

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)

#02-0877

AUGUST 22, 2008

BABYLON, THE GREAT CITY #3

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)

In previous issues [#02-0875, July 31, 2008; 02-0876, August 14, 2008], it has been presented that, in Scripture, *the great city* refers to Babylon, which represents a conglomeration of all of mankind's systems throughout the world. The entire world has become one colossal city called Babylon with man as the head. It represents all that mankind has built in rebellion against God, and it is a counterfeit of the heavenly Jerusalem, the building of God. The point has also been made that the earthly Jerusalem, the old city sitting in the midst of the Middle East, is closely identified with Babylon and will fall as Babylon falls. It appears that Babylon as a system and Jerusalem as a literal city will fall.

In my article on this subject (Article #9, May 2008), I propose that mystery Babylon, *the great city*, is more than a single city located in some nation but rather a system that engulfs the world. I read an article that stated that commerce today is based on interconnected global manufacturing and financial systems. This pretty much describes Babylon. We have been living in the midst of this Babylonian system for some time, at least since early in the 20th century. Further, it is possible that it is about to fall.

This issue briefly considers the mystery as presented in Revelation 18.

It is interesting that Babylon, *the great city*, is personified as a woman and called a mystery or a secret. It seems that many today see Babylon as a literal city; some identify it as Jerusalem, some identify it as Rome, some see it as a revived city in the present-day Iraq, and yet others see it as some major city of worldwide influence such as New York City. At any rate, ones who hold it to be a literal place on earth and, I might add, a singular place on earth often view the vision given to John as totally literal. However, it would seem that there is not much mystery to Babylon being a literal city if all one would have to do is locate the one place on earth that matches what is described in Revelation 18, or all one would have to do is wait for it to be manifested. However, this city is obviously operative when it is called a mystery, which means that people will be in her midst without knowing it. So, it must be seen through something other than the natural eye. It must be discerned just as John saw it, that is, *in spirit*. We need to see what it signifies, for *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, as penned by John, the apostle of love, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, **signifies** what must occur (Revelation 1.1 KJV). *Signify* means “to be a sign of or indication of.” We could say that it is symbolic of a spiritual truth.

The key to understanding the mystery is found in the words *city*, *system*, and *commerce*. A *city* refers to a people united for a common purpose or with some common bond. A *system* refers to a set or arrangement of things so related or connected as to form a unity or whole. *Commerce* refers to buying and selling (trading) and social intercourse.

Revelation 18 signifies the entire world being united and held together by a system of commerce. This does not mean that all the nations are at peace with one another, or even hold the same set of beliefs, or all operate or govern in the same way. What it does signify is a system that mutually benefits the nations and unites them for this benefit.

Commerce is what drives the economic engine of the world, and it is quite apparent that John saw commerce in action. After all, he heard the angel speak of merchants, cargoes of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet, and the list goes on to include things that John knew of in his day (Revelation 18.11-13), which all symbolize the commerce of buying and selling goods of value. He heard that the merchants became rich from the commerce of Babylon and great wealth was amassed.

Speaking in the present tense, all the nations of the world participate in what Babylon offers, and the merchants of the earth are becoming rich by her wealth. The world has prostituted itself with this harlot system, all for the sake of material gain and satisfying the flesh.

“For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality.” (Revelation 18.3 NASB)

Notice how inclusive this declaration is, for it includes all the nations, and all the kings, which means all the leaders of the nations, and all the merchants, which means everyone who buys and sells. John saw a great, immoral, wealthy system called *the great city* that reigns over the kings or leaders of the earth.

There is more, for Revelation 18 describes a system of commerce based on shipping by sea. It makes perfect sense, for ships were the common mode of transport in John's day, especially ships on the Mediterranean Sea, which was the main body of water. But it was more than this, for John was caught up *in* spirit and given a prophetic view that signified something that extended beyond the Mediterranean Sea of his day to include all the seas of the world. He saw a day in which the primary mode of transporting goods throughout the world would be by sea, and whatever drove this system would make people rich, immoral, and unclean. There was no reason for John to see airplanes or trucks, things that were totally foreign in his day.

The fact of the matter is that shipping by sea is still the primary mode of transport 2,000 years later. According to 2004 statistics, worldwide, there are 4,000 ocean ports served by 46,000 ships, carrying 5.8 billion tons of goods in 11 million containers. These numbers, although quite large, do not give us a perspective of how big they truly are until we realize that shipping goods by sea accounts for 80% of all goods shipped worldwide. In other words, shipping goods by sea is the predominant mode of transport, greater than by air or by land.

It is my belief that Revelation 18 describes a worldwide system of commerce that reigns over all the nations and cities of the nations, which obviously encompasses the multitudes as well. *The great city* is a great global system of commerce that unites and integrates the world and all its other systems in some form or fashion. Again, this is a worldwide conglomeration that provides for the selling of goods throughout the world, and, I might add, it is driven by greed and the love of money. How will this system fall? Will it be by a nuclear war, as so many envision? We are told that the merchants will see the smoke of her burning and that she will be thrown down with violence. Perhaps, a localized nuclear war, such as in the Middle East, will lead to massive local destruction that affects the oil market that, in turn, will set off a worldwide panic amongst the nations and their respective financial markets that, in turn, will be like dominoes that fall across the globe until there is a complete collapse of the world's economic systems. Commerce will cease as Babylon, *the great city*, falls.

As painful as this might sound, it is a good thing, for it means the arrival of the Kingdom or Tabernacles Age and the manifestation of the sons of glory, along with the King of Glory!