

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God
IN CHRIST JESUS.*

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

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BABYLON, THE GREAT CITY #1

On her forehead a name was written, a mystery, "BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." (Revelation 17.5 NASB)

"Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour your judgment has come." (Revelation 18.10 NASB)

The expression *the great city* appears twelve times in the Bible, and its use in all cases gives a clear indication of the character of what is identified as *the great city*. Also, the number *twelve* refers to governmental perfection, and, in this case, it refers to the perfection of man's government, which is in rebellion against God. The first mention in Scripture of this expression is attributed to Nimrod, the mighty conqueror who formed the first *man-centered* (as opposed to *God-centered*) kingdom called *Babylon* in the land of Shinar, and who later went into Assyria to build great cities, one of which was Nineveh (Genesis 10.10-12). The very character of the builder of *the great city* reveals much about the meaning and, thus, the character of *the great city*.

Scripture describes Nimrod as **a mighty one on the earth, a mighty hunter before the Lord** (Genesis 10.8-9). The word *mighty* is an intensified form (appearing twice) of the Hebrew word *gibbôr*, which means "powerful; by implication warrior, tyrant:—champion, chief, giant, man, mighty (man, one), strong, (man), valiant man" (*The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996). The same word is used of Joshua and his valiant warriors or mighty men of valor (Joshua 1.14; 8.3), as well as the valiant warriors within the walls of Jericho that Joshua defeated (Joshua 6.2). Thus, it is safe to state that Nimrod was a mighty warrior, one who conquered. The word *before* can also mean "opposition," and this is most likely the meaning of the phrase *before the Lord*; that is, *opposition to the Lord*. Thus, it is generally agreed that *Nimrod* means "increase; rebellious; apostate; valiant one" (*Dictionary of Bible Proper Names*, by C.A. Potts, Bible Truth Publishers, 1981). Other references state that it means "headstrong," or "rebel."

The next three mentions of *the great city* (Jonah 1.2; 3.2; 4.11) are all attributed to Nineveh, the city founded by Nimrod, and the Lord's command to Jonah the prophet: **"Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me"** (Jonah 1.2 NASB).

The remaining eight references to *the great city* are discovered in *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Revelation 11.8; 16.19; 17.18; 18.10, 16, 18, 19, 21). The first one is a reference to **the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also the Lord was crucified**. Obviously, this is a reference to the ancient and earthly Jerusalem and all the apostasy and wickedness associated with it. The remaining seven references are directly attributed to what is called a mystery, *Babylon, the great city*. The number *seven* denotes completeness of what is in view. In the context of *Babylon, the great city*, it refers to the completeness of mankind's rebellion against God and the building of a world-wide system to make a name for mankind, just as Nimrod tried to do in building Babel. John heard the voice from heaven say that **her sins have piled up as high as heaven** (Revelation 18.5 NASB). In other words, her sins have reached completeness in the sight of God, and she must be judged accordingly.

Thus, the expression *the great city* is associated with wickedness, rebellion, and opposition to God, and this is at the very heart of the character of Babylon, which, in its broadest sense, refers to the *kosmos* or worldwide system that carnal man has built to his own glory and for his own name. Like the building of the city Babel, at its center is a tower that reaches to heaven and declares that man will be like God; only the tower is in the heart of man that exalts himself above God and worships his knowledge and his ways. It is *soul*-centered, not *spirit*-centered. It is *man*-centered, not *God*-centered, or more specifically, *Christ*-centered. This attitude is not new, for it can be traced back to the very beginning of mankind when the serpent deceived Eve.

The serpent said to the woman, “You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (Genesis 3.4-5 NASB)

Ever since that fateful day, we could say that mankind has been chasing after knowledge of all kinds, even seeking for answers to the countless secrets of life, the universe, and the entire creation, rather than seeking to know Elohim, the Creator of all things. For roughly 6,000 years, mankind, apart from God, has died in his knowledge.

Babylon represents all the *isms* that mankind has invented based on his knowledge. An *ism* is a system, and a *system* is a set or arrangement of things so related or connected as to form a unity or organic whole. The Greek word *kosmos*, which means “orderly arrangement,” is often translated as the word *world*. But Babylon is more than one *ism* and thus more than one *system*. It represents all the systems of the world with man as the center.

It is a *conglomeration*, which is a collection of miscellaneous things into one big mass, a collection of many separate parts. The parts do not have to agree with each other; in fact, many are quite dissimilar, even in opposition to one another. But they have one thing in common; they are centered on man and are a counterfeit to the heart and mind of Christ. In this case, all the *isms* and *systems* of the world are one huge collection with man as the head, not God, and especially not God’s Son, our beloved Lord Jesus Christ. This conglomeration is united as **the kingdom of the world**, which is destined to become **the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ** (Revelation 11.15 NASB). It is *universal* in that it includes the entire world, all the nations, all the cities of the nations, and the many waters, which are **peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues** (Revelation 17.15 NASB). As the kingdom of the world, it embraces all the religious *isms* of the world, and all the social, economic, political, and governmental systems of the world.

The entire world has become one huge city called *Babylon* that has become **a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird** (Revelation 18.2 NASB). It is an immoral city that has amassed great wealth and concentrated that wealth in the hands of the few, not the many, and has brought all mankind into bondage. The character of this immoral city is **greed** and **the love of money**, which is **a root of all sorts of evil** (1 Timothy 6.10 NASB). The character of Babylon has infected the entire world, without exception.

Before any of us go throwing stones at others, we need to turn to the pulpits of Christendom to see that this leaven, this greed and love of money, has infected many of the Lord’s people as well. Recently, I heard a well-known pastor-teacher speaking on what is demanded of Christians. The first thing out of his mouth was that they must tithe, most likely, so that he can maintain his “ministry.” This is in spite of the fact that his concept is unscriptural. Others tell their congregation that they will be cursed if they do not give their pastor 10% of their gross income, even if they are dirt poor and cannot feed their family. Others demand that their congregation “sow a seed” if they expect God to give them any monetary blessing. Even if they have no food on the table, they are to give their last penny or even use their nearly maxed-out credit cards, so that God will bless them.

Oh, people of God, wake up! This is the very heart and soul of Babylon! It is carnal. It is in rebellion against God.