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The things which will announce, accompany and follow the return of Christ

No 6. "The rising again of the city of Babylon"

"And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies,"
Revelation 18:1-3.

We here in the United Kingdom have had many a very clear indication of the economic dictatorship that the Bible tells us will arise in this region of the world, over which the Roman Empire once held sway. I am referring to the diktats that have emanated from the bureaucrats of the European Union. They have poked their nose into every area of life within the UK from what we may put in our sausages to how we gauge weights and measurements! Successive weak and subservient Westminster governments have meekly acquiesced in the EU's demands time and time again.

Presently, the British Coalition Government, comprised of Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, is deeply divided over the decision by the Conservative Prime Minister, David Cameron to reject the demands for EU Treaty changes, in order to combat the financial problems facing the EU nations. Cameron vetoed the changes because he believed that they are detrimental to the financial wellbeing of the UK. This has raised the ire of EU leaders, especially those of France and Germany, as well as europhiles within the UK, such as the Deputy Prime Minister, Liberal Democrat leader, Nick Clegg.

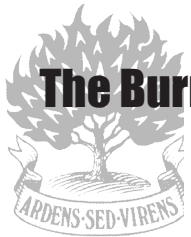
Whether Mr Cameron can hold out against the opposition mounted against him is very doubtful.

This controversy serves to demonstrate the escalating tendency to centre increasingly dictatorial powers within the EU. These trends have been noted by the opponents of the EU within the UK and used as an argument to support the UK's withdrawal from the European Union.

Whatever fears such opponents may have, few of them would give any credit to what the Bible says the present economic structures with their underlying religious influences, will grow into — the commercial empire of the Antichrist!

I wish to consider the growth and destruction of the city of Babylon as it rises to become the commercial hub of antichristianity at the end of this age. It will be a commercial empire with restrictions that will be most definitely more intensive than today's EU regulations. Objectionable as today's EU regulations may be, they fall very far short of what Antichrist will impose upon those within his dominion. Revelation 13:11-17, indicates clearly the character of his regime and the suffering the followers of Christ may expect at his hands and those of his deputy, the "False Prophet. "And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name."

The emergence of Babylon as the metropolis of Antichrist will be another sign to watch for as a herald of the approach of Christ's return.



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1. THE BIBLE'S REFERENCES TO BABYLON

Today, Babylon is only a small town but it was not always so. It once stood astride the ancient world as a dominating political, military and commercial giant. Today, this is long forgotten by most people, if indeed, they know anything of its history at all.

However, that will most certainly change as the time of the end draws near.

1. Babylon was earth's first major city. "And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar;" Genesis 10:8-10. It was the capital of the first empire, that of Nimrod's, Noah's great-grandson. It was a city of lawlessness and idolatry. Consider carefully what we read of it in these early references. Nimrod, its founder, is described as "a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD." This "mightiness" is a mightiness in defiance of God. The phrase "a mighty hunter before the Lord" carries the meaning of "acting in the face of God". He was a defier of God. That is later seen in the decision to build Babel. "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 throughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, 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," Genesis 11:2-4. This decision is contrary to the command of God given to Noah and all his descendants. "And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth," Genesis 9:1. They were to "replenish" or "fill" the earth by spreading abroad upon it. But Babel or Babylon was erected in defiance of this divine command. The purpose of their building the city was to "make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth," Genesis 11:4. Little wonder then that these attitudes toward God and actions in defiance of Him resulted in "confusion"! Babylon means "confusion" and such has ever been the fruit that follows man's defiance of God and His Law.

Today, society is throwing over God's law as never before and the result that is clearly seen is "confusion". But that confusion will increase as man resorts to further and greater defiance of God, in his attempts to rectify the disastrous consequences of his rebellion.

What Babylon was back then in the days of Nimrod (circa 2350 BC) she will be to a greater degree at the end of this age.

Curbed

I might just add that God curbed the development of Babylon and its rebellion back then because His time for her had not come. Genesis 11:8 reads: "So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city." Note the phrase, "they left off to build the city." Of course, man returned to that project later and Babylon was built and, indeed, it will be built again and become the centre of that rebellion begun in Nimrod's day under a greater than Nimrod - Antichrist. It is then that the Lord will "come down" once more but this time utterly to destroy Babylon and its rebellion. "And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; and the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth," Revelation 18:21-24.



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2. Babylon re-emerged on the world stage in the days of Israel's sin and rebellion. At the beginning of his ministry, Jeremiah was given the task of warning Judah of the rise of Babylon, as an instrument of judgment in God's hand against the continuing sins of His people. "And the word of the LORD came unto me the second time, saying, What seest thou? And I said, I see a seething pot; and the face thereof is toward the north. Then the LORD said unto me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land. For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the LORD; and they shall come, and they shall set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah. And I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands," Jeremiah 1:13-16.

Jeremiah went on to enlarge on this prophecy, and as is the case in Scripture, become ever more specific and detailed. In the very first mention of the name "Babylon" in the book of Jeremiah, the purpose of God is made very clear. Jeremiah has been arrested and put in the stocks and cruelly mistreated by Pashur the priest. To that evil man is the purpose of God made clear by the prophet of God.

"Now Pashur the son of Immer the priest, who was also chief governor in the house of the LORD, heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things. Then Pashur smote Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that were in the high gate of Benjamin, which was by the house of the LORD. And it came to pass on the morrow, that Pashur brought forth Jeremiah out of the stocks. Then said Jeremiah unto him, The LORD hath not called thy name Pashur, but Magor-missabib. For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends: and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and thine eyes shall behold it: and I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive into Babylon, and shall slay them with the sword. Moreover I will deliver all the strength of this city, and all the labours thereof, and all the precious things thereof, and all the treasures of the kings of Judah will I give into the hand of their enemies, which shall spoil them, and take them, and carry them to Babylon. And thou, Pashur, and all that dwell in thine house shall go into captivity: and thou shalt come to Babylon, and there thou shalt die, and shalt be buried there, thou, and all thy friends, to whom thou hast prophesied lies," Jeremiah 20:1-6.

The influence of Babylonianism is told us by Jeremiah in chapter 51:7. "Babylon hath been a golden cup in the LORD'S hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad." She exercised an influence that was as an intoxicating wine. Her influence, like drunkenness, led to shame and ruin and her judgment. That is how the nations of the old Roman world will be affected in the last days.

"And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies," Revelation 18:1-3.

Can we not see the beginnings of these things in the blinded, drunken adherence to the falsehoods of ecumenism with its overthrowal of the Word of God, and the slavish compliance to European political and monetary union presently gripping western Europe?

That drunkenness can become only more evident as the nations continue to sup from the cup of apostasy and as the Day of the Lord draws near.

3. Babylon will re-emerge once again a short time before the return of Christ. She features very much in the prophecies of those days just prior to our Saviour's return in glory. The land of Nimrod, Erech or Iraq, as we know it today, has not really featured in world affairs as it once did. After the death of Belshazzar and the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus in about 541 BC, the city continued to flourish for a time. Its inhabitants



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revolted against the Persians and was recaptured by Darius Hystaspes after a siege of some twenty months in 516 BC. He severely punished its inhabitants and destroyed the outer walls of the city. Further revolts and subsequent acts of destruction of the city in punishment took place, but even in the days of Alexander the Great, it was still a substantial city which willingly welcomed him (circa 331 BC). Alexander planned to make Babylon the metropolis of a universal empire, but his death frustrated that purpose.

It was after this that the city began a steady decline. Due to persecution, the declining city became a centre of refuge for Jews. Under Caligula (37-41 AD), they were attacked and slaughtered. The Jewish presence is borne witness to by Peter's epistle to Jewish believers in Babylon about 64 AD. Jews continued to be connected with the declining city over the next centuries until the Arabian, Ibn Hankal makes reference to Babylon as a "small village" in 917 AD. In the present day, there are but some ruins left that have any links with the ancient city, though Saddam Hussein was reported to be engaged in a measure of restoration work in the 1980s. Following the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the US military forces under the command of General James T. Conway of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force were criticised for building the military base "Camp Alpha", comprising among other facilities a helipad, on ancient Babylonian ruins.

Whatever its present state, the Bible makes it clear that a city will be there when the Saviour returns and that it will be the centre of antichristian commercial activity. Chapter 18 of Revelation is a record of its destruction.

II. THE FUTURE RISE OF BABYLON

The prophecy of Babylon's destruction, as set down in the book of Isaiah, was written some 100 years before Nebuchadnezzar, while Babylon was comparatively unknown. Isaiah wrote: "And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged," Isaiah 13:19-22. This was a reference to the city in the days of its glory, a glory not seen as yet at that time. But Isaiah also describes its doom. It will be as when "God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah". In Isaiah 14:23, the prophet writes: "I will also make it a possession for the bittern, and pools of water: and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith the LORD of hosts." It is also clearly stated that the time of Babylon's destruction will also be the time of Israel's deliverance. "The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand: that I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains tread him under foot: then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their shoulders. This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth: and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" Isaiah 14:24-27. Please note the solemn affirmations that the Lord makes regarding these matters.

As He has stated it, so shall it be!

Question

Now, the question must be asked: Has there taken place a fulfillment of these prophecies in the manner in which they have been laid down? Is Babylon as Sodom and Gomorrah? Has the Assyrian (one of the titles of Antichrist) been broken in God's land and has he been trodden underfoot on the mountains of Israel? Is Israel delivered from the power of the Gentiles and has Jerusalem become a "praise in the earth" (Isaiah 62:7)? There is only one answer to these questions - NO!

Future

If that is so, then the fall of Babylon is yet in the future. That being so, the glorious Babylon spoken of by Isaiah as suffering destruction like that of Sodom and Gomorrah has yet to be built again.

Either that or God's words cannot be taken to mean what they say. Such is an impossible proposition for the



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Bible-believer to contemplate!
Therefore Babylon must be built again.

1. The future rise of the city prophesied. A clear indication of this is given in Zechariah 5:5-11. "Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what is this that goeth forth. And I said, What is it? And he said, This is an ephah that goeth forth. He said moreover, This is their resemblance through all the earth. And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead: and this is a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah. And he said, This is wickedness. And he cast it into the midst of the ephah; and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof. Then lifted I up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came out two women, and the wind was in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork: and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven. Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah? And he said unto me, To build it an house in the land of Shinar: and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base."

Please consider what Zechariah's words tell us. It is important to remember that Zechariah prophesied after the capture of the city of Babylon which many, wrongly, believe saw the fulfillment of the prophecies of the destruction of Babylon, to which we have referred in Isaiah 13 and 14. Yet here is a prophecy of an enterprise which will be centred in the land of Shinar or Babylon which is the very embodiment of "wickedness". This wicked enterprise will have a house or home built for it in Babylon. Consider the details of this prophecy.

1. The symbol. The ephah, a receptacle for measuring or holding that amount, is a symbol of business and commercial enterprise. This wickedness will develop under the guise and concealment of commercial activities.

2. The suppression. God keeps a lid, a heavy lead weight upon the activities of the spirit of wickedness that is in the heart of Babylonianism. It will only develop in God's time. This agrees with what Paul says in 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7. "And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way." There is a time for the revealing of this wickedness - God's time. Until then it is "withholden" or restrained and held in check. When God's time comes, then the "mystery of iniquity" will be released from restraint and permitted to develop. By that time, it will have been housed on its own base in the land of Shinar or Babylon.

3. The establishment. It is to be placed upon a base in Shinar or modern Iraq. Note the reference to the stork, a migratory bird that returns each year to the same nest, generation after generation. That which men left off to build (Genesis 11:8) they will, like the migratory bird returning to its ancient nest, return to one day.

2. The future rise realised. In the last book of the Bible we are presented with this future city of Babylon established and flourishing under its king, Antichrist, as the hour of judgment draws near.

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, 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. And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name," Revelation 14:6-11.

"And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon



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came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath," Revelation 16:17-19.

"And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies," Revelation 18:1-3.

Are not these words of the angel but a reiteration of what Isaiah and Jeremiah prophesied so long ago? "But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged," Isaiah 13:21-22.

"Therefore the wild beasts of the desert with the wild beasts of the islands shall dwell there, and the owls shall dwell therein: and it shall be no more inhabited for ever; neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation," Jeremiah 50:39.

"And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwellingplace for dragons, an astonishment, and an hissing, without an inhabitant," Jeremiah 51:37.

Please note the repeated reference to her fall and the lamentations of those who were part of her activities, Revelation 18:10, 16, 21. God would have us ever remember her demise and her doom and the destiny of those who yield to her allurements. That will help to keep us from being deceived by her.

III. THE FINAL DOOM OF BABYLON

"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," Revelation 18:21.

1. The judgment is of God. "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her," Revelation 18:20 "For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever," Revelation 19:2-3. The work of her casting down will be carried out, under God, by armies from the east. "And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared," Revelation 16:12.

2. The judgment is swift. Babylon will disappear as does a stone when thrown into the sea. "The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, and saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, and cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! And 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," Revelation 18:15-18, 21.

3. The judgment will be complete. No trace of her will be left. She will come to nothing. Let us learn . . .

a. God will not overlook sin. Do not men need to be taught this lesson again today? We live in a society in which those who have engaged in murder and robbery, and who make no secret of this fact but rather glory in it, have been elevated to the highest positions of authority in the land. Such an elevation has been endorsed and supported by many who profess to be Christians. This can only be because there has been a forgetting of the truth that God will judge sin. "The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the



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clouds are the dust of his feet," Nahum 1:3.

How often God's longsuffering and slowness to wrath has been mistaken for indifference toward sin! That will be seen as a fatal and fateful error one day.

b. God's threats are real. God does not make idle threats. "The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation," Numbers 14:18. Hundreds of years have passed since God pronounced His judgments on Babylon. They shall come to pass.

c. God's wrath is greater than we can imagine. Men scoff at hell and the judgments of God. But it is the laughter of fools, those who are in total ignorance of what it is they mock. Damnation is not called the lake of fire for nothing! "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire," Revelation 20:15. "The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" Isaiah 33:14.

How such words as these should make the sinner to tremble and seek that refuge set before us in the gospel, even Christ the Mighty to save. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him," John 3:36. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life," John 5:24.

d. God's wrath is preceded by mercy. There was a Daniel in Babylon in 600 BC who testified of the God of mercy and the mercy of God. There was a gospel witness in Babylon in the days of the apostles. "The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son," 1 Peter 5:13.

There will likewise be a gospel witness in the last days. "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues," Revelation 18:4.

Just as the Lord in mercy issues a call to the inhabitants of Babylon before judgment fell, in the same manner as He issued a warning in Sodom before the fire fell and in the same way issued a warning to a world facing the flood in the days of Noah, even so God has patiently, lovingly and graciously issued a call to the sinners of this age to repent and believe the gospel.

What of you, have you yet heeded the call of God in the gospel? Have you fled to Christ as a refuge from the wrath to come?