

KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

"Teaching the things concerning the kingdom of God..."

FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

Part 194

MYSTERY BABYLON (continued)

“And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH” (Rev. 17:5).

“And *the woman which thou sawest* IS THAT GREAT CITY (BABYLON) which reigneth over the kings of the earth” (Rev. 17:18).

I do not believe there is any way to fully explain, imagine, or understand all the ways this *Mystery Babylon* works. The word “Babylon” means **confusion**. When we consider the vast array of church denominations with their varied names, organizational systems, creeds, liturgies, disciplines, and methods, there is one title that can be written across the whole — MYSTERY CONFUSION. It is the **mixture** of good and evil, of truth and error, of flesh and spirit that brings such confusion. So interwoven is truth with error, endeavoring to uplift and bless mankind while building a kingdom for self; good works that are a blessing to many, while promoting one’s own name, reputation, interests, and power, until it becomes difficult to discern which is right and which is wrong.

In our previous studies on this subject we have seen that in John’s visions in the book of Revelation two women are clearly presented. One is that impure woman, the great harlot, who is arrayed in purple and scarlet and decked with gold, precious stones, and pearls. This whore is gilded with all the wonderful materials of the holy city, New Jerusalem; yet she is filled with abominations. In outward appearance she looks like the glorious city of God coming down from God out of heaven — this is her façade, her pretension. But in inward reality she is full of names of blasphemy, filthiness of fornication, and horrible abominations. She is outwardly bedecked with three things — gold, precious stones, and pearls; but she is inwardly full of three other things — blasphemies, abominations, and impurities.

In the church systems of man today two groups of things are put together by the adversary. On the one hand, there is the gold, the precious stones, and the pearls — these are the things which God is after! But on the other hand, there are the blasphemies, the abominations, and the filthiness — these are the things the flesh delights in! The church systems combine these two groups in a horrible mixture. The subtle and deceiving thing is just this: the church system has gilded itself with the materials of the New Jerusalem! We must be able to see past the gilding to discern the inward reality. We cannot judge by outward appearances, we need a discerning and transparent revelation to penetrate to the very core. Apparently in the church systems there are gold, precious stones, and pearls, whereas in reality there are in a greater measure blasphemies, abominations, and filthiness. These conflicting sets of realities are somehow combined in one person — in one evil woman!

We must all see that not only within the pages of the book of Revelation, but also today in the culture of our world, there is such an evil woman gilded with all the precious materials of God’s holy city, yet filled with all the corruption of the flesh and all the filthiness of her whoredoms. If it were not for the gilding, if it were not for a measure of love for the Lord, and a little of His divine truth, and some of His graces and gifts

that adorn the church systems, the whole world would immediately see them for what they are and recognize the abominations. I have no hesitation in saying again — such a one, such an evil woman exists upon this earth today! Not only is this great whore alive and well on planet earth today, but also her evil daughters. She has many daughters, some of international fame and acclaim, others less known. The more powerful and richer they are, the easier they are to discern; the smaller they are the more easily you are fooled. You may be quite clear and resolute never to be involved with one of the historic, formal, and powerful church systems of man. You may also be clear never to join yourself to *any* of the man-made denominations. But watch out! You may easily become involved with one of the beautiful little daughters of one of the whore's daughters! You may flirt with and eventually marry not the eldest daughter of the harlot, but one of the youngest granddaughters! That little girl that you marry may be born pure, for harlots are not *born* — they are *made*! Pure little girls grow up to become harlots. Have you ever seen it fail? God will move sovereignly and in a pure way upon a people, pouring out a mighty visitation and work of grace, power, and glory, and those who receive this move of God either *come out* or are *cast out* of the religious system they were a part of. They come out to follow the Lord in the paths of His leading! And yet — the very moment they come out the harlot influence of their mother from whom they are now estranged commences to exert itself in their new walk with God. The very spirit that was to have been forsaken raises its unholy head right in the midst and soon they start to build another ***tower of Babylon***, another ***system of mixture*** to add to the universal confusion and carnality and filthiness manifest everywhere in the church.

Later on in the book of Revelation, in chapter nineteen, we come to the presentation of the other woman, the pure, spotless bride of the Lamb. She is clothed in fine linen, clean, white, and bright. There is nothing *mixed* or *impure* about this woman! Then in chapter twenty-one this same lovely woman is presented to us under another figure, that of the holy city, New Jerusalem. That city is not gilded with gold nor adorned with precious stones and pearls, as is the harlot; that city is *constituted* of pure gold, precious stones, and pearls! The city proper *is* pure gold, clear as crystal. There is no mixture, there is nothing concealed anywhere within that is impure or an abomination. Apparently and actually, inwardly and outwardly, in any way and in every way, it is gold! The wall of the city is constructed of jasper, and every gate is of one great, precious, beautiful pearl. What a marvelous thing! This is not a cheap gilded piece of jewelry — but an article that has been raised up out of the very life, nature, and glory of God Himself from center to circumference. This is precisely WHAT IT IS — IT IS GOLD, IT IS PRECIOUS STONE, AND IT IS PEARL.

These are the two women who stand for the church in the earth today. Never entertain the notion that in Babylon there is no gold, no precious stones, and no pearls. Not only are there many of the Lord's people there, truly born of His Spirit, but there are also many precious stones there. But consider the message communicated to us through John's visions: if you have heard the message, if you have seen the vision, could you justify great Babylon? Could you say that since there is so much gold and so many precious stones and pearls in Babylon you should remain there? Not at all! The man who justifies remaining in Babylon, or justifies the keeping of the Babylonian garment along with the wedge of gold has never truly "gotten" the message of the book of Revelation! May the Lord open His word and open the understanding of all who read these lines. May the Lord grant clear and transparent discernment that you may say, "Regardless of how much gold is there, regardless of how many precious stones and pearls are there, that is still MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH!"

Many of the Lord's people are childish in their understanding and think that as long as people who love and worship the Lord are in Babylon it is all right. You may say it is all right, but the Lord says, ***"COME OUT OF HER my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues"*** (Rev. 18:4). Do not be fooled, do not be deceived, do not be cheated out of your true inheritance in the kingdom of God! Few of those who read these lines could be deceived by the gaudy harlot upon her beast, for you have already received the love of the truth and received the call to come out of great Babylon. But you still must watch for those lovely young daughters and granddaughters of the harlot; oh, how beautiful they can be and how pure they can appear! Unless, however, they have been mightily dealt with by God, unless they have been thoroughly purged, refined, and processed by the Lord, the genes they have

inherited from their mother and the childhood influences of their mother will in due time lead them down into the dark paths of harlotry. You can count on it!

How God hates mixtures! I would be remiss if I did not point out to my readers the further and self-evident truth that ALL churches, fellowships, prayer groups, Bible study groups, and meetings of every kind *are mixtures!* Yours, too, precious friend of mine, who is offended by that statement. Let me be perfectly understood. We praise God for the churches, fellowships, and meetings where the saints come together to worship, share the word, and encourage, instruct, and edify one another. I would not speak a word against that. But I also have no hesitation whatever in assuring you that your particular church or fellowship will never, *as a group*, as *one man numerically*, enter into the fullness of God! There is not one single church or fellowship on earth today in which every single person warming its pews will in this hour attain unto the full stature of sonship. There is no gathering of saints of which I am aware that shall with every attendant be manifest as the sons of God. Not one! Why? BECAUSE THERE IS SO MUCH MIXTURE!

Every group has its babes, its spiritual adolescents, those who are puffed up with head knowledge but devoid of experience with God, and those who thrill to a new revelation but have never been brought under the harness of the Lord to be broken to His ways. Most groups carry an undercurrent of fleshly manifestations, bickering, disagreements, strife, criticism, carnality, immaturity, spiritual pride, shallowness, weakness, untrustworthiness, faithlessness, false prophecies, erroneous doctrines, and more. Let the preacher write me who doesn't have any of this in his congregation! And I'm not talking about the Methodists, the Baptists, or the Pentecostals — I speak of those who consider themselves the elect of the Lord who are pressing forward unto sonship and the kingdom of God! Oh, how we like to pride ourselves that WE have come out of Babylon, WE are now the true church, WE are God's called and chosen elect, WE are the manifest sons of God, WE are the Royal Priesthood, WE are the corporate man that is going to reign in the kingdom and even now WE are beginning to reign! WE are the most spiritual people in the world! It is possible that some of us are these things, but it is also probable that some of us *are not* — for who can deny that we are still a *mixed multitude!*

The natural mind is ever seeking something visible and tangible. It loves to claim prerogatives, position, privileges, rights, station, accomplishment, and attainment. It loves to be able to count noses and number people. It loves to circumscribe a certain group and say with evident pride, "This is the body of Christ. These are the elect. All who stand on this foundation are the sons of God. All who believe as we believe, worship as we worship, and submit to the divine order in this place will be the sons of God and will reign with Christ in the kingdom." And then we add, "All who do not will not be sons." We forget that only God knows who are *really His!* "The Lord knoweth them that are His." In our eagerness to build a church, a fellowship, or a movement, to visibly produce the "corporate man" who will as "one body" and "one man" inherit the promises, we forget that before ever Solomon's glorious temple was compacted together and filled with the majestic manifestation of God's glory, there was a long and tedious INDIVIDUAL dealing of God upon each and every member to be placed in that temple!

Long before there was a "coming together" of all the parts and the subsequent eruption of celestial glory, there was a private, singular, and personal work wonderfully wrought upon each and every part. The cedars of Lebanon were chopped down one by one, dragged to the sea, transported by ship to Israel, and there each was skillfully cut and hewn into a number of boards and beams. Each board was sawed, planed, and sanded. The gold was both mined and refined. The stones were quarried and individually cut precisely to specifications. Great tapestries were cut according to pattern and professionally sewn together, each intricately embroidered and exquisitely fashioned with its own special beauty and glory. Each vessel was molded with infinite care and polished to perfection.. Each piece of furniture was masterfully constructed and meticulously finished. Only *after* all this INDIVIDUAL WORK was fully completed were all the various parts of the building *compacted together* — and that WITHOUT THE SOUND OF A HAMMER! No tool of any kind was needed, for the work had already been accomplished upon each part. But in this significant hour, methinks I can *still hear* the sound of the hammer, the noise of the saw, the clink of the chisel, and the blast of the furnace refining gold for the altar and vessels of the temple of God! It should be evident to all who have eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts to understand that the INDIVIDUAL WORK upon the members of God's glorious spiritual temple of sons is still in progress!

Seems to me many brethren have got the cart before the horse. They are trying to bring the body of Christ together as “one corporate man” so that *together* we can “go on unto perfection.” But you don’t build the temple in order to perfect it — you perfect EACH MEMBER, and *then* put it all together! Ah, yes, there is some “togetherness” in the process. The boards are in one place being dealt with, while the stones are in a different place being wrought upon, and the gold in another place, and so on. There are “groupings” as each part in their respective places are brought to perfection. And there is ministry in the process, too! The masons, the carpenters, the miners, the sculptors, the workers with gold and silver and brass, the seamstresses — each faithfully ministering to their portion and parts. Isn’t it wonderful!

It is not, however, the framing together of the building that perfects each member, but the *prior individual working* fulfilled upon each member makes possible the ultimate placement together, raising up the glorious corporate structure. Many men have tried to put this house of sons together prematurely — before the preliminary work of preparation had been accomplished upon each “living stone.” All such efforts are doomed to failure and can only produce a grotesque monstrosity — MYSTERY BABYLON! All such efforts can only bring forth a misshapen, ill-proportioned, crooked, unsightly edifice of CONFUSION destined to perpetual desolation. Let all men know that in the fullness of God’s time His great MANIFESTED SON COMPANY W-I-L-L come together and stand tall, powerful, glorious, and victorious in the earth — by the sudden, powerful, sovereign move of the Lord!

In closing this thought I would leave with you the poignant and penetrating words of another. “The hour has come for us to realize that only *the Lord* knoweth them that are His. Only *the Lord* can gather the tares out of the wheat. Only *the Lord* can separate the sheep from the goats. Only *the Lord* can call His sheep by name and lead them out. Only *the Lord* can look into the four corners of the earth and call forth His elect. Who, then, am I to circumscribe anything? I must learn to know men not by what they say, what they believe, where they are, or least of all because they are members of a certain group, but by that strange witness that made Jesus say to Peter, ‘Thou art Peter,’ and by that same spiritual revelation that made Peter say to Jesus, ‘Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ How often we have been shockingly disappointed in men! It was because we knew them only after the flesh and we did not know them after the spirit. We accepted them because they were inside a certain circle and said they belonged to ‘the move’. Yes, indeed, they may have been inside the circle and they may have been in the move, but where were they in God’s eyes? That is the important question!” — George Hawtin.

Also this statement from brother Scott Paris beautifully expresses my own heart. “I have no interest whatsoever in establishing and setting up any person or group of persons to be obeyed, whose dictates and opinions are in any way considered binding, final, or infallible. I have no desire to leave behind me any kind of religious organization — or anything that anyone can join, promote, publicize, or use for personal profit, or even anything anyone can feel he can rely upon for his salvation. If there is anything that I would like most of all to do in my life on earth, it is to remove from man all those crutches and props upon which he has relied. The only real strength there is, is in the realization of our union with the Lord the Spirit. That is a true realization of spiritual power! When we have that realization, one with the Lord becomes a majority. One person having a spiritual understanding of the nature of God becomes a law of harmony, health, and supply to multitudes of people everywhere. That is where strength, health, and supply is — in union with God!”

MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT

A little writing by Al Watson which came into my hands many years ago gives the following history of ancient Babylon:

“The origins of Babylon date back to the eleventh chapter of Genesis and the tower of Babel. ‘Babel’ means confusion, or division. *The whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Let us build us a city and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And*

the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the children of men builded. And the Lord said, Behold, the people are one and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained (or withheld) from them, which they have imagined to do. Let us go down and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth' (Gen. 11:1-9).

“All the people of the earth had *one* language and *one* speech. They gathered *together* in the land of Shinar. God Himself said, *‘The people are one!’* And they began to build a tower *‘unto heaven’*. There was a unity there more profound and complete than any unity mankind since has ever known. Everybody had one language with one pronunciation. All linguistic research tends to bear out this fact that once only one language existed on earth, enabling mankind in the flesh to be almost perfectly united. Man desired to build a tower whose primary purpose was to *preserve* this unity. What that tower was is debatable. Some infer from the Hebrew text translated *‘whose top...unto heaven’* that it was the culmination of astrological knowledge of the ancients. The similarity of the signs of the Zodiac the world over adds support to this theory. Whatever the tower was, it surely demonstrates the advanced degree of civilization at that time, for it contained bricks baked in ovens cemented together with asphalt (*‘slime’*). It clearly dealt with some kind of *knowledge*, for in order to destroy it God destroyed communication; He confused languages so men could no longer communicate. The tower must have been a thing of titanic importance, for God Himself said, *‘This they begin to do’* (or *‘This is only the beginning’*): and now nothing will be withheld from them, which they have imagined to do.’

“If man had built the tower, everything he could imagine would have been his! Nothing would be withheld! ***Without God, in the power of the flesh, operating solely by the knowledge of good and evil, mankind would have unlocked all the secrets of nature, conquered the earth and achieved the perfect society! Utopia would have arrived.*** This tower was to be the consummation of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the highest accomplishment of carnal man. If men reached this stage, they would have become almost unredeemable. To sum up then: the city of Babel is a symbol of fleshly unity, man's attempts to be *one* apart from the Spirit of God. SUCH ATTEMPTS AT UNITY GOD DESTROYS! — end quote.

The confusion that followed was Babel; it was the result of God's destruction of Babel. ***“So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. THEREFORE is the name of it called Babel; BECAUSE the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth”*** (Gen. 11:8-9). Babel is the result of man's rejection of God's government for a government (city) of his own making. Her rejection of, and rebellion against, the Lord was not by open violence or blasphemy against Him, but by acting independently of Him, as though He did not exist. United by a common language and speech, the people left the territory of God's choosing and traveled from the east until they found a plain in the land of Shinar. Here, they settled and made their homes. Their making brick tells us that they planned to make themselves as secure as possible on this earth. They were in a “kingdom-building” spirit!

Three times in Genesis 11:3-4 the expression *let us* is used. *“Let us make brick...let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens...let us make a name for ourselves.”* Not once did anyone say, *“Let us pray and seek God's will!”* They were all in complete accord and agreement with and among themselves. But what they failed to realize is that while man proposes, God disposes! The last word on anything is always with the Lord! The rich fool in the parable of Jesus thought he knew exactly what he would do with his own little kingdom that he was building up. He said within himself, *“I will do this: I will pull down my barns, and build larger ones; and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry.”* But then it was God's turn to speak, and He replied by saying to him, *“Fool! This night your soul is required of you”* (Lk. 12:16-20). This insidious spirit of “I will,” which is the spirit of Babylon, is not dead. It continues to influence and corrupt all who do not listen to the voice of the Spirit and who do not earnestly seek the revealed will of the Lord.

Let everyone know of a certainty that the shocking vision John beheld of the swaggering power and incredible filth of the harlot upon her beast is even now a terrifying reality throughout all the nations of the earth. No brazen hussy was ever more shameless, bold, or impudent. John's vision could be especially appreciated in his day because, according to history, it was an old and well-known custom among high-priced Roman prostitutes to let her name be publicly known, *wearing it on her forehead*. John intimated that it would not be difficult to discover this great spiritual harlot, because her name is *in her forehead*; that is, she is so prominently marked in her nature and characteristics that we cannot fail to see her unless we shut our eyes and refuse to look. Anyone who is quickened and blessed with spiritual discernment will immediately recognize upon her countenance the marks of her harlotry! Only the spiritually blind meet her and recognize not what she is.

As we have already shown there are two cities and two women presented in the book of Revelation. One of the cities is the holy city, New Jerusalem. The other is called Mystery Babylon. They are symbols and symbols are *not* what they are called, therefore neither of the two cities is a literal city somewhere on earth. If they are not cities, what are they? They are symbols of something else. If they were real cities, as many commentators suppose, they would not be among all the beautiful symbols of the book of Revelation, which is entirely a book of symbols. Most of the preachers today have the first city confused with other things. The vast majority think that New Jerusalem is a description of heaven; therefore they talk about the city as heaven, having golden streets and mansions over the hill-top. But New Jerusalem *cannot be heaven* because John sees it coming down from God *out of heaven*! Church theology today has the Holy City, Heaven, and the Kingdom of God all mixed up and confused. Confused — oh, yes, that is the mark of Babylon! It is obvious they do not know what the New Jerusalem is, nor what Heaven is, nor what the Kingdom of God is!

Concerning the other city, Mystery Babylon, one brother wrote: "Most church people and most of the prophecy teachers think this is a natural city, or it will be a natural city because natural Babylon lies in ruins. One 'wise and prudent' prophecy preacher said the city of ancient Babylon would be rebuilt so God could tear it down again like it tells in Revelation chapter eighteen. That preaching is about as far from the spiritual truth as one can get, but it sounds exciting and it sells books. These 'book salesmen' point us to Revelation 18:17-19 and unravel their natural minds with how the people on board ships at sea will see the smoke of Babylon burning. Teaching like that is inexcusable. I wonder how many of these prophecy preachers have consulted a map to see how far the site of ancient Babylon is located from a body of water large enough to accommodate ocean going vessels and close enough to Babylon for the ones on board to see the smoke. Anyone who will look at a map will see the distance is far too great to see the smoke. Wake up! These so-called 'authorities' on prophecy are very wrong! In no way is the Babylon of the Revelation going to be a literal city on the site of ancient Babylon. The wise and prudent have missed it again! Read your Bible and stop being misled. If we do not we and these 'book salesmen' will all fall in the ditch together! I am tired of their fairy tales — aren't you?" — end quote.

The great and eternal truths of the book of Revelation are communicated in the form of signs and symbols. Yes, it has in it literal meaning — *in the spirit*! When we say something is not *literal* we do not mean that it is *not real*; we mean simply that it is not *natural* and it is not the same as what the symbol literally pictures. SPIRITUAL THINGS are *real, they do exist*, but they are *not natural, carnal, or earthly*. If you don't understand the spiritual language, the symbol has no meaning. It is like hearing someone speak in Chinese and trying to understand what they are saying. It is the knowledge of the *inner language of the spirit* that is required to understand these mysteries.

This point is illustrated by the following little story. Jackie Gleason told a story of a man who would ride his little blue bicycle through a customs checkpoint. Every day at the same time he rode up. Every time his bicycle basket held three jars: one filled with sand, one filled with water, and one filled with nuts and bolts. The customs agents were suspicious that this man was smuggling, so they would often open up the jars — but the sand was just sand, the water was just water, the nuts and bolts were just nuts and bolts. Sometimes they would frisk the man himself, and on a few occasions they even took the bicycle itself apart. No contraband was ever found. Yet since this man came through their checkpoint every single day, and no one ever saw him riding back, they just knew he had to be smuggling something. Several years later one of

the customs agents stopped the man on the little blue bicycle and said: "Today is my last day. I'm going to retire. I have no desire to catch you but for the sake of my peace of mind, could you tell me what you've been smuggling all these years? The man replied, "I've been smuggling little blue bicycles." Ah — Revelation is a *spiritual book*, the *Revelation of Jesus Christ!* People miss it because they are focusing on something other than that. Like the customs agent who focused on the three jars of sand, water, and nuts and bolts, they focus on world events, history, outward nations, political rulers, national armies, world wars, government conspiracies, etc. — and MISS THE OBVIOUS! They miss that which is *obviously spiritual!* There was no literal, geographical city of Babylon on earth in John's day, and there is not one now, nor will there be again, despite the curious interpretations and prophetists who foretell Babylon must be rebuilt over in Iraq for the purpose of being destroyed again. Babylon is ever with us, it was already a reality in John's day and it has been present through all the decades, centuries, and millennia since John's day. The blessed truth is that the two women and the two cities in the Revelation picture two church systems which have existed side by side throughout the church age. Believers have had a choice to make between the two all of this time. The sad truth is that the vast majority of the Lord's people have chosen to dwell in great Babylon! Just as it was when God called His people Israel out of the literal Babylon in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, so is it now — *only a remnant has come out to enter into their own inheritance and build up the kingdom and house of the Lord!*

The word "mystery" in the scriptures does not have the same meaning as in our everyday English. It does not refer to unsolved crimes, nor stories about clever sleuths, nor riddles with elusive meanings. There are several "mysteries" spoken of in the Bible, and in every case there is the revelation of something which previously had been hidden. The English word "mystery" is a transliteration of the Greek word *musterion*. It would be possible, in every instance, to translate the Greek word *musterion* by our English word "secret." "Behold I show you a mystery..." will be best understood this way, "Behold I reveal unto you a secret..." A revealed secret is no longer a mystery in the modern sense. Jesus often spoke of the "mystery" and the "mysteries" of the kingdom of heaven. "And He said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the *mystery* of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables" (Mk. 4:11). "He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the *mysteries* of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given" (Mat. 13:11). Oh, how many "secrets" there are in relation to the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven that have ever been veiled to the carnal mind and understood only by the revelation of the spirit! And very few of the Lord's people have ever understood the dark "secrets" of Mystery Babylon! Mystery Babylon is the exact opposite of the Mystery Kingdom — and it takes a revelation of the spirit to unravel and comprehend the secrets of either!

Many years ago the Grand Trunk Railway became concerned over the number of accidents at railroad crossings. Automobiles were colliding with the onrushing trains. The railroad company offered a prize of twenty-five hundred dollars to the person who suggested the best slogan for use at railway crossings. The person who won the contest submitted the phrase which we have seen many times — "Stop, Look, and Listen." This is sound advice for every motorist at every railway crossing! In like manner the book of Revelation bears an inspired message for all who read and consider — "Stop, Look, and Listen!" That is the thrust of this vision which John beholds, and while John was both astonished and perplexed by what he saw, he stood transfixed, pondering — contemplating what the deep spiritual significance of the scene could be. Oh, ye people of earthly wisdom, be not deceived! As you read and consider the vision as did John, STOP! LOOK! LISTEN!

I do not think I'm wise, my friends;
I do not think "I know."
But I am ever searching
That in knowledge I might grow.
It is the glory of our God
To keep a thing concealed;
But 'tis the honor of kings and priests;
To search 'till it's revealed!

— Lora Huston

What dreadful thoughts and feelings are awakened in the soul by the very sound of the words *Mystery Babylon!* They are terrible words. As we have mentioned again and again in this Study, they bring before us at once, that vast mass of professed Christians who call themselves “the church,” but are not. Mystery Babylon is a dark and dreadful anomaly. It is neither one thing nor the other. It is not “Israel, nor the Gentiles, nor the church of God.” The “great city” spoken of is neither geographical Jerusalem nor is it the heavenly Jerusalem from above, the mother of us all. It is a corrupt mysterious mixture, a spiritual malformation, a hideous mutation, the masterpiece of Satan, the corrupter of the truth of God, the distorter of the character of God, the perverter of the ways of God, the enslaver of the souls of men, a trap, a snare, a stumbling block by which men are made two-fold more the children of hell than before. It is the corruption of the very best thing — the body of Christ — and therefore the most vile of corruptions. It is that thing which Satan has made of professing Christianity.

In the symbolism of prophecy a “city” signifies a religious government backed by power and influence. Thus, the “holy city, New Jerusalem,” is the symbol used to represent the established rule and government of God composed of the overcoming bride of Christ and the sons of God. “And he that overcometh...to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers” (Rev. 2:26-27). So the “holy city, New Jerusalem” is the capital city of God’s kingdom, the ruling company of kings and priests, exalted and reigning, backed by all the power and authority of their omnipotent Father. The true church is also, and in the same connection, represented as a woman, “the bride, the Lamb’s wife,” in beauty, power, and glory, and backed by the power and authority of Christ, her Husband. A “city” is thus a religious or spiritual *government* and a “woman” is a *church*. In this case the woman is the true, overcoming church and that church IS the government of the kingdom of God over the whole earth! We can only understand this mystery as we understand the great truth that the bride, the Lamb’s wife, IS “that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God” (Rev. 21:9). Many people confuse the bride of Christ and the manifest sons of God. But there need be no confusion! The truth is very simple. The city is the bride, and the throne within the city is the manifest sons of God! All compacted together, the Lamb, His “bride,” and His “many brethren” ***constitute the government of God!*** THAT is the capital city of His great, eternal, and universal kingdom — the New Jerusalem!

Using, as the Spirit bids us, the same method of interpretation as applies to the *woman*, the bride of Christ, who is also *that great city* which proceeds forth from God and the heavenlies, then the Mystical Babylon can be nothing else but a *church* which is also a religious *government* backed by power and influence. But this “church” is a “harlot” church; fallen, corrupt, with a Head other than Christ, taking to herself many “lovers,” thus an apostate church, which is also a great ecclesiastical kingdom, exalted to power and dominion in the earth, and backed, to a considerable degree by the kings of the earth, the civil powers, which are all more or less intoxicated with her spirit and doctrines. This apostate church lost her virgin purity, for, instead of waiting, as an espoused and chaste virgin, for exaltation with the heavenly Bridegroom, she associated herself with worldly powers, and prostituted her virgin purity of doctrine, character, and anointing, to suit the world’s ideas; and in return she has received, and now to some extent exercises, a present dominion, in large measure by the support of the kings of the earth, from the kings and presidents and prime ministers, all the way down to the congresses, mayors, city counsels, government social institutions, civic organizations, charities, etc., etc. So we see, that since the kingdoms of the civilized world have submitted themselves to be largely dominated by the influence of these great ecclesiastical systems, accepting from them the name “Christian nations” and “Christendom,” they also link themselves in with great Babylon, and become a part of it, so that, as in the ancient type, the name Babylon applied, not only to the city, but also to the whole Babylonian empire, here too the symbolic term “Babylon” applies, not only to the great ecclesiastical organizations, the harlot churches, Papal and Protestant, but also, in a wider sense, to all acknowledged “Christian nations.” That is the mystery!

It is worse by far than Judaism; worse by far than the darkest of pagan religions; because it has higher light and richer privileges, makes the very highest profession, and occupies the very loftiest seat. It is without doubt that awful apostasy for which is reserved the very heaviest judgments of God — the most bitter dregs of the cup of His righteous wrath. You can read it all in chapter eighteen of the Revelation! If

the words penned by John on Patmos do not say this, then I have no understanding or comprehension of language — natural or spiritual. I doubt if one Christian in one hundred thousand has anything like an adequate sense of the true character and inevitable doom of that system together with all the teachings, rituals, traditions, holy days, programs, organizations, promotions, and religious exercises which surround them. If they had it would solemnize their minds and hearts, and cause them to sense the urgent need to flee at once, with greater speed than any of the residents of ancient Pompeii, out of Babylon's clutches, and stand apart in holy separation from Babylon's ways, that they might escape such awful judgment as is about to be executed, for "strong is the Lord that judgeth her."

In regard to her name — MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH — let us observe, in the first place, that the *name* in scripture is always expressive of one's true nature and state of being. And therefore, we learn that the true nature and the real being of this woman is that of a city, and the city is Babylon. The mystery is that the name of that city is Babylon. We would not expect the name of this Babylon, no more than we would expect her to be seated on this scarlet colored beast. She appears as the church. If we were bidden to guess the name of this woman as she appears, we would say her name is Church, Christianity, Christendom, The People of God, The Body of Christ, or New Jerusalem. But such is not the case! The woman appears as the church, but she is the false church. She bears the appearance of Jerusalem, the holy city, the bride of Christ; but in essence she is nothing but Babylon. That is the mystery!

The question follows — how does a "false church" come to be? There is not a hint in the Bible that a single apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, teacher, or preacher ever started a "false church" from scratch. The apostles were not concerned about new, pagan churches rising up claiming to be Christian. Simon Magus seems a prime candidate to start his own church, but he is never heard from again after Acts, chapter eight. Apparently, the apostles did not consider him worthy of further mention. He was obviously a phony and posed no threat to anyone but himself. They were more concerned about real ministers, and even whole churches, going bad. John himself wrote of just such a situation: "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not...and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church" (III John 9,10).

Here was a situation where the true brethren were put out of the church, and only a corrupt minister and his followers were left. Where is the true church in any generation or age? Expelled and scattered! Where is the false church? It is the remaining "establishment." Here is a plain scriptural illustration of how a false church comes to be! It happens when the true church *goes bad!* I mentioned earlier that harlots are not *born* — they are *made!* Women grow up and begin to prostitute themselves, *becoming harlots*. This same great truth is revealed in the Spirit's command, "COME OUT OF HER, my people..." Ah, it is "His people" who are brought "out" of the systems of religion. Those who come out are the bride of Christ; the system left behind is Babylon. Sometimes those who come out are led forth by the sovereign illumination and dealings of the Lord; at other times they are vomited out of the system as Jonah was vomited out of the belly of the whale. Sometimes those who "come out" truly come out *unto the Lord*, and they become the bride of Christ. Others come out only to repeat the same sins as the false system they came out of, thus becoming just another of the "harlot daughters" of the mother. Oh, yes! We see both of these realities in John's visions of Mystery Babylon. There are the daughters who are born of their mother, and there are the Lord's people who are called out unto Him! It is an ever-present, continuous process. God is always calling a people out unto Himself! Some of us have been called out again and again as we have continued to follow the Lamb from experience to experience, and from glory to glory. Great is the mystery!

When the true church goes bad, it nearly always becomes authoritarian. Since it is beginning to adopt doctrines and practices that are contrary to truth and the walk in the Spirit, it must increasingly appeal to "church government" and the "authority" of the leaders in order to maintain control. The Head of the true church is Christ. Christ Himself is in control and is running the church! He does this by His Spirit within each member of the body — not by any man-made headship. Charges of heresy, threat of excommunication, and threat of hell and damnation become weapons to be used against those who dissent. "Church government," which should denote God's government over the church by the power of the Holy

Spirit, slowly but surely becomes *man's government* over the individual believer. One thing is sure — the Lord Jesus has said that ***He would build His church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. He loved the church and gave Himself for it, and He SHALL present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing!*** And in the closing chapters of the Revelation we see that church, that sun-clad woman, that pure virgin clothed in white linen, clean and pure and bright, that golden, shining, glorious city descending, appearing out of the heavens of the Spirit of the Lord — oh, yes, my beloved, I have read the end of the book! Through all the electrifying, hair-raising, soul-stirring, thrilling, compelling, and suspenseful events of the drama as related by John, we come finally to the exciting climax. The end of the story declares of great Babylon, “Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her. 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***” (Rev. 18:20-21). The end of the story declares of the true church, the body of Christ, “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor unto Him: ***for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready...***and there came unto me one of the seven angels...saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and ***he showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God...and the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it. AND THE GATES OF IT SHALL NOT BE SHUT AT ALL BY DAY: FOR THERE SHALL BE NO NIGHT THERE***” (Rev. 19:7; 21:9-11,24,25).

THE CHURCH OF MAKE BELIEVE

I have met so many people, I have met them by the score,
And if I keep on living, I'll meet a million more.
Their souls are tired and weary of what they thought would
make them strong,
It's left them broken hearted, though they try to sing along.
They all are true believers and not easy to deceive,
And they've heard the Spirit saying, “Leave *the church of*
make-believe!”

This church it speaks of Jesus and they freely use His name
While they crucify each other and put the Lord to open shame.
But the church they think they're part of is one they can't
perceive;
It's built on the blood of Jesus, and not a place of make-believe!

This church of make-believe is rooted firmly in the sand;
Its character is of the world, its ideas, all from man.
It boasts of size and numbers and programs for everyone,
Its leaders touch the glory for what they think they've done.
The Spirit of the Living God would free them if He could,
But those who think they serve Him are bound by human good.

This church it runs on formulas of so-called faith and power,
It's got itself believing it will triumph in this hour.
It hopes to rule the nations before the Lord it sees,
But those who know the truth of God don't buy this make-
believe!

This church has plans and busy-ness which keeps men on the run,
Days and hours all consumed with getting so much done.
Seminars and conferences and endless meetings do abound,
But years of this can drain your soul and put you in the ground.
The longings of the Saviour's heart toward those for whom He

grieves,
Are drowned by all the clamor in the church of make-believe.
This church can be like Martha who lived so ill at ease
Trying like the raging tide to make her Master pleased;
But there are those like Mary who in stillness did receive
The best that Jesus offered men who shunned such make-
believe.

This church it loves position and like the Pharisees of old,
It lives by much tradition which leaves men dead and cold.
It has a hierarchy spawned of men and not from God,
A system of religion that to Jesus must seem odd.
He told them you're all brethren and this is what you'll be
And if men teach you otherwise it's simply make-believe!

Now there *is* a church of Jesus and it's like a planted seed,
It's not another system, a doctrine, or a creed.
It's a living organism in which all who do believe
Live with one another in this shared reality.

There is a church of Jesus throughout earth's history
That's recognized in every age by pure simplicity.
Its trademark is devotion to the Master who is Lord,
Who is held in honor, is worshipped and adored.
And if we love and serve Him, you know He will be
pleased
To keep us free forever from the church of make-believe!

— author unknown

To be continued

J. PRESTON EBY