

Sabbath School Lesson #10 – America and Babylon – 2-8 June 2018

Christ would have us study the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation, as these will all soon be fulfilled, and thereafter their fulfillment, we are told in Daniel, “And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book” (Daniel 12:1).

Sunday: Deadly Wounded Head – There was a time in history when the Papacy persecuted the people of God. That time of persecution was “for a time appointed.” The only such time appointed is the time of Daniel 7:25; the 1260 prophetic days or years of papal supremacy, mentioned also in Revelation 12:6, 14, and 13:5. Beginning with the full establishment of the Papacy in 538 this period of 1260 years expired in 1798. In that year the army of France entered Rome, removed the Pope and abolished the papal college. It was a heavy blow to mark the end of that period which began when the army of the Roman emperor established the Papacy in Rome; supreme over all the churches. It was a deadly wound but it has been or is being healed, and both Daniel and John represent the Papacy as still fighting the truth even to the end of time. The “beast,” – the Papacy – received “a deadly wound” as the result of the enlightenment that followed the Reformation; at the present rate of progress, with almost all professed Protestantism drunk with the wine of her doctrines, with a Pope who is the most popular that ever occupied the Papal chair (for instance, Pope Francis’ speaking to both houses of the US Congress in 2015 was a historical first) – how long will it be before that deadly wound will be fully healed? In all appearance Protestantism has long become but a counterpart of the Papacy, and it will not be long that Protestantism will form the Image to the Beast. And these things are but tokens of the near approach of the end. For when that anti-Christian power, puffed up by the adulation and servile homage which all nations is rendering to her, shall say, “I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow,” then “shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire; for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her” (Revelation 18:7-8). May it be ours to hold up the beacon light of truth faithfully to the many honest souls yet enslaved by her, and to sound the final cry, “Come, out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues,” so that they may flock to the standard which the Spirit of the Lord hath raised.

Monday: The United States in Prophecy – Beginning with the eleventh verse of Revelation 13, we find a description of the nature and work of “another beast” which the prophet saw “coming up out of the earth,” rising at the time the first beast was wounded and existing contemporaneously with the “first beast.” “What nation of the New World was in 1798 rising into power, giving promise of strength and greatness, and attracting the attention of the world? The application of the symbol admits of no question. One nation, and only one, meets the specifications of this prophecy; it points unmistakably to the United States of America” (*The Great Controversy*, p 440). Of his work we read, “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” (verses 12-14). An image is a likeness of the thing to which it is made. An image to or “of” the “beast” (verse 15), which we have seen represents Rome in its papal form, will be a likeness of the Papacy. What constitutes the Papacy?

What led to the rise of the Papacy was the exaltation of man in the place of God, and the Pope claimed to be head over all the churches. But the true Head of the church is Christ (Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18). In claiming to be the church’s *visible* head, the Pope denies the invisible One who is its true Head; and in claiming to be the Vicar of Christ, he denies Him who said to His followers, “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:20). In claiming the power to change the Sabbath and to exercise spiritual authority over men, the Papacy has likewise exalted man to the place of God. In brief, the Papacy is an apostate spiritual power in which man occupies the place of God, dominating the State for the purpose of governing the consciences of men; and the living image of the Papacy will be like it. It will be a power speaking contrary to the Word of God, and using civil arm to enforce its decrees upon the conscience. Of the work of the beast with two horns we read further that “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" (verses 15-17). The image first formed from the principles of the Papacy, and then is given life by the power of the two-horned beast, which causes those principles to be put into practical effect.

The image is made by "them that dwell on the earth." As it is not the Papacy itself, though like unto it, it must be formed by those not reckoned as papal adherents; in other words, among those counted as Protestants. That the principles of the Papacy largely prevail among those so counted is an evident fact today. The tendency Rome-ward among them, both in doctrine and practice, is too plain to be denied. Popery is the religion of human nature, and the religion of all systems of Paganism. It is easier for one to go to an arbiter than to settle the difficulty himself; easier – to human nature – to obtain the pronouncement of the minister upon a question of right or wrong than to seek information from the Word of God. It is easier to get from him an interpretation of the Scripture than to settle its meaning by personal study and prayer; especially if the interpretation absolves one from what would otherwise be regarded as a disagreeable duty. Many a conscience-troubled Protestant has in this way been absolved from obligation to observe God's Sabbath.

Tuesday: An Issue of Worship – When Sunday Law is passed worship will sharply be an issue. Revelation 13 brings to view a power, seeking to enforce the worship of "the beast," that is, to compel men to refuse to worship God, and to substitute the commandments of men for His commandments. He makes an image to the beast, and will "cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed." The highest point of proud opposition to God is seen in the attempted changing of the commandments. The Papacy, which under the name of Christianity, overpasses the deeds of the heathen, having gone farther in opposition to God, in blasphemy against Him, and in persecution of His true followers, than any heathen nation ever did, has presumed to set itself above the law of God, teaching men to honour Sunday instead of Saturday the seventh day Sabbath. The substitution is the mark of the authority of the Papacy. Many of those who call themselves Protestants are with all their might seeking to enforce this mark of the Papacy, and so far will they yet go that they will issue a decree authorising anybody to kill those who do not receive this mark. It will be a time to try men's souls, it will then be determined who has learned to trust in God for salvation. Happy will it then be for everybody who can hear God say to him, "I, even I, am He that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; And forgettest the LORD thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor? The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail" (Isaiah 51:12-14). We do well to learn these promises, for we shall, if faithful to God, soon have occasion to recall these.

Wednesday: "Babylon the Great" – The Medo-Persian kingdom immediately took the place in the world, that had been occupied by Babylon, and although Cyrus publicly acknowledged the true God, the most of the kings of Persia received honours themselves as gods, instead of according the honour to God. They, like Belshazzar of Babylon, were weighed in the balances and found wanting. The same spirit was prominent throughout the Grecian supremacy; and when Rome took its place as mistress of the world, the spirit of idolatrous pride reached a pitch never before dreamed of. To that power, more than to any other ever known on earth, applies the title, "Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth;" and in her are fulfilled these words: "I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus" (Revelation 17:5-6). Thus we see the very same power of old exists unchanged until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not that in ancient Babylon we have a type of that which is described in the Revelation, but that it is one and the same power in each case; and the people of God have never been fully out of Babylon since the days of Nebuchadnezzar.

Thursday: Come Out of Her, My People – But deliverance is sure. Babylon is to be utterly destroyed, and the call of God is, "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). How quickly utter destruction may follow the greatest seeming prosperity, is seen in the case of Belshazzar. When the kingdom of Babylon had reached the height of its glory, and her kings were most self-complacent, destruction came. That, however, was but the beginning of the end. It was a warning. Just as surely as the ancient city of Babylon fell at the height of its pride and splendour, when she said, "I shall be a lady for ever," so surely will the judgments of God come on the whole earth, when religion, no matter by what name it is called, has reached the place where it is identified with and controls the destinies of the nations. At the time when "the church" is universally acknowledged, so that men begin to say, "Peace, and safety," then will "sudden destruction" come upon them (1 Thessalonians 5:3).