliness, she became, though still professedly the church of Christ, only the manifestation to the world of the mystery of *self* and of selfishness, which is the very mystery of iniquity.

In the fifth chapter of Ephesians, the apostle speaks “concerning Christ and the church,” under the figure of the marriage relation, with *Christ* in the place of the husband, and *the church* in the place of the wife. And the Word says, “*The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the Saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. . . . This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*” Verses 23-32. The relationship of the church to Christ is thus plainly shown to be the same as that of the wife to her own husband. As the husband himself, and *not another man*, is “the head of the wife;” so Christ himself, and *not another*, is “the head of the church.”

Now suppose another man should propose to put himself in between a husband and his wife, to speak to her the sentiments of her husband in faith and morals, what would the loyal wife do?—Everybody knows that she would resent such an intrusion, and would promptly repudiate all such proffers. But suppose another man should not only propose to put himself in the place of the husband to the wife, but that the wife should agree to the proposal, and actually accept this other man in the place of her husband, to speak to her the sentiments of her husband in faith and morals, then what would that be but treason to her own husband, apostasy from her marriage vows, and adultery with this other man? And what kind of faith and morals do you have in that case?—Everybody knows that that would be nothing but unfaithfulness and immorality.

Now the Bishop of Rome claims to be the head of that church. From Cardinal Gibbons we quote:—

“Says the Council of Florence (1439), at which also were present the bishop of the Greek and Latin Church, “We define that the Roman pontiff is the successor of blessed Peter, prince of the apostles, and the true vicar of Christ, the *head of the whole church*, the father and doctor of all Christians; and we declare that to him, in the person of blessed Peter, was given, by Jesus Christ our Saviour, full power to feed, rule, and govern the universal church.”

“The pope is here called the *true vicar*, or representative, of Christ in this lower kingdom of the church militant; that is, the pope is the organ of our Saviour, and speaks his sentiments in faith and morals.”—“*The Faith of Our Fathers*,” pages 154, 155.

It was the Council of Chalcedon, 451 A. D., that first addressed the Bishop of Rome as “the head, of whom we are the members.”

Thus the Church of Rome claims to be “the bride of Christ.” She claims that she is “the spouse of Christ.” And yet she has accepted another man as the “representative” of her husband, as the “substitute”—*vicar*—for her husband, to occupy the place of her husband in his absence.

How could the complete abandon, the essential wantonness, the utter confusion of moral principles, of a wife, be more clearly demonstrated than in citing the confirmed fact of another man’s occupying the place of her husband to her, as evidence of her faithfulness and purity? How could she more clearly demonstrate that all true sense of faithfulness, of morality, and of purity has become completely confused in her consciousness? That a confirmed adulteress and harlot should boast of her iniquity as being the only way to righteousness, is certainly nothing else than the very mystery of iniquity itself.

Yet she did not stop even there: she went on and took to herself yet other men: she committed fornication with the kings of the earth. Having lost the heavenly power, she now sought for earthly power. Having forsaken the arm of the Lord, she sought the arm of man. Having disconnected herself from the kingdom of heaven, she would now connect herself with the kingdoms of earth. “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. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration." Rev. 17:3-6.

Cardinal Gibbons says:—"Babylon," from which Peter addressed his first epistle, is understood by learned annotators, Protestant and Catholic, to refer to Rome.—"*The Faith of Our Fathers*," page 131.

In the end of the first general epistle of St. Peter we have these words: "The church that is in Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you: and so doth my son Mark" (1 Peter 5:13). Peter, which he wrote from Rome, called Rome figuratively Babylon. Now since this Babylon signifies Rome, and since it is a church—a woman—that is thus called Babylon, it follows with absolute certainty that it is the Church of Rome that is this "Babylon the mother."

God would have healed Babylon, but she would not be healed. In the Reformation He sent a balm for her, if so be that she might be healed; but she would not receive it, and, therefore, the Lord was obliged to leave her to her own ways. In the Reformation the Lord sent his gospel anew, and with power, to all people; and at that time all the people were in Babylon, because all were under the dominion of Rome. Multitudes received the gospel, and walked in the light as it was then revealed. But as that was the first step out of darkness, there were other steps to be taken, to reach the fullness of the gospel: there was advance light in which to walk.

And here again history began to repeat itself. Many of those who had come out of darkness, and had taken the first steps into the light of the gospel, stopped there, became satisfied with that: they counted themselves sufficiently rich, and increased with goods, and therefore in need of nothing. And, as the consequence, they grew proud of what they had, exalted themselves upon what they had, and became exclusive. Then, as the gospel must go on as the light must increase more and more unto the perfect day, it followed that all those who would walk in the advancing light,—the fuller gospel,—were excluded from the company of those who were self-satisfied, and were obliged to go forward as had the others at the first.

Then these became satisfied with what *they* had, grew proud of it, exalted themselves upon it, and became exclusive. But as the gospel must still advance, and as those who would walk in the advancing light would receive more truth, could not do so and be recognized as of the company of those who had taken the former steps, they must, in turn, inevitably go on in a separate company.

Thus those people, instead of continuing to be *reformers*, became respectively *Lutherans* and *Calvinists*. Each phase of advancing truth developed a separate denomination. And this is the whole philosophy of the principal divisions manifest in the different denominations of Protestantism. If those who *started* in the Reformation had continued to walk in the light as it shone more fully, if they had received advanced truth as they grew in the knowledge of the gospel, it is plain enough that there never could have been any other company, any new denomination: they would all have been reformers; there would have been one continuous and progressive reformation.

But when those who had received light and truth refused to receive more; when they held that they had *all* the light and *all* the truth, and grew proud, self-exalted, and exclusive because of it; and when they excluded from their company those who would receive increased light and advanced truth,—then there was nothing else for these to do but to associate together in the fellowship of the light and truth that they had received, and in the spirit of the gospel to spread it to all people.

Then, history further repeated itself. These successive denominations, each in turn refusing to go further, and so rejecting truth, were turned from originally the “Gate of God” to “confusion.” Each one, in turn, as the mother at the first, joined herself to another man: they accepted kings of the earth as their head, in place of Christ, the true Head,—entered into illicit connection with the kings of the earth. The Emperor of Germany was the head of the Lutheran Church. In the Scandinavian countries also the Lutheran is the state church, and the head of the state was the head of that church. In England the sovereign was head of the Church of England; and in Scotland the same sovereign was head of the church (Presbyterian) of Scotland. In New England the Congregationalists became the state church, as had the others each in her place; and each and all of them after the very example of “Babylon the Great, the Mother.”

Up to the time of the planting of the American colonies, each denomination that had been developed by the advance steps of the Reformation had become joined to the state; and that the Independents, or Congregationalists, who had not joined themselves to the state in Europe, did so in *the New England colonies*, while the Church of England was the established church in all the Southern colonies. So it came to pass that in the “New World,” church and state were in every colony united, except in Rhode Island, and the whole influence of the colonial governments was enlisted in sustaining the illicit union of professed Protestantism and the state.

But in Virginia, immediately after the Declaration of Independence, the Presbyterians, the Baptists, and the Quakers took the lead in a movement that became universal and even national on this side of the sea. That movement was the total separation of religion and the state, bringing the churches back to the original “principles on which the gospel was first propagated and the Reformation from popery carried on.”

This principle of the total separation of church and state was established in the National Charter, and was recognized as a fundamental principle in the State of Virginia. And from this the influence spread, and caused that “in every other American State oppressive statutes concerning religion fell into disuse, and were gradually repealed.”

In this great nation, Protestantism was placed in its original attitude, as in the beginning of the Reformation, and also in the original attitude of Christianity as it was preached by Christ and the apostles, and as the fundamental principles of Christianity require. Protestantism—the church, even in its different denominations—became clothed with a power that made her once more, and rightly, the “Gate of God.” And the benign influence of this excellent example acted upon all the nations of the Old World, and led them forward in the path of light and liberty, which is the path of true Protestantism, which is the path of true Christianity, the total separation of the church from the state: the path in which the church walks only with her true Husband, with her dependence solely upon God.

Then, in 1840-44 there came the time when, “to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,” God would send the message of “the everlasting gospel,” proclaiming, to all men: “Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of

waters.” Rev. 14:6, 7. The church in this great nation, standing in an attitude the purest and the closest to God of any in the world would be the chosen instrument by which God would spread that message of blessing and of warning to “every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.”

Here was a wonderful blessing that God had for His church at that time,—a blessing by which she would have been indeed the “Gate of God” to “every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” on the earth. It was a message that opened up to the church the length and breadth and depth and height of the glory of the everlasting gospel as it had never been seen before since the days when the apostles preached it in the fullness of its living power. In this message was “the mystery of God” revealed in all its fullness,—God manifest in the flesh,—Christ in men “the hope of glory.” And all this blessing and glory was to be proclaimed to all the world in view of the fact that “the hour of His judgment is come;” and in order that men might be fitted to stand holy and without blame before God, ready in all respects to be translated without seeing death, at the coming of the glorious Lord.

But lo! instead of receiving this wonderful blessing; instead of rejoicing and being glad that God had sent to her a message that would clothe her with such power as would make her the instrument of God’s greatest work for the salvation of the nations, she refused the blessing, rejected the message of God, and would not walk in the light that had come to her and to the world.

Then history again repeated itself. By thus rejecting the message of God, there was a “falling away” again from the truth, and she that had been the “Gate of God,” became “confusion,” and of her it had to be said, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen.” Faith is the strength and salvation of the church, as of the individual. Faith is the breath of life of the church, it must be constantly and momentarily used, in order to live by it; because “the just shall *live by faith*,” and faith comes by hearing the word of God.

When any advance light or additional truth is rejected by a church or by an individual, that church or individual not only rejects this advance light and truth, but rejects whatever light and truth such church or individual *formerly possessed*. A person refusing to breathe rejects not only renewed life, but loses the life that he already has.

This is strongly illustrated in the words of Jesus concerning the people of his day on earth, who rejected him: “If I had not come and

spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin.” John 15:22. Before Jesus came, these people were walking in the light of faith as they then had it, and Jesus testifies that they were accepted in it. If those folks had died before Jesus came, they would have been saved, because “they had not had sin.” But when He came with such light and truth and glory; when He spoke to them such words as had never been spoken to them; when He did among them such works as none ever had done; and they rejected it all and refused Him, in so doing they rejected *all true faith*; not only the present faith in Him and His message, but also the faith which they had before He came. Jesus further said: “If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated me and my Father.” Verse 24.

Men can not *reject* the truth of God, and still *retain* the truth of God: they can not *refuse* to walk in the light, and still walk in the light: they can not hate Christ and God, and still be the brethren of Christ and the children of God.

Consequently, when in 1840-44 God’s wonderful message of the everlasting gospel of light and blessing and of truth, to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, bringing to them the presence, the power, the righteousness, of God, which would prepare them to stand in the judgment,—when this was rejected, and when God’s messengers whom He sent to give it were hated and persecuted, then she which had been the “Gate of God” in her day, ceased to be the “Gate of God,” and became only “confusion.”

The century and a half that have rolled by since that time have demonstrated how aptly the Bible term *Babylon* fits modern religious confusion. Once the honored depository of God’s saving gospel for all the world, Babylon has fallen and has put a cup to the world’s lips containing confusing doctrines. Revelation 18:4 indicates that the world’s present sociological distress and injustices are the result of Babylon’s spiritual fall.

Here is the real reason that a post-Christian culture has now overtaken our world—something once thought impossible. Secularism and materialism, instead of being vanquished by a virile church with a powerful united witness to the gospel, have themselves conquered the spiritual impact of the church. This development is exactly the opposite of what Christ intended. Not only is the church splintered into innumerable sects, most of which contradict the

teachings of the others, but with few exceptions its presence seems powerless to combat the selfishness and sensuality rampant in the world today.

Not yet is the downward spiral complete. The second angel says that Babylon “has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.” Revelation 14:8. The reference is to a state of spiritual adultery on the part of the church, the bride-to-be of Christ. Her message is intoxicating to the world, but not yet has the world imbibed enough of her false-teaching confusion to become thoroughly drunk.

The coming of the fourth angel’s message. But that state of affairs will come soon enough. The somber shadows deepen in Revelation 18. There the second angel’s message of Babylon’s fall is repeated by “another angel,” a fourth, who proclaims that “all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.” Verses 1, 3. Then the process of intoxication will be complete. And that time is not far off.

The result will be the collapse of order and stability on a global scale. “Her sins have reached to heaven. . . . Her plagues will come in one day—death and mourning and famine. . . . The kings of the earth . . . and the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn for her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore.” “Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, ‘Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore. . . . Your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth.’” Verses 5-11, 21-24.

Thus is salt that has lost its flavor thrown away. And thus will a world perish for the want of the only ingredient that can preserve it from its own penchant for soul corruption—the pure, unadulterated gospel of Jesus Christ, its Saviour, a gospel that motivates to obedience to all of God’s commandments.

But the Lord still has good news for those who will listen. The very message announcing the forthcoming doom of Babylon includes an invitation of grace addressed to those who will listen: “I heard another voice from heaven saying, ‘Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.’” Revelation 18:4.

What does it mean to “come out of her”? We can’t leave the planet. We can’t all retire to some lonely paradise in the South Pacific. Most of us can’t even leave our jobs and stay away from shops, offices, supermarkets, and freeways.

But we can begin taking steps to “come out” of the confusion of false doctrines and insipid substitutes for genuine New Testament truth. We can find God’s church that believes and proclaims the pure gospel. And we can progressively disentangle ourselves from the corrupting influences that so blatantly permeate our modern world.

May that “voice from heaven” that John heard speak once again to our hearts. And amid the noise and discord of the world, may God grant us open hearts that can listen and hear the still small sound of that voice before it is too late.

Will the message succeed? Revelation gives us no sorrowful picture of the Lamb of God turning away from the world in a final defeat. Multitudes will respond joyfully to the call of the first angel to accept the everlasting gospel and worship the Creator. It’s as though God can hardly contain His joy as He points to these as the fruitage of His last appeal: “Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.” Revelation 14:12.

Those who respond to these angels’ messages are described in Revelation as a special group. “I looked, and behold, a Lamb [the once-crucified Jesus] standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father’s name written on their foreheads.” Revelation 14:1. Who are these special people? “These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. . . . And in their mouth was found no guile, for they are without fault before the throne of God.” Verses 4, 5.

Can any of us reasonably hope to have God say of us that we are “without fault”? Scripture says yes. The grace of the Lamb can bring about this seemingly impossible goal. That is what Jesus died to accomplish, and He did not die in vain. Satan says it is impossible, but the message of the three angels is that God will certainly have a people who bring glory to Him.

Revelation’s primary concern is the vindication of the Lamb who paid an infinite price to redeem us. But His vindication involves our own, for we are one with Him. Those who stand faithfully “with Him” in this final struggle will not do so in order to gain a reward for themselves. Salvation is indeed a fantastic bargain, but getting a

good bargain will not be the motive for anyone who truly follows Christ in these last days. The little flower girl at a wedding is ever so sweet and lovable, but all she really cares about is getting some of the cake and ice cream at the reception. The bride, on the other hand, couldn't care less about the refreshments. Her interest is in the bridegroom and in him alone.

It *is* possible for us self-seeking humans, who have been all our lives immersed in pursuing trivial self-interest, to find a larger perspective—a genuine heart sympathy with the Lamb of God. Appreciation of Him for His own sake will transcend both our fear of being lost and a merely selfish hope of a reward in heaven. This is the experience God is calling us to have.