



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

Smoke rising from Antichrist's city



"And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning," Revelation 18:9.

It has been another week in which the eyes of the world have been drawn to Rome.

This time the thing looked for was the smoke that issued forth from a small chimney on the Vatican palace and particularly what colour it was. Black smoke indicated that the cardinals gathered to elect the next pope had not been agreed on a successor whereas white smoke indicated that a decision had been reached. On Tuesday 19th April, white smoke signalled the arrival of another man to take upon himself the blasphemous role of "the Holy Father" of the Roman Catholic institution. As the news circulated I was made to think of the verse before us tonight. Here is the smoke signal that I as a Christian look for. It is to be noted that while many on earth will mourn at this signal (Rev 18:9-19), heaven will rejoice, verse 20. That which is here cast down is full-blown Babylonianism. It is that which we see today in many forms but most plainly in the wickednesses of the Roman Catholic church. Please consider this portion with me for it is a picture of events in a not very distant future.

I. THE IDENTITY OF THE CITY

Immediately we come to controversy for there are many good Christians who would claim that we are looking at the city of Rome. I disagree. I believe that this is the city of Babylon reborn. Why do I hold to such a view? Well, let me answer that question as plainly as I can.

That is the name the Lord gives to the city. When God calls a city by a name, that ought to be proof enough of the name of the city! Babylon is mentioned by Peter as a place where he ministered. "The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son," 1 Peter 5:13. This too, we are told by some, refers to Rome. If it is Rome then Peter did pastor in that city! Does this not rather destroy the assertion by historic Protestantism, in response to Rome's claim that Peter was the first Bishop of Rome, that the Bible does not give the slightest evidence of Peter having ever been in Rome! But why would God substitute the name "Babylon" for the name "Rome"? What is the basis of such an interpretation? Those who hold to this view must answer that question. We like to repeat that God says what He means and means what He says! Whenever the Saviour used analogies or metaphors, He always gave the explanation for the illustration He employed. He never left it to men to put on His words whatever meaning and interpretation they felt was appropriate. This may be seen in His use of parables. This truth may be seen in the use of metaphors in the Old Testament also. Isaiah 5:1-7 is an example of what I say.



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Prophecy clearly indicates that Babylon was to be the seat of the final manifestation of lawlessness. Here is another reason why I believe that the city here termed Babylon is indeed Babylon. Look at 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." apostasy The "wickedness" (rish'ah) referred to here in verse 8 is the spirit of apostasy, that lawlessness for which the Canaanites were destroyed. "Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the LORD thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the LORD hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness (rish'ah) of these nations the LORD doth drive them out from before thee. Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness (rish'ah) of these nations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," Deuteronomy 9:4-5. This woman seen in the ephah is the harlot of Rev 17:3-6. She "makes her home" (for that is the meaning of the word "sitteth") in the ephah, a commercial measuring container. Note that this is how this lawlessness appears throughout the earth, verse 6, following God's scattering of it as recorded in Genesis 11:8. "So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city." This is a reference to God's response to the act of rebellion at the tower of Babel, which is, of course, the city of Babylon. However, lawlessness is to have built for it a permanent base or "resting place" in the land of Shinar, verse 11. Where is the land of Shinar? It is the "country of two rivers" for that is the meaning of the name. It is the place where rebellion first was manifested. "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. Consider also: "And 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 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. 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 is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, 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



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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," Genesis 11:1-9. Shinar was the land where there first appeared a lawless confederacy of men defying God's will and purpose for mankind. Shinar was where Daniel was held captive. "In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god," Daniel 1:1-2. The city where "lawlessness" was first associated with, at the end of this age, once more be its centre.

3. Such an interpretation is in complete agreement with the OT references to the fate of Babylon. The destruction of Babylon as set forth by the prophets has not yet happened. If we carefully read Isaiah 13:1 through to 14:27 this will be seen to be so. Please note these facts from that and other related passages of Holy Scripture.

[1] Isaiah 14:25-27. The king of Babylon, Antichrist, is to be killed in Israel! At the time when God's purpose "for the whole earth" is about to be accomplished, the king of Babylon will be trodden under the feet of Christ in His land — Israel. That did not happen at the overthrow of the kingdom of Babylon in the days of Belshazzar (Daniel 5:30-31) which many point to as the fulfillment of the prophecies regarding the destruction of Babylon!

[2] Isaiah 13:19 -22, 14:22-23. The destruction of Babylon will be as Sodom and Gomorrah. That did not happen at the fall of Babylon at the hands of the Medes and Persians! Alexander the Great died in Babylon in 325 BC. The Medes and Persians took Babylon in 538 BC — nearly 200 years before. Babylon is still in existence and was bombed in the first Iraq war!

[3] Isaiah 13:9-13. The fall of Babylon is linked to signs in the heavens, the same signs which Christ indicates will take place just before His return, Matthew 24:29-31. Those signs most certainly did not take place in 538 BC.

[4] Isaiah 14:1-7 and Jeremiah 50:1-5 and 18-20. The destruction of Babylon is linked with the conversion of Israel. In Jeremiah 51:29-33 and Daniel 11:40-45 we are given details of the final assault that totally destroys Babylon. Please note from Daniel 11:40-45 just where the king of Babylon is when this happens. He is near to Israel and Egypt when the bad news of the attack upon his city comes to him (Jeremiah 51:29, 31-32). These are the tidings which angers him so much, Daniel 11:44. If "Babylon" is "Rome", then news of the burning of that city would be coming to the king of Babylon from the west not the east as God states!

II. THE INDICTMENT OF THE CITY

Her character. It is satanic. It has been the supplier and promoter of the wickedness throughout the world, Rev 18:3. She is the source of the spirit of murder, Rev 18:24.

Her influence. It made the nations drunk which led on to lewd idolatry in the midst of intoxicating abundance and luxury. It is to be a city of merchants and commercial enterprise, Rev 18:11. This Rome has never been.



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Her winsomeness. She was a deceiver, Rev 18:23. "Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground: there is no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate. . . . Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called, The lady of kingdoms," Isaiah 47:1, 5.

Believers are still to be found in her midst! verse 4. The ministry of calling on God's people to separate from apostasy will continue until this last call which is issued by the Lord Himself. How good to be part of that witness which calls God's people out of apostasy! Babylon will have all the pleasantness of the area around Sodom which so allured Lot, Genesis 13:10. Babylon will be man's Eden!

III. THE INFERNO OF THE CITY

It will be a complete destruction. She will be burnt completely as was Sodom, Isaiah 13:19. Its destruction will be complete. "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.

It will be a very public destruction. All shall see her destruction. Earth and heaven shall watch her destruction. "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 they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate. Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her," Rev 18:15-20. The nations who looked on her so admiringly will gaze upon her with horror and dread. They will see their hopes and dreams going up in smoke for Babylon did not merely cater to the material well-being of men but offered, indeed, enforced an alternative to God and His gospel upon them. All their false and foolish hopes will go up in the smoke of Babylon's burning and the horror of the judgment of God which is about to break forth upon evil men will grip their souls.

It pictures the torments of the damnation that she will bring upon all who submitted to her. "And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever," Rev 19:3. "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 14:9-11. The burning of Babylon will be but the foreshadowing of the fires of hell that will embrace all



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who yield up themselves to the allurements of Babylon's false religion. In the light of that, it is essential that we understand the depths of the coming flood of deceit and corruption that will break forth upon this world in ever increasing measures. We have seen something of that deceit in the hysterical events in Rome. Greater will follow when lawlessness in its final manifestation takes up its abode in Babylon.