

Yes, ancient Babylon was an earthly city with an earthly leader whose word usurped the very Word of God. Yes, the Bible says that spiritual Babylon would be a church symbolized by a woman. But she's a harlot, a fallen woman, so it would be a fallen religion. It would sit in a great city on seven hills. It would deck itself in colors of purple and scarlet. It would be confused in that it would elevate man's word above God's Word. The Bible says in 2 Thessalonians 2:4 that it would have an earthly leader "who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."

What else do we discover about Babylon? Only as we understand ancient Babylon can we understand the Book of Revelation. Many don't understand Revelation because they don't understand the comparative symbols. All the other books in the Bible find their focal point and final culmination in the Book of Revelation. Revelation must not be studied in isolation, like an island to itself, for it ties together all the books of the Bible.

What does "Mystery, Babylon the Great" mean? Well, what practices did Babylon have in the Old Testament? In Ezekiel 6:4 God says, "Your altars shall be desolate, and your images shall be broken: and I will cast down your slain men before your idols." Babylon was the center of idol worship. It was a great city which had Nebuchadnezzar, one who pretended to represent God, as its leader. As you walked through Babylon, everywhere you turned there were images—idols—representing the pagan gods. But the God of heaven commands us in Exodus 20:4, 5, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. . . . Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them." Yet Babylon was the center of image worship!

Dr. Alexander Hislop, in his classic study, *The Two Babylons*, says: "Babylon was the primal source from which all these systems of idolatry flowed." So the spring of the river of idolatry was ancient Babylon. According to the second commandment, images should not be used in religious worship, and believers should not bow down before them.

"Oh," someone says, "but I don't believe the image is God. I just believe the image represents God." And that is precisely the thing the second commandment forbids! The second commandment doesn't say, "Don't make the image the god." It says, "Don't worship God through the image." Notice, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven . . ." In other words, the image is a likeness—a representation—of something in heaven that you worship through. "Don't make any likeness of anything that's in heaven above, or that's in earth beneath, or that's in the water under the earth. Don't bow down to them,

nor serve them." But ancient Babylon used images in its worship to represent what was up in heaven.

Notice this series of remarkable parallels between history and revelation: Ancient Babylon was a city. Modern Rome is a city. Ancient Babylon had Nebuchadnezzar as an earthly leader who claimed to represent God to the people. Modern Rome has the papal power as an earthly leader who claims to represent God to the people. Ancient Babylon held the word of Nebuchadnezzar above the Word of Scripture. Modern Rome holds tradition above Scripture. Ancient Babylon used images in its worship. Modern Rome uses images in its worship.

Historian Henry Thomas Buckle says this in his book, *The History of Civilization*, Volume 1, page 188: "*The adoration of idols* that is in Babylon and paganism was succeeded by *the adoration of saints*." Now, he's a world-famous historian. You can find his book in the library. The worship of the Virgin Mary was substituted for the worship of the virgin goddess Diana and other pagan divinities. So the ancient pagans worshiped idols, but the same idols were used to adore the saints when the pagans came into the Christian church.

We know what God says in the second commandment. But note what Cardinal Gibbons, Catholic Archbishop of Baltimore, said about image worship: "By the images which we *kiss* and before which we uncover our heads or *kneel*, we adore Christ and venerate His *saints*." In other words, the images are important vehicles of worship. Ancient Babylon had them, modern Rome has them.

Now here's an amazing statement archaeologists have just uncovered by Nabopolassar, the king of Babylon who was Nebuchadnezzar's father. You can't understand "Mystery, Babylon the Great" in Revelation unless you peel back the onion layers to uncover what Babylon represented in the Old Testament. Once we have that clear, then we can understand Revelation 17. Here's the recently discovered ancient inscription by Nabopolassar, ruler of Babylon: "At the time Marduk [the chief god of Babylon] commanded me to build the Tower of Babel which had become weakened by time and fallen into disrepair [so by the time of Nabopolassar, the Tower of Babel was in ruins] He commanded me to ground its base securely on the breast of the *underworld*, whereas its pinnacle should strain upwards to the *skies*."

THE SUPPOSED IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

Friends, there were two major teachings of pagan Babylon—everything else was peripheral. The first major teaching was that immortal spirits lived in the underworld. The second major teaching was that the sun, the brightest luminary god in the heavens, was to be worshiped. That's why when the temple tower of Marduk was built, it had its roots in the immortal souls or spirits

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of the underworld, and it pointed toward the sky. So the two cardinal teachings of ancient Babylon were: One, that a person who dies has an immortal spirit that lives on. And two, that the sun is to be worshiped.

Now notice what the heavenly Messenger says about these things in Ezekiel 8:13, 14: "He said also unto me, Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations that they do." Greater what? *Abominations!* "Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the Lord's house"—they were doing abominations right in the Lord's house!—"which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz." Who was Tammuz? Tammuz was the Babylonian god of vegetation.

Why were the women committing abomination in the Lord's house by weeping for this pagan god? They believed that Tammuz died annually when summer came and dried up their crops. But they also believed his immortal spirit descended to the underworld. Therefore, the women wept because the heat was drying the crops, and they wanted the dead god to awake and cause their crops once again to flourish.

So the idea that when people die, they're not really dead—that their soul is immortal and their immortal spirit leaves man at death—can be traced back to ancient Babylon. All of the ancient pagan religions—without exception—had the idea that the soul, or man's essential being, was immortal. That non-biblical concept, inherited from Babylon, was like a common thread running through them all.

Notice this slide showing the inside of an Egyptian pyramid. A number of months ago I was inside one of these pyramids in Egypt. The ancient pyramids were memorials and burial chambers for the dead. When Pharaoh died, his servants were slain and buried with him so they could serve him in the spirit world. For the Babylonians and Egyptians believed that when a person died, he *wasn't really dead*. The Egyptian pyramids were great monuments, great houses for the dead to hold their immortal spirits. But the heathen idea of man's soul being naturally immortal is a pagan doctrine! It comes from Egypt and Babylon, not the Bible.

William E. Gladstone, four-time Prime Minister of Great Britain and a theologian in his own right, said: "The doctrine of *natural*, as distinguished from *Christian*, immortality . . . crept into the Church, by a back door." How could that happen? What does the Bible say happens to people when they die? The Bible is very plain. It says in Psalm 115:17, "*The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence.*" The Bible says the dead don't praise the Lord—but if they were awake and conscious, the saved would be forever praising Him! The words *soul* and *spirit* appear in the Bible sixteen-hundred times, but *never once are they declared to be immortal!* Fifty-three times the Bible says death is but a

"sleep." But through Babylonian and Egyptian paganism, through the pagan philosophy of the Greeks, the idea of the immortality of the soul came into the Christian church.

Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is *death*; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Death is the *absence* of life, not the *continuation* of life in an immortal state. Eternal life is a gift Christ will bestow when He returns, and not before. Psalm 146:4 teaches that when a man dies, "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; *in that very day his thoughts PERISH.*"

But what did pagan Babylon and Egypt say? They said the dead were immortal, and lived on, and could think and feel and see what was happening on earth after death. But that's NOT according to the Bible! The Bible says death is but a sleep. The immortality idea came from Babylon and Egypt and infiltrated the Western world through the pagan ideas of influential Greek philosophers like Plato.

Ecclesiastes 9:5 says, "The living know that they shall die: but *the dead know not any thing.*" The Bible says the dead don't know anything! They're unconscious—sleeping a dreamless sleep until Jesus calls them from the tomb. Egypt and Babylon contradict God and say that the dead know everything. But *where* did those ancient pagans get the false notion of man's "immortal soul"?

Who was it that told *the first lie in this world*: "You will not surely die"? Genesis 3:4 tells us: "The serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall *not* surely die." Satan told that lie to Eve in Eden. You won't really die. You can eat of the tree. You'll live on. You're immortal. But the Bible says in 1 Timothy 6:16 that *only God has immortality!* The diabolical idea of an immortal spirit that leaves the body at death began in Babylon, passed to pagan Rome, who passed it on to *papal* Rome when pagans became quasi-Christians and joined the church. Sadly, this pagan doctrine was also adopted by many Protestants.

The Bible says death is but a sleep until Jesus Christ comes in the glorious resurrection. So then Babylon—what does it represent? Babylon is a great city with a mortal leader whose tradition is above the Bible. It's a city where the leader's words are accepted over the words of the Bible. It's a city that has images all through it. It's a city that practices the worship of the dead and leads people to worship the immortal spirits of people who have gone on. All of this comes not from New Testament Christianity, not from the Bible, but from Babylon!

PAGAN WORSHIP OF THE SUN

But wait. Here's Ezekiel again—Ezekiel 8:16: "And he brought me into the inner court of the Lord's house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the Lord, be-