

## Babylon the Woman

From Ronald L. Dart's Program Notes

Students of the Bible know that Babylon the Great is a major player in the prophecies of the end. But have you ever searched your atlas looking for Babylon today? What you're likely to find is a set of ruins, a museum and a hotel somewhere in Iraq. Babylon is gone!

Although there was a geographical Babylon during Jesus' days, the city of Babylon was nothing but ruins when John was on the Isle of Patmos and saw the great Babylon in a vision of the end times. There is one striking difference between the Babylon of Revelation, and the Babylon of old. John's vision has a nightmare quality. He is in vision. Time means nothing. Images are everything. And yet, it is inescapably looking forward to a time we have still not seen.

"One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, 'Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters.'" The seven bowls of God's wrath are part of the seventh of the last trumpets in Revelation. "With her the kings of the earth committed adultery and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries.' Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert.

There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. This title was written on her forehead: MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus. When I saw her, I was greatly astonished. Then the angel said to me: 'Why are you astonished? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast she rides, which has the seven heads and ten horns. The beast, which you saw, once was, now is

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not, and will come up out of the Abyss and go to his destruction. The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast, because he once was, now is not, and yet will come'" (Revelation 17:1-8, NIV).

Have you noticed the striking difference between the Babylon of Revelation 17 and Babylon of the Old Testament? Babylon the Great, in Revelation, is a woman.

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### ***God Loves a Cheerful Giver. . .***

Do you get the puckers when the subject of money and/or giving are brought up? If so, it's time for an attitude adjustment. "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:6-7). I can't apologize for this. It's in the Bible, and I believe it. Do you?

## When Serving is Fun

By Paula Hughes

You may be serving in your local church right now, but have you thought of it as being fun? Serving is a formal affair, after all—right? Someone comes to you to ask if you’ll help with this or that, or asks you to join the committee in charge. Is it still serving if you’re having fun?

You arrive at church early to help set up the chairs. You help make coffee or set out snacks. You laugh and joke with others who are there to help. It’s fun! And you think you are there because you enjoy that time with your friends. But it is also service.

Maybe you come to the church building one evening during the week to clean. And you enjoy the chance to work with others. You’ve become good friends with those you work with regularly. You wouldn’t miss getting together, and you’re having

fun! But it is also service.

Every week you have an exciting YEA lesson planned for the children’s Sabbath School. You love the time you spend reading the lesson to prepare. You like to gather and organize the materials you’ll need. And you wouldn’t trade the joy and excitement on the faces of the children or teens as they learn the messages from the Bible. It’s fun! But it is also service.

Your baking rivals that of Betty Crocker. You enjoy trying new recipes. And every week the members of the congregation enjoy the delicious treats you bring. But you never thought of it as service.

The point is that service never seems like a chore when you are doing something you love to do. When you enjoy serving others. Often,

the reward is seeing the faces of others light up with joy because of something you did.

Take the opportunity to do the same thing this year at the Feast of Tabernacles. Many volunteers are needed in all areas. Everything you can volunteer to do is something that helps the brethren to celebrate the Feast and rejoice before God. We need you! Light up a face at the Feast this year. Volunteers are needed for registration, YEA Feast classes, the Pie and Ice Cream Social, the Family Picnic, to unload and re-load the equipment trailer, and to set up on September 18th before the Feast begins. Please contact Phil McCollum at [cemfot@gmail.com](mailto:cemfot@gmail.com) or Paula Hughes at [paulahughes@borntowin.net](mailto:paulahughes@borntowin.net) or by phone at 1-888-BIBLE-44.

## Surprise Me

By Richard Glasgow

My daughter used to work at an advertising agency: an environment abounding in creativity. While there, she received a thoughtful note of appreciation from David Culp, a cohort, who later became her business mentor. As a proud daddy, it melted my heart; as a praying man, it challenged my trust in God. Was I willing to be surprised by the Big Guy?

“Many years ago, I had a crazy-brilliant creative partner. Lives in Woodstock, NY, now. We’re still friends. We were a very tight-knit team. Sometimes, when we were on the road and eating at great restaurants—this was in the days of outrageous expense accounts—when it was time to order, my partner would tell the waiter, ‘Surprise me.’ He

wouldn’t give a hint about his tastes or answer any questions. Just, ‘Surprise me.’ I’ve done that a few times myself, and it’s really fun. The waiters love it, too.

“Well, sometime last year, I realized something: I’ll trust a waiter to surprise me, with full expectation that it will be a great experience, but I wasn’t trusting God to surprise me. I’d be really specific what I’d pray for, as if there were reason to be suspicious of anything outside the realm of what I could imagine I needed. So finally I started saying, sometimes, to God, ‘Surprise me. I’ll let you decide what you think’s good today.’

“And surprise me he has. It’s been one astonishment after another. You’re one of them. At a time when I

really needed a kindred spirit and a challenging intellect in my life, in you dropped out of the blue—such a completely unexpected person and in such an unexpected way. A wonderful surprise I could never have designed. The specifics I would ask God for are so dull and uncreative compared to His surprises. This is fun. I’m grateful. Thank you.”

So what do you think? Are you ready to tell God “surprise me” next time you pray? You know it would be a total delight for God to hear you say this and knowing he’s our loving Father you can be sure he’ll respond to you in special ways you may have never expected.

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Today, let's study an Old Testament prophecy of Babylon that is rarely referenced. This is a musical work—Habakkuk. Probably an oratorio or a cantata in three chapters. The reason for thinking this is because of the way it ends: "For the director of music. On my stringed instruments." So it is a musical work. It seems that Habakkuk was written early among the Minor Prophets because he speaks of a future fall of Babylon. The Medes have not come down on Babylon yet.

We begin with a complaint from Habakkuk—a prayer: "How long, O LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, 'Violence!' but you do not save? Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds." Perhaps this is so common in the human condition that we assume it is unremarkable. It is certainly true in our society, right now. But there is a consequence of this condition. "Therefore the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails. The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted" (Habakkuk 1:2-4).

Soon after the Supreme Court decision legalizing sodomy, friends were complaining that over the weekend just before, they had felt beleaguered. That the gay agenda had so dominated the news media that my friends felt hemmed in. Verse four is an apt description of where we are today. "Therefore the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails. The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted."

But now it is God's turn to speak. "'Look at the nations and watch—and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told. I am raising up the Babylonians, that ruthless and impetuous people, who sweep across the whole earth to seize dwelling places not their own'" (Habakkuk 1:5-6). The King James Version calls them, "a bitter and hasty nation." If you want to know what this looks like, just think Germans and blitzkrieg. This is what the Chaldeans—the Babylonians—were like.

"'They are a feared and dreaded people; they are a law to themselves and promote their own honor. Their horses are swifter than leopards, fiercer than wolves at dusk. Their cavalry gallops headlong; their horsemen come from afar. They fly like a vulture swooping to devour; they all come bent on violence. Their hordes advance like a desert wind and gather prisoners like sand'" (vv. 7-9). This image would fit the German invasion of Poland and then France, forcing the British into a panic to evacuate at Dunkirk.

"'They deride kings and scoff at rulers. They laugh at all fortified cities; they build earthen ramps and capture them. Then they sweep past like the wind and go on—guilty men, whose own strength is their god'" (vv. 10-11).

Now it is Habakkuk's turn to speak to God: "O LORD, are you not from everlasting? My God, my Holy One, we will not die. O LORD, you have appointed them to execute judgment; O Rock, you have ordained them to punish. Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong. Why then do

you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves? You have made men like fish in the sea, like sea creatures that have no ruler. The wicked foe pulls all of them up with hooks, he catches them in his net, he gathers them up in his dragnet; and so he rejoices and is glad. Therefore he sacrifices to his net and burns incense to his dragnet, for by his net he lives in luxury and enjoys the choicest food. Is he to keep on emptying his net, destroying nations without mercy?" (vv. 12-17).

Men are like sea creatures that have no ruler. Every man for himself. Like sheep without a shepherd. But the Chaldeans have a ruler and they gather up everyone that doesn't.

"I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts; I will look to see what he will say to me, and what answer I am to give to this complaint. Then the LORD replied: 'Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it. For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay'" (Habakkuk 2:1-3). The Hebrew for the word "end" means just that. The end of what has to be determined.

"'See, he is puffed up; his desires are not upright—but the righteous will live by his faith—indeed, wine betrays him; he is arrogant and never at rest. Because he is as greedy as the grave and like death is never satisfied, he gathers to himself all the nations and takes captive all the peoples. Will not all of them taunt him with ridicule and scorn, saying, 'Woe to him who piles

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up stolen goods and makes himself wealthy by extortion! How long must this go on? Will not your debtors suddenly arise? Will they not wake up and make you tremble? Then you will become their victim. Because you have plundered many nations, the peoples who are left will plunder you. For you have shed man's blood; you have destroyed lands and cities and everyone in them. Woe to him who builds his realm by unjust gain to set his nest on high, to escape the clutches of ruin! You have plotted the ruin of many peoples, shaming your own house and forfeiting your life.

The stones of the wall will cry out, and the beams of the woodwork will echo it. Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed and establishes a town by crime! Has not the LORD Almighty determined that the people's labor is only fuel for the fire, that the nations exhaust themselves for nothing? For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbors, pouring it from the wineskin till they are drunk, so that he can gaze on their naked bodies. You will be filled with shame instead of glory. Now it is your turn! Drink and be exposed! The cup from the LORD's right hand is coming

around to you, and disgrace will cover your glory" (vv. 2:4-16).

Do you hear echoes of Revelation's Babylon in this passage? Ronald Dart will take you into Revelation when the seventh angel pours out his bowl and the voice of an angel says, "It is done." You'll want to get this CD titled, *Babylon the Woman*, to increase your knowledge of this prophetic time. It's a must. So check the enclosed card or call 1-888-BIBLE-44 today and order your CD—it's *FREE!*

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proficient and equipped  
for every good work.*