

the
REFORMATION

herald

Vol. 53, No. 3

THE
MIDNIGHT
CRY



Another Angel / The Wine of Babylon / Refusing False Revivals

the REFORMATION *herald*

Volume 53, Number 3

IN THIS ISSUE

- **Another Angel**
Inspiring lessons from the early Advent believers. 4
- **Bible Research—Our Advent Heritage**
A sound legacy of thorough reasoning from Scripture. 8
- **What Is Babylon? Literal and Spiritual**
Subtle sources of doctrinal confusion. 12
- **The Midnight Cry**
A historic event with a parallel for today. 16
- **The Wine of Babylon**
Spiritual confounding symbolized by a fermented fluid. 19
- **A Progressive Message**
Stemming the tidal wave of worldly confusion. 22
- **Rejecting the Rudiments of the World**
Dispelling the darkness of widespread errors. 25
- **Refusing False Revivals**
The broad way offers cheap sensationalism, but narrow is the way to life. 27
- **Pictorial News**
Photos from around the world. 30
- **Children's Corner**
Confusion is corrupting. 32



Official Church Publication of the
Seventh Day Adventist
Reform Movement

"The age in which we live calls for reformatory action."
—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 488.

Editor Davi Paes Silva
Assistant to the Editor B. Monteiro
Creative Services D. Lee

THE REFORMATION HERALD® (ISSN 0482-0843) features articles on Bible doctrine that will enrich the spiritual life of those who seek to know more about God. It is published bimonthly by the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement General Conference, P. O. Box 7240, Roanoke, VA 24019-0240, U.S.A.

Web: <http://www.sdarm.org> | e-mail: info@sdarm.org

Printed and distributed by Reformation Herald Publishing Association. Manuscripts, inquiries, address changes, subscriptions, payments, and donations should be mailed to the address below. Periodical postage paid at Roanoke, Virginia 24022.

Subscription rates: United States U.S. \$14.95; Foreign countries U.S. \$20.00; Single issue U.S. \$ 3.50

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: The Reformation Herald, P. O. Box 7240, ROANOKE, VA 24019.

Vol. 53, No. 3; Copyright © 2012 May–June Issue; **Illustrations:** 123RF on pp. 2, 4–8, 10–12, 19, 22–26; Higher Clips on p. 3; istock.com on p. 9; SermonView.com on the front cover and pp. 14–16, 20, 27, 32.

The Last WARNING—II

“Modern Babylon mixes church and state while opposing real biblical truth.”



The second angel's message says: “Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication” (Revelation 14:8).

The Bible speaks about two Babylons: one literal and one spiritual. There are many characteristics that are common to both Babylons.

In ancient Babylon the church was strongly connected with the state. The king was worshipped as a god. Modern Babylon is a mixture of church and

state. The pope becomes the head of the state and of the Catholic church.

Ancient Babylon had no respect for the liberty of conscience, while modern Babylon tolerates freedom of conscience only wherever it cannot do otherwise.

Old Babylon had her own religious system in opposition to God's religious system. Modern Babylon has her own religious system in opposition to biblical truth, and so on.

The message of the second angel, however, is not talking about Babylon, the mother. It is talking about her daughters, the popular churches that follow the basic principles of the mother: Sunday keeping, immortality of the soul, rejecting the sanctuary message, and others.

In 1844, when the message of the soon return of Christ and other kindred truths were rejected by the main churches in the United States, the message that “Babylon is fallen” was applied to those churches for despising the light from Heaven.

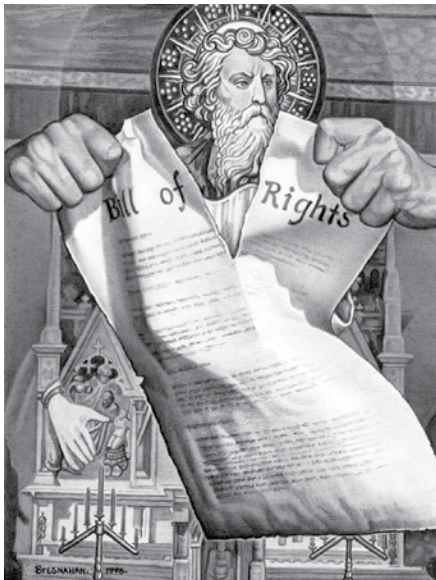
“Our hopes now centered on the coming of the Lord in 1844. This was also the time for the message of the second angel, who, flying through the midst of heaven, cried, ‘Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city’ (Rev-

elation 14:8). That message was first proclaimed by the servants of God in the summer of 1844. As a result, many left the fallen churches. In connection with this message the midnight cry [See Matthew 25:1–13] was given: ‘Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him.’ In every part of the land, light was given concerning this message, and the cry aroused thousands. It went from city to city, from village to village, and into the remote country regions. It reached the learned and talented, as well as the obscure and humble.”¹

This message has a special connection with the warning given by the angel of Revelation 18:2, “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.” This is the reason why we, who are living in the closing scenes of world's history, should pay special attention to it. Those who don't learn its lessons are likely to repeat its mistakes. May the Lord help us! *R*

References

¹ *Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 53, 54.



Another Angel

By Tobias Stockler

Suppose your friend invites you to go down the Niagara River with him or her.

You both climb into a canoe and enjoy the scenery as the current takes you downstream. Suddenly, you realize that you are on your way toward Niagara Falls! You want out, *now!* You tell your friend to steer toward the bank of the river. But your friend keeps steering toward the middle of the river. He or she tells you that the current takes you along better in the middle. He or she talks about the beauty of the sunshine, the glory of the trees, and the flowers along the way. Your friend calmly admires the birds overhead.

You try to reason with your friend: There is danger ahead. It is safer to act now. When the danger becomes visible, it may be too late to avoid it. The current is stronger close to the falls, and it is harder to get out of the river. But your friend is consumed with the pleasure of the moment. He or she is enjoying the trip and is not willing to reason with you about it.

You are faced with the worst choice of your life. You can stay friends and fall sixteen stories to your death, or you can abandon your friend and save your life. What do you do when being friends is a form of slow (or sometimes even instant) suicide?

This hypothetical situation is a real choice faced by people in many countries today. Do you remain friends with

someone who asks you to be involved in rape? Do you keep a relationship with someone that requires you to be drunk or high on drugs in order to be his or her friend? What about a friend that asks you to cover up murder or some lesser crime?

Christians face this same problem in another form. As Christians, we find that life is more than food and pleasure. We are happiest when we are conscious of the smile of Jesus. We find that our wisest thoughts are about Him. Our greatest contentment comes while we listen to Jesus or serve others as He has done. He is our best Friend. We are not willing to go anywhere He is not welcome.

But we have family and friends that do not see as we do. They appreciate life and understand many things. But Jesus is someone they do not want. They dislike or maybe even hate His name, His demands, His words, His guidance, His attention. They want to be our friends. But they demand that we ignore or reject Jesus in order to spend time with them. What do you do when your family and your friends pull you away from God? What do you do when friendship is a form of spiritual suicide?

An experience in history

The realization that two cannot walk together except they be agreed (Amos 3:3) is the question that confronted more than fifty thousand Christians in 1844. In the years leading up to 1844, the Christians of the United States had an astounding experience. The members of various churches could not

agree to pray together, but through the American Bible Society they cooperated (without praying together) in the printing and distributing of thousands of Bibles. They could not worship together, but they printed thousands of tracts and sent missionaries to rare places together.

During the years from 1840–1844 many of the churches across America hosted revivals and suddenly cooperated like never before. These churches investigated their own theology and realized that certain new ideas had crept in to their churches. They repudiated these new doctrines in favor of the older, more scriptural beliefs. An interest deepened and spread in personal guidance from the Scriptures rather than moral direction coming from church administration. This dependence on the Bible led to trusting Jesus to return to earth in the spring of 1844. But He did not appear. Thousands gave up on God for “disappointing” them. They abandoned the study of the Bible as their source of spiritual guidance and turned to pastors and spiritual experts to provide them with salvation. They paid less attention to God and more attention to the “social gospel” of trying to help other people through good works. They rejected the idea that Jesus was coming soon and focused on gaining prosperity in this world. They determined that reason and science were more trustworthy than God through His Word. And in a few decades they started to cut out parts of the Bible, such as the record of creation, that didn’t fit with their reason and scientific conclusions.

1844

As these religious people turned from God to a form of religion and to making themselves prosperous, they became hostile to those who still believed Jesus would come soon. They began to make fun of the people that they used to admire and spend time with. They opposed and eventually attacked their own friends and family for believing what they now rejected. This made life harder for the Advent people.

For thousands of Advent people it was already a very confusing time. They were disappointed also. They wanted Jesus to come. They expected the world to be over before those days. And they had no explanation for what didn't happen. Yet they knew that they were part of a powerful experience. Unity, humility, consecration, dedication were fruits of God, not of Satan. Whatever happened was good. God was in it. But where was He now? Why had He disappointed them? They had questions but no answers. But giving up on God wasn't an option. Like Job of old, they declared that they would trust God even if they died in the process.

Three Advent pastors, Joshua Himes, Sylvester Bliss, and Apollos Hale, published their own observation. "We were not hasty in embracing our opinions. We believe that we were honest and sincere inquirers after truth. We obeyed our Savior's command to search the Scriptures. We relied not upon our own wisdom; but we looked to God for guidance and direction, and endeavored to lay ourselves upon His altar, trusting that He would direct our footsteps aright. We examined all the arguments which were advanced against us with a sincere desire to know

the truth and be kept from error; but we must confess that the varied and multiform positions of our opponents only confirmed us in our views. We saw that whether we were right or wrong, our opponents could not be right; and they had no agreement among themselves. The arguments of each were so weak and puerile that they were under the necessity of continually undoing what they had themselves done; and by their opposite and contradictory views they demonstrated that however they might regard our opinions, they had no confidence in the opinions of each other. And, moreover, there was not a cardinal point in our whole position in which we were not sustained by one or more of those who labored to disprove the immediate coming of the Lord. While we had the literal rendering of the Scriptures to sustain us, our opponents endeavored in vain to prove that the Scriptures are not to be understood literally, although every prophecy which has been fulfilled has been so in its most literally minute particulars."¹

About this time, George Storrs' *Six Sermons* became popular among the Advent believers. In these sermons the Advent preacher examined the Bible teaching about life after death. He could find no proof for the common belief that human minds exist forever, even after the bodies that house and support those minds die. Storrs was thorough. He examined the beliefs of pagans and Christians. He examined the words of Scripture and the expressions popular in his day. He compared everything to the teachings of the Bible and demonstrated that evil people are not conscious throughout eternity. The

Bible plainly teaches that what we right now call death is a sleep of mental unconsciousness. It is also plain that people who love evil will lose consciousness and will no longer exist throughout eternity. Storrs made clear that in choosing to love and trust Jesus or reject Him, one was choosing eternal *life* or eternal *extinction*. During the summer of 1844, many Advent believers accepted the truth that immortality is given only to those that love God and trust Him and to *no one else*.

Getting to the need of the hour

During the month of August of 1844, several thousand Advent believers gathered in coastal New Hampshire for a conference. Part way through the conference a minister was giving a routine sermon on prophecy, boring his audience with the repetition of what was already familiar. Suddenly a lady stood up and respectfully interrupted the speaker. "It is too late to spend our time upon these truths, with which we are familiar, and which have been blessed to us in the past, and have served their purpose and their time."²

The speaker sat down and the lady continued, with everyone listening carefully. "It is too late, brethren, to

We need courage to stand alone if necessary, but the dedication to be

spend precious time as we have since this camp meeting commenced. Time is short. The Lord has servants here who have meat in due season for his household. Let them speak, and let the people hear them."³

Soon a speaker was invited to present what came to be known as the seventh-month truth. Probably a man by the name of Samuel Snow, the speaker presented details of prophecy that were previously unnoticed. He corrected the year of Jesus' death from A.D. 33 to A.D. 31. He presented that the beginning of the 2300-day prophecy occurred in the fall of 457 B.C. Those 2300 days represent 2300 complete years. And Snow introduced a more careful comparison of the model to the reality, the type to the antitype. The national festivals of ancient Israel were not only illustrations of God and His assistance to and for the salvation of humans. They were also time prophecies, pinpointing the exact time of Jesus' death and resurrection, and the visible increase in the assistance of the Holy Spirit. So the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Weeks in the fall of the Israelite year should tell us about Jesus' second coming. Accordingly, the cleansing of the sanctuary should take place about the time of the Day of Atonement, or about October 22, 1844.

Thousands of people left that camp meeting passionate about Jesus coming again. Confusion disappeared and even some beginnings of fanaticism among a few people were suppressed. (For example, people meaninglessly repeated "Glory to God," or would have church services of loud shouting and clapping all night, and were constantly making decisions based only on impressions from "God," and sometimes expecting other people to provide all their necessities while they refused to work for themselves and while they read the Bible or sang songs.)

Advent believers understood that they were now experiencing the fulfillment of the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25. All of the virgins slept until midnight. Part of them had light

or truth that would lead people in the dark. The other group of people had been following truth but now had no truth for the moment. Late spring and early summer of 1844 seemed as a dark night of confusion to many of the religious people of America. But half way between March and October or in the middle of the night at "midnight," truth came to light the way to the heavenly wedding.

"The parable of the ten virgins of Matthew 25 also illustrates the experience of the Adventist people [in 1844]. . . . The coming of Christ, as announced by the first angel's message, was understood to be represented by the coming of the bridegroom. The widespread reformation under the proclamation of His soon coming, answered to the going forth of the virgins. In this parable . . . two classes are represented. All had taken their lamps, the Bible, and by its light had gone forth to meet the Bridegroom. . . . [Some] had received the grace of God, the regenerating, enlightening power of the Holy Spirit, which renders His word a lamp to the feet and a light to the path. In the fear of God they had studied the Scriptures to learn the truth and had earnestly sought for purity of heart and life. These had a personal experience, a faith in God and in His word, which could not be overthrown by disappointment and delay. Others . . . moved from impulse. Their fears had been excited by the solemn message, but they had depended upon the faith of their brethren, satisfied with the flickering light of good emotions, without a thorough understanding of the truth or a genuine work of grace in the heart. These had gone forth to meet the Lord, full of hope in the prospect of immediate reward; but they were not prepared for delay and disappointment. When trials came, their faith failed, and their lights burned dim. . . .

In this time of uncertainty, the interest of the superficial and halfhearted soon began to waver, and their efforts to relax; but those whose faith was

based on a personal knowledge of the Bible had a rock beneath their feet, which the waves of disappointment could not wash away. 'They all slumbered and slept' (verse 5), one class in unconcern and abandonment of their faith, the other class patiently waiting till clearer light should be given. Yet in the night of trial the latter seemed to lose, to some extent, their zeal and devotion. The halfhearted and superficial could no longer lean upon the faith of their brethren. Each must stand or fall for himself."⁴

As enthusiasm, clarity, and certainty returned to the Advent people, the rest of the religious community opposed them even more strongly. "The orthodox churches used every means to prevent the belief in Christ's soon coming from spreading. No liberty was granted in their meetings to those who dared mention a hope of the soon coming of Christ. Professed lovers of Jesus scornfully rejected the tidings that He whom they claimed as their best friend was soon to visit them. They were excited and angered against those who proclaimed the news of His coming, and who rejoiced that they should speedily behold Him in His glory."⁵ Many Advent believers were thrown out of their local churches for believing in Jesus' second coming. Others left. But they did not leave easily. They only left because it would be spiritual suicide to remain with those that opposed the Bible and its truths so strongly.

Standing alone

Approximately 50,000 people were left without a church. But the separation from their friends and family, as painful as it had been, was almost forgotten in the joy of seeing Jesus soon. He is coming! "Every morning we felt that it was our first work to secure the evidence that our lives were right before God. Our interest for one another increased; we prayed much with and for one another. We assembled in the orchards and groves to commune with God and to offer up our petitions to

united with other believers as much as possible.

Him, feeling more fully in His presence when surrounded by His natural works. The joys of salvation were more necessary to us than our food and drink. If clouds obscured our minds, we dared not rest or sleep till they were swept away by the consciousness of our acceptance with the Lord. . . .

"The waiting people of God approached the hour when they fondly hoped their joys would be complete in the coming of the Saviour. But the time again passed unmarked by the advent of Jesus. It was hard to take up the cares of life that we thought had been laid down forever. It was a bitter disappointment that fell upon the little flock whose faith had been so strong and whose hope had been so high. But we were surprised that we felt so free in the Lord and were so strongly sustained by His strength and grace.

"The experience of the former year was, however, repeated to a greater extent. A large class renounced their faith. Some, who had been very confident, were so deeply wounded in their pride that they felt like fleeing from the world. Like Jonah, they complained of God, and chose death rather than life. Those who had built their faith upon the evidence of others, and not upon the word of God, were now as ready to again change their views. The hypocrites, who had hoped to deceive the Lord as well as themselves with their counterfeit penitence and devotion, now felt relieved from impending danger, and openly opposed the cause they had lately professed to love.

"The weak and the wicked united in declaring that there could be no more fears or expectations now. The time had passed, the Lord had not come, and the world would remain the same for thousands of years. This second great test revealed a mass of worthless drift that had been drawn into the strong current of the advent faith, and been borne along for a time with the true believers and earnest workers."⁶

From hopeful excitement to disappointment to hopeful excitement to disappointment, those who trusted God in 1844 had a year of extremes. They were deeply challenged. But the experience was worthwhile. The separation from their friends and family was painful but justified. It was a separation required to remain true to the central truths of the Reformation: salvation from evil thoughts and actions only by depending on God; the Bible as the personal voice of God to the believer; the understanding of the Bible by personal search of the Scripture rather than through experts and human authorities; truth as maintained by the collective conscience of the people rather than provided by the ultimatum of the clergy. The believers jumped ship from their Protestant peers. But their consciences were clear and at peace. They left the boat, not because they wanted disunity, but because they refused spiritual suicide. Departure was better than going "over the falls."

Many of the spiritual descendants of the religious world of 1844 have no idea what their forefathers lost when they rejected God's personal guidance through a personal understanding of His Word. They are not personally responsible for that historical choice. But they share in its consequences.

For those who remained loyal to God through embarrassment and disappointment, the road before them was difficult and often lonely. They would have to build all over again. But they could do so with God's help and guidance.

Where are we now?

On which side of this divide do we find ourselves today? We may adopt the Advent doctrines but have the philosophy of those who rejected God's leading in that day. We need the doctrines **and** the personal faith in God of those believers. We need the personal guidance of God through His Word. We need courage to stand alone

if necessary, but the dedication to be united with other believers as much as possible.

Courage and moral integrity like this means learning to trust Jesus and trust Him completely. This faith was another one of the great lessons of 1844. George Storrs described complete faith in Jesus well in one of his last articles before the great disappointment of October 22. He said that preparing for the coming of Jesus was like going to meet a great ship on its way to heaven. The advertisement stated that the ship would only pick up passengers from an island a little way out from shore. And it only picked up those passengers that pushed their little boats away after reaching the island. If you kept your little boat tied on the back of the island, just in case, the ship's captain would refuse to let you on board. As the ship arrived at the island, many people went running to cut loose their boats. But the ship left them behind, and now their little boats were gone also. Storrs urged his fellow Advent believers to recognize that Jesus only takes to heaven those that trust Him completely. If we try to make **our way** of escape rather than trusting Jesus to take us to heaven in **His way**, we will be lost.

Let us consecrate ourselves then to trust Jesus no matter how dearly it costs us, and carry forward the work of the Advent believers as long as human civilization lasts. *R*

References

- ¹ J. N. Loughborough, *The Great Second Advent Movement*, pp. 155, 156.
- ² James White, *Life Incidents*, p. 159.
- ³ *Ibid.*, p. 160.
- ⁴ *The Great Controversy*, pp. 394, 395.
- ⁵ *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 54.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 55.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 55, 56.

BIBLE RESEARCH— OUR ADVENT HERITAGE

By Nathan Tyler



Over 4,000 years ago Noah and his family ventured out of the ark into a whole new world. The earth had been washed clean. The wicked population had all been buried by the Flood. This was a fresh start and a new opportunity for human beings to live according to God's revealed will.

It did not take long, however, for things to go wrong. God had commanded them to "replenish the earth" (Genesis 9:1), but people soon decided to create a mega-metropolis to live in, instead of being "scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth" (Genesis 11:4).

This city was called Babel—the beginnings of old Babylon. The religion of Babel was a mixture of truth and error. Its people set their own will in the place of the will of God. But the Lord intervened to scatter them by confusing their language. In this way

they unwittingly fulfilled the command He had given.

In this issue of *The Reformation Herald* we examine the message of the second angel, which refers to apostate modern Christianity as "Babylon."

New Babylon

The first Babylon and last Babylon have some interesting things in common. The first Babylon ended when their language was confounded—everyone spoke something different. This demonstrated that in human nature there is no true tendency to unity with one another, apart from unity in opposition to God.

Modern Babylon presents a confusing array of conflicting doctrines, and displays no unity except in its opposition to the commandments of God. This situation is foretold in Isaiah 4:1, "And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own

apparel: only let us be called by thy name."

The remnant, on the other hand, are distinguished by their unity in spirit and action. Jesus' desire is "that they may be made perfect in one," producing in them the result that "they shall see eye to eye," so much so, in fact, that it becomes a powerful evidence "the world may know" that Jesus is the Saviour of the world (see John 17:21, 23 and Isaiah 52:8).

How can the remnant come to this remarkable condition? How can they be united in a pure faith? And how was it that the Advent movement could denounce Babylon and stand free of error?

Our Advent heritage

The answer to these questions is found in the principles of study which led Advent believers in the discovery of truth. Are you familiar with the story of William Miller? Let's notice

some things about how he studied the Scriptures.

What were William Miller's study aids? Because there were so many different interpretations of the Bible, promoted by the many different denominations and theologians, Miller "saw that he must distinguish between the Bible and all the peculiar and partisan interpretations of it." His biographer records that "[Miller] laid aside all commentaries and used the marginal references and his Concordance as his only helps."¹

Later in the book the biographer relates the story of a clergyman who once went to visit William Miller and was disappointed to find that he was not home at the time. Since he could not meet with Mr. Miller, he asked if he could at least see his library. Miller's daughter led the way to his study and, to the visitor's amazement, showed him the two books on Miller's desk and said, "That is his library." His Bible and his concordance were the only theological books that he had. (See Bliss, p. 245).

Miller studied through the Bible verse by verse, comparing Scripture with Scripture. "When he found anything **obscure**, it was his custom to **compare it with every other text** which seemed to have **any reference to the matter** under consideration. **Every word** was permitted to have its proper bearing upon the subject of the text, and **if his view of it harmonized with**



William Miller

When you walk with Jesus, you never stop learning truth from His Word. God's people need to keep studying for greater revelations of truth.

every collateral passage, it ceased to be a difficulty. Thus whenever he met with a passage hard to be understood he found an explanation in some other portion of the Scriptures."²

It was not just William Miller who studied like this. Those who followed on into the third angel's message were still "searching the Scriptures upon the same plan that Father Miller adopted." They followed the same principles that he set out in his book *Views of the Prophecies and Prophetic Chronology*. Some of the most important principles found there are:

"1. Every word must have its proper bearing on the subject presented in the Bible.

"2. All Scripture is necessary and may be understood by diligent application and study.

"3. Nothing revealed in Scripture can or will be hid from those who ask in faith, not wavering.

"4. To understand doctrine, bring all the scriptures together on the subject you wish to know; then let every word have its proper influence; and if you can form your theory without a contradiction, you cannot be in error.

"5. Scripture must be its own expositor, since it is a rule of itself. If I depend on a teacher to expound to me, and he should guess at its meaning, or desire to have it so on account of his sectarian creed, or to be thought wise, then his guessing, desire, creed, or wisdom is my rule, and not the Bible."³

J. N. Andrews, an Advent preacher, once wrote, "We have the truth concerning any doctrine of the Bible when we are able to present a divine harmony of all the scripture testimony pertaining to that subject"⁴

We today need to take the same approach to Bible study. The apostle wrote, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth

not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

Let's talk a little more about some important things to keep in mind while researching in God's Word.

Advancing light

What is a characteristic of those who keep following God's guidance? Proverbs 4:18 says that "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." This means that when you walk with Jesus, you *never stop learning* truth from His Word.

God's people need to keep studying for greater revelations of truth. "Let no one come to the conclusion that there is no more truth to be revealed. . . . Many gems are yet scattered that are to be gathered together to become the property of the remnant people of God."⁵

Of course, new light will never contradict the old. We need to "prove all things," and then to "hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). But just because we have a solid foundation of truth does not mean that we don't need to keep studying.

In fact, *not studying* for new light is a Babylonish characteristic. This is what the Advent believers met and which led them to proclaim the message of the second angel and to separate from the apostate churches. They experienced first-hand that "as real spiritual life declines, it has ever been the tendency to cease to advance in the knowledge of the truth. Men rest satisfied with the light already received from God's word and discourage any further investigation of the Scriptures. They *become conservative* and *seek to avoid discussion*."⁶

Study for yourself

Why is it important to study *individually* to understand the truth?

The verse we read earlier says, “Study to shew *thyself* approved unto God” (emphasis added).

This means that “we are not safe when we are content to float along with the current, believing because some one else believes. . . . We must, through fervent prayer and deep and earnest research, become established and settled, rooted and grounded in the faith, and know, each for himself, that we have the truth.”⁷ “We are nearing the time when we shall stand individually alone to answer for our belief.”⁸

It’s like when you were a newborn baby—your “food” was actually eaten for you by your mother and given to you in another form. But eventually you had to start eating for yourself. “For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:13, 14). When we first learn the truth, we get it from someone else. But as we grow spiritually, we begin to study God’s word for ourselves.

Who then can God teach? “Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts” (Isaiah 28:9). This means people who are not just taking someone else’s word for it! “We should not take the testimony of any man as to what the Scriptures teach, but should study the words of God for ourselves.”⁹

Attitude

However, in order to be able to study for ourselves, following the same

principles as those first Advent believers, we need the right attitude.

What makes us able to learn? The psalmist wrote, “The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way” (Psalm 25:9). God can only teach humble people. In fact, our attitude determines what kind of help we will get to study the Bible. “The *spirit* in which you *come to the investigation of the Scriptures* will determine the *character* of the *assistant at your side*. Angels from the world of light will be with those who in humility of heart seek for divine guidance. But if the Bible is opened with irreverence, with a feeling of self-sufficiency, if the heart is filled with prejudice, Satan is beside you, and he will set the plain statements of God’s word in a perverted light.”¹⁰

This is how you can lay aside preconceived ideas, like Miller determined to do. This is very important, because many times we will find our ideas are challenged by our study of the Bible. So do this: “If, as you read, conviction comes, and you see that your cherished opinions are not in harmony with the word, do not try to make the word fit these opinions. Make your opinions fit the word.”¹¹

All the evidence

It is the practice of Babylon, on the other hand, to start with a theory, and then set out to prove it from the Bible. See how a false doctrine can start? “The **discord** and **division** which exist among the churches of Christendom are in a great measure due to the **prevailing custom of wresting the Scriptures to support a favorite theory**.”¹²

This is why it’s important to look at *all* the evidence on a given subject. The

apostle wrote, “**All scripture** is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). This means that every verse is important. We should treasure and examine “every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4).

Doubt

How do we weigh the evidence that we find? “For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little” (Isaiah 28:10). We must be careful that we get the line upon line and the precept upon precept—not just here a little, and there a little!

Many times when we are trying to weigh evidence, we realize that there are questions which don’t seem to have answers. Why would God do this to us? “Divine inspiration asks many questions which the most profound scholar cannot answer. These questions were not asked that we might answer them, but to call our attention to the deep mysteries of God and to teach us that our wisdom is limited.”¹³

So, be prepared to always have more questions than answers, but don’t let this stop you from making up your mind. “God has made ample provision to establish the faith of all men, if they will decide from the weight of evidence. But if they wait to have every seeming objection removed before they believe, they will never be settled, rooted, and grounded in the truth. God will never remove all seeming difficulties from our path. Those who wish to doubt may find opportunity; those who wish to believe will find plenty of evidence upon which to base their faith.”¹⁴

Live by it

What was the problem with many people in the time of Jesus? The leaders, He said, would “say, and do not” (Matthew 23:3). So we may have the right teaching but the wrong spirit. “Men may profess faith in the truth; but if it does not make them sincere, kind, patient, forbearing, heavenly-minded, it is a curse to its possessors, and through their influence it is a curse to the world.”¹⁵

Jesus remarked, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).

There is no way around it—we have to live by what we preach. “Many keep the truth in the outer court. . . . A faultless creed and a carnal life are too often found together in professed believers. To be a means to a saving end, the word of God must be intelligently and practically understood and obeyed.”¹⁶

“A true knowledge of the Bible can be gained only through the aid of that Spirit by whom the word was given. And in order to gain this knowledge we must live by it. All that God’s word commands, we are to obey. All that it promises, we may claim. The life which it enjoins is the life that, through its power, we are to live. Only as the Bible is *thus held* can it be studied effectively.”¹⁷

A powerful result

In a future issue we will discuss more about what happens when the second angel’s message is repeated by “that other angel” of Revelation 18. But for now let’s think about this point: Why does God want each of us to be diligent Bible students and to follow the principles outlined above?

What will happen in the process of putting truth into practice? Jesus’ last prayer for His disciples included these words: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17).

What do you think will happen to the church as a whole when it becomes sanctified through the truth? “That he might *sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word*, that he might present it to himself a **glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish**” (Ephesians 5:26, 27, emphasis supplied). *This is God’s purpose for you.*

When we are sanctified by the truth, then the part of Jesus’ prayer about unity will also be fulfilled. “When the laborers have an abiding Christ in their own souls, when all selfishness is dead, **when there is no rivalry, no strife for the supremacy, when oneness exists, when they sanctify themselves**, so that love for one another is seen and felt, *then the showers of the grace of the Holy Spirit will just as surely come upon them.*”¹⁸

It is this experience, promoted by the principles we were taught in the first and second angels’ messages, that prepares the way for the final reception of the third. Notice the grand result: “When the **human agents shall exercise their faculties to acquire knowledge**, to become **deep-thinking men**; when they, as the **greatest witnesses for God and the truth**, shall have **won in the field of investigation of vital doctrines** concerning the salvation of the soul, that glory may be given to the God of heaven as supreme, **then even judges and kings will be brought to acknowledge**, in the courts of justice,

in **parliaments and councils**, that the **God** who made the heavens and the earth is the **only true and living God**, the **author of Christianity**, the **author of all truth**, who **instituted the seventh-day Sabbath** when the foundations of the world were laid.”¹⁹

May we therefore be faithful and diligent students of God’s Word. May we be prepared in our own heart to serve God fully, going forth armed with the principles of truth for a world that needs to hear them. *R*

References

- ¹ Sylvester Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller*, p. 69.
- ² *The Great Controversy*, p. 320. [Emphasis supplied.]
- ³ *The Review and Herald*, November 25, 1884.
- ⁴ J. N. Andrews, *The Commandment to Restore and to Build Jerusalem*, pp. 7, 8.
- ⁵ *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 34.
- ⁶ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 706, 707. [Emphasis supplied.]
- ⁷ *The Review and Herald*, September 4, 1888.
- ⁸ *Evangelism*, p. 69.
- ⁹ *Steps to Christ*, p. 90.
- ¹⁰ *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 108. [Emphasis supplied.]
- ¹¹ *Messages to Young People*, p. 260.
- ¹² *The Great Controversy*, p. 520. [Emphasis supplied.]
- ¹³ *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 431.
- ¹⁴ *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 583, 584.
- ¹⁵ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 310.
- ¹⁶ *The Review and Herald*, October 1, 1901.
- ¹⁷ *Education*, p. 189. [Emphasis supplied.]
- ¹⁸ *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 1, p. 178. [Emphasis supplied.]
- ¹⁹ *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 374, 375. [Emphasis supplied.]

What is Babylon?

Literal &

Spiritual

By Henry Portalanza

This room is in a state of Babylon!" my mother would say after one of many unscheduled inspections of my room. As I ponder on the assignment of this challenging subject, my mind takes a trip down memory lane, and I vividly hear my mother's not-so-pleasant verdict on the state of my room during my teenage years. What was the meaning of those words? I perfectly knew what she meant. Even if I were not acquainted with the historical details regarding Babylon, as I put together the sound of displeasure in the tone of my mother's voice, the state of affairs of my room, and the word Babylon, a clear definition would take shape in my mind that it meant only one thing: Confusion.

What does not begin right will not end up right! So says the maxim. The beginning of Babylon was not the result of a conquest or revolution, but rather it was from a state of utter confusion, and prophecy foretells and current events confirm that the end of spiritual Babylon will also be in a condition of complete confusion.

In this article we will examine the beginning and the steps that brought about the rise and fall of ancient Babylon and will apply the key principles that gave rise to spiritual Babylon and that will eventually confirm its fall.

I. The origin of ancient Babylon

Soon after the Flood as the earth and its inhabitants were beginning the process of recovery after such a catastrophic event in just the fourth generation from Noah, we are introduced to an important individual. In Genesis 10:8, 9 we read that "Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty

one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord." The description of "mighty one" given in the original Hebrew has an alternative definition of "despot." To paraphrase the whole description in Hebrew, it would read thus: "He began to be a despot in the earth. He was a mighty hunter of men to lead them away from the Lord." Thus he went and founded a kingdom:

"And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar" (verse 10).

Under satanic inspiration, the ambitious warrior Nimrod proceeded to form a new apostate religion to glorify himself and his mother Semiramis or Rhea, thought of as the primeval goddess. He trained a considerable army of young men who shared his warlike disposition and with them established his power in the city of Babylon.

"The men of Babel had determined to establish a government that should be independent of God. . . . Had they gone unchecked, they would have demoralized the world in its infancy. Their confederacy was founded in rebellion; a kingdom established for self exaltation, but in which God was to have no rule or honor. Had this confederacy been permitted, a mighty power would have borne sway to banish righteousness—and with it peace, happiness, and security—from the earth."¹

History describes the beginning of Babylon as it is tied to the account of the "Tower of Babel":

"Babylon is often designated in the cuneiform texts by a symbolical name, ideographically written, meaning 'the town of the root of languages'. . . .

"The story of the 'Tower of the Tongues' was among the most ancient recollections of the Chaldeans, and was one of the national traditions of the Armenians, who had received it from the civilized nations inhabiting the Tigris-Euphrates basin. Berosus gives the story in a form almost identical with that of the Bible, which will be found further on in the chapter on the Babylonians. . . .

"Some years since an inscription of King Nebuchadnezzar was recovered

and translated, in which he boasts of having repaired and completed the tower in honour of one of his gods. He calls it "The Tower of the Seven Stages, the Eternal House, the Temple of the Seven Illuminaries of the Earth' (the seven planets) to which is attached the most ancient legend of Borsippa. . . .

"Nebuchadnezzar adds, 'Men had abandoned it since the days of the deluge, speaking their words in disorder. The earthquake and lightning had shaken the crude brickwork and split the burnt brickwork of the revetment, the crude brick of the upper stories had crumbled down into mere piles.'"²

The Bible account talks about a city and a tower. The city was related to a government, while the tower indicates worship. Thus the tower of Babel stood for rebellion against God; rebellion against the government of God and rebellion against the true worship. This is confirmed by the following statement:

"[The Babel builders] determined to keep their community united in one body and to found a monarchy which should eventually embrace the whole earth. . . . Had they succeeded, a mighty power would have borne sway, banishing righteousness and inaugurating a new religion."³

This new religion was to replace the worship of God with a counterfeit religion. It consisted in drawing the attention away from the plan of redemption by replacing it with a system of rituals, mysteries, and multiple deities while at the same time it recognized God. And as God dispersed human beings from the valley of Shinar, each civilization inherited and practiced a variant of this mother of all mysteries, Babylon.

It is from the land of Shinar that God called Abraham and said: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee" (Genesis 12:1).

The fall of Babylon

The prophet Isaiah foretold the fall of literal Babylon (see Isaiah 47:10, 11).

The fall of the splendid city of Babylon, whose magnificence had been one of the seven wonders of the world, was a shocking surprise to the ancient world. Belshazzar, in a bold act of defi-

ance, presumed to bring to his drunken feast the sacred vessels taken from the temple in Jerusalem.

The Bible account says: "Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein" (Daniel 5:2).

Inspiration adds: "The king would prove that nothing was too sacred for his hands to handle."⁴

If there is one sin that reaches the limit of God's forbearance—if there is an act that seals the destiny of an individual or of a nation—it is the blatant disregard for the authority of God by mixing the sacred with the profane. God is swift in dealing with this challenge. This was also evidenced with Nadab and Abihu when they presented strange fire before the Lord. Now, Belshazzar's Babylon proved to be no exception.

We read, "In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote" (verse 5).

The Spirit of Prophecy confirms: "In that last night of mad folly, Belshazzar and his lords had filled up the measure of their guilt and the guilt of the Chaldean kingdom. No longer could God's restraining hand ward off the impending evil. Through manifold providences, God had sought to teach them reverence for His law. 'We would have healed Babylon,' He declared of those whose judgment was now reaching unto heaven, 'but she is not healed' (Jeremiah 51:9). Because of the strange perversity of the human heart, God had at last found it necessary to pass the irrevocable sentence. Belshazzar was to fall, and his kingdom was to pass into other hands."⁵

II. The origin of modern Babylon

"The message of Revelation 14, announcing the *fall* of Babylon must apply to religious bodies that were once pure and have become corrupt."⁶

What is spiritual Babylon? is the question that this sobering statement

If there is one sin that reaches the limit of God's forbearance, . . . it is the blatant disregard of God by mixing the sacred with the profane.

addresses with a definition that can be applied in very broad strokes. As we see the situation of today's Christian world, we need to not just see the apostasy that is prevalent, but also examine how and where we are standing.

Balaam, as he was attempting to curse the people of God while viewing the camp from the mountaintop, said this under inspiration, "From the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations" (Numbers 23:9).

In order to be a pure and peculiar people, God's faithful ones have always had to respect this Heaven-ordained principle. They are to be **in** the world, but they are not to be **of** the world. God's church is not to seek the endorsement of ecumenical councils nor the sanction of the state. Inspiration is clear on this point:

"Consider, my brethren and sisters, that the Lord has a people, a chosen people, His church, to be His own, His own fortress, which He holds in a sin-stricken, revolted world; and He intended that no **authority should be known in it, no laws be acknowledged by it, but His own.**"⁷

The other principle that is just as important because it is tied to the first is the following, as ordered through Moses: "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you" (Deuteronomy 4:2).

Then again Solomon instructs and councils: "Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar" (Proverbs 30:5, 6).

The beginning of the great apostasy

What was the beginning of spiritual Babylon? The answer reads thus:

"The *very beginning of the great apostasy* was in seeking to supplement the authority of God by that of the church. Rome *began* by enjoining what God had not forbidden, and she *ended* by forbidding what He had explicitly enjoined."⁸

The apostle Paul in his letter to the Thessalonians sounded a warning in order that the recently established church would be watchful. The members of the church at that time believed that Jesus would return in their lifetime, but Paul under inspiration sent a clear warning about what was supposed to take place prior to the second coming, and to be aware that there was a danger lurking within the ranks that would soon become evident. See 2 Thessalonians 2:3–5. To the Ephesians he warned: "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:29–31).

No sooner had the last of the disciples died, that Satan's agents became bolder with their heresies in their attack against the purity of the gospel. In order to gain new converts, unfaithful pastors began adopting heathen customs in their worship.

Within twenty years after the death of John the Revelator, the perversion of the truth of Christ had become widespread. About the history of this century Johann Lorenz von Mosheim, a German church historian and eloquent lecturer, wrote this:

"It is certain that to religious worship, both public and private, many rites were added, without necessity, and to the offense of sober and good men."⁹

"The Christians were pronounced atheists, because they were destitute of

temples, altars, victims, priests, and all that pomp in which the vulgar suppose the essence of religion to consist. For unenlightened persons are prone to estimate religion by what meets their eyes. To silence this accusation, the Christian doctors thought it necessary to introduce some external rites, which would strike the senses of the people, so that they could maintain themselves really to possess all those things of which Christians were charged with being destitute, though under different forms."¹⁰

The next step to follow was the adoption of pagan holidays, many of which Christians even in our day celebrate. But the principal of them all was the day of the sun as a festival day. Before the close of the second century the form of worship had been compromised with heathen customs, that the professed Christian world was adopting heathen positions and forms during their worship and prayers—so much so that the heathen were accusing them of sun-worship. Regarding this Tertullian wrote in his *Apology for the Christians*:

"Others, again, certainly with more information and greater verisimilitude, believe that the sun is our god. We shall be counted Persians perhaps, though we do not worship the orb of day painted on a piece of linen cloth, having himself everywhere in his own disk. The idea no doubt has originated from our being known to turn to the east in prayer. But you, many of you, also under pretense sometimes of worshipping the heavenly bodies, move your lips in the direction of the sunrise. In the same way, if we devote Sunday to rejoicing, from a far different reason than sun-worship, we have some resemblance to those of you who devote the day of Saturn to ease and luxury, though they too go far away from Jewish ways, of which indeed they are ignorant."¹¹

All this was taking place one hundred and fifty years before the proclamation of the conversion of Constantine.

Not satisfied with the gains he was making among the believers, Satan took straight aim at the canon of the Scriptures. The great center of learning in Alexandria was home to a congrega-

As we see the situation of today's Christian world, we need to not just see the apostasy that is prevalent, but also examine how and where we are standing.

tion of Christian believers that during the time of the apostle Paul had become eminent in the knowledge of the Scriptures but also was exposed to Greek influence. Gnosticism had started to creep into the church and it was starting to become evident in the leadership. Tertullian (around 160–around 221 A.D.) wrote to one of these scribes the following:

“Now this heresy of yours does not receive certain Scriptures; and whichever of them it does receive, it perverts by means of additions and diminutions, for the accomplishment of its own purpose; and such as it does receive, it receives not in their entirety; but even when it does receive any up to a certain point as entire, it nevertheless perverts even these by the contrivance of diverse interpretations.”¹²

Beginning with Justin Martyr who was born the year of John the Revelator's death, heresies were conveyed, magnified, and then implemented into the manuscript reproduction of the Scriptures. Tatian the Assyrian, Justin Martyr's pupil, wrote a harmony of the gospels called Diatessaron. In it were incorporated Gnostic ideas and heresies. A bishop in Siria at that time became so alarmed that he ordered two hundred copies of this Diatessaron thrown out because it was getting confused with the true gospels. Clement of Alexandria, Tatian's pupil, founded a missionary school where all these heresies and pagan philosophy were being taught as pure gospel. All this became amplified by Origen, his pupil, who further corrupted the New Testament manuscripts in his work Hexapla, which was six versions of the Bible side by side with commentaries and additions, all in one book. This became the manual which Jerome mainly used in the making of the Latin Vulgate in the year 382 A.D. The Latin Vulgate then became the official version of the Bible for the Catholic Church.

All the groundwork was ready by the time the papacy was established. Because of the thoroughness of the confusion fomented at that time by the events described, the papacy took control, and through the union with the secular power it plunged the known Christian world into a period

of spiritual darkness commonly known as the Dark Ages.

The Reformation

Amid the spiritual darkness of this period, certain individuals such as John Wycliff, Jan Huss, and Jerome of Prague were prominent. Their influence was to be heard as a shout of freedom throughout Europe. On October 31, 1517, “Babylon” was dealt a mighty blow when Martin Luther nailed his 95 thesis to the door of the church in Wittenberg, Germany. As this great reformer stood valiantly against Rome and its dogmas, there arose simultaneously throughout Europe, men who also lifted the banner of freedom from the spiritual darkness that had been imposed on them for so long. The main point of dissent from Rome was first to recognize the Word of God as the only authority in spiritual issues. People learned that the soul may be justified only by faith in the merits of Jesus Christ, and that the penitent sinner did not need any act of penance in order to be forgiven. They discovered, too, that the individual has been endowed by God with a conscience and given freedom to follow its dictates. In this all of the different reformers agreed.

Mixture of the sacred and profane

As it was with the fall of old Babylon that the profane wine was placed in sacred vessels, likewise spiritual Babylon will through legislation impose sacredness on a common day. The inspired pen wrote:

“When Protestant churches shall unite with the secular power to sustain a false religion, for opposing which their ancestors endured the fiercest persecution, then will the papal sabbath be enforced by the combined authority of church and state. There will be a national apostasy, which will end only in national ruin.”¹³

There will be no neutral ground. We will either be part of Babylon or part of the saved. We read further:

“Men in authority will enact laws controlling the conscience, after the example of the papacy. Babylon will make all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. Every nation will be involved.”¹⁴

The fate of the world will then be sealed. The fall of Babylon will be complete.

Conclusion

Today, as we observe the events and see the devil hard at work trying to bring the world, the religious bodies, society, and families into a state of utter confusion, may we hear the same voice that spoke to Abraham in the land of Shinar: “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee.” As the enemy of our souls presents this world as his work of complete confusion, God will point to us before the universe and before the angels and declare: “Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12). *R*

References

- ¹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 123.
- ² F. Lenormant, and E. Chevallier, *Manual of the Ancient History of the East*, book i, chap. iv, sec. iv, par. 1.
- ³ *Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 213.
- ⁴ *Prophets and Kings*, p. 524.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 530.
- ⁶ *The Great Controversy*, p. 383.
- ⁷ *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 16. [Emphasis supplied.]
- ⁸ *The Great Controversy*, pp. 289, 290. [Emphasis supplied.]
- ⁹ Quoted in Alonzo T. Jones, *The Two Republicans*, p. 207.
- ¹⁰ Quoted in Jones, *ibid.*
- ¹¹ Quoted in Jones, *ibid.*, p. 212.
- ¹² Quoted on the SAGE CD-Rom, Sabe Software, Albany, OR, U.S.A.
- ¹³ *Evangelism*, p. 235.
- ¹⁴ *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 7, p. 949.

A woman wearing a blue headscarf and a dark, textured garment is shown in profile, looking towards the right. She is holding a small, round, lit oil lamp in her hands. The background is dark and textured, with a warm, golden light emanating from the lamp, illuminating her face and hands.

THE MIDNIGHT CRY

[Emphasis supplied throughout]

*A Bible and Spirit of Prophecy compilation, with
comments by Davi Paes Silva*

When shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them; but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them

that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not" (Matthew 25:1-12).

All earthly illustrations are not sufficient to explain heavenly things. This is the reason why Jesus used many different parables to help His children understand the "kingdom of heaven."

The parable of the ten virgins is one of the most important parables uttered by Christ. In it we find very essential lessons for our spiritual preparation for eternity. Here we have some key points:

- **TEN VIRGINS**—In Revelation 14:4,

talking about the sealed group of 144,000, it is said that they "were not defiled with women [fallen churches]; for they are virgins." "[The two classes of watchers who profess to be waiting for their Lord] are called virgins because they profess a pure faith."¹

- **LAMPS**—God's Word. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119: 105).
- **BRIDEGROOM**—Jesus Christ.
- **FIVE WISE VIRGINS AND FIVE FOOLISH ONES**—Two classes in God's church. "There have ever been two classes among those who profess to be followers of Christ. While one class study the Saviour's life and earnestly seek to correct their defects and conform to the Pattern, the other class shun the plain, practical truths which expose their errors. Even in her best estate the church was not

composed wholly of the true, pure, and sincere."² Both classes fell into spiritual slumber.

• THE OIL:

- a. The Holy Spirit: **"The oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit."**³
- b. The righteousness of Christ: **"That oil is the righteousness of Christ.** It represents character, and character is not transferable. No man can secure it for another. Each must obtain for himself a character purified from every stain of sin."⁴
- c. The grace of Christ. "He who relaxes his vigilance because he knows not the day nor the hour when his Lord shall come, who becomes careless, and neglects **to have his vessel filled with oil (the grace of Christ) will be found unprepared and will not go in to the wedding.** How solemn is the oft-repeated warning that our Lord has given to watch! He says, 'Be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh' (Matthew 24:44)."⁵
"Ask God to give you much of the oil of His grace."⁶

What was the Midnight Cry?

In His parable of the ten virgins, Christ says that "at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him" (Matthew 25:6).

"It is in a crisis that character is revealed. When the earnest voice proclaimed at midnight, 'Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him,' and the sleeping virgins were roused from their slumbers, it was seen who had made preparation for the event. Both parties were taken unawares; but one was prepared for the emergency, and the other was found without preparation. **So now, a sudden and unlooked-for calamity, something that brings the soul face to face with death, will show whether there is any real faith in the promises of God.** It will show whether the soul is sustained by grace. **The great final**

test comes at the close of human probation, when it will be too late for the soul's need to be supplied."⁷

"Those who rejected the first message could not be benefited by the second; neither were they benefited by the midnight cry, which was to prepare them to enter with Jesus by faith into the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary."⁸

"With mighty power the cry is to be sounded in our large centers of population: 'Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him.'"⁹

"Oh, how I long to see church members clothed with their beautiful garments and prepared to go forth to meet the Bridegroom! Many are expecting to sit down to the marriage supper of the Lamb, who are unprepared for the coming of the King. They are like the blind; they do not seem to discern their danger."¹⁰ "This is no time for the messengers of God to stop to prop up those who know the truth, and who have every advantage. Let them go on to lift the standard and give the warning, 'Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him.'"¹¹

The Parable Related to the Advent Movement

As we study the application of the parable of the ten virgins, we find that it has applications at different times. For example, the parable had a clear application to the advent movement before 1844.

"The coming of Christ, as announced by the first angel's message, was understood to be represented by the coming of the bridegroom. The widespread reformation under the proclamation of His soon coming, answered to the going forth of the virgins. In this parable, as in that of Matthew 24, two classes are represented. All had taken their lamps, the Bible, and by its light had gone forth to meet the Bridegroom. But while 'they that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them,' 'the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.' The latter class had received the grace of God, the regenerating, enlightening power of the Holy Spirit, which renders His word a lamp to the feet and a light

to the path. In the fear of God they had studied the Scriptures to learn the truth, and had earnestly sought for purity of heart and life. These had a personal experience, a faith in God and in His word, which could not be overthrown by disappointment and delay. Others "took their lamps, and took no oil with them." They had moved from impulse. Their fears had been excited by the solemn message, but they had depended upon the faith of their brethren, satisfied with the flickering light of good emotions, without a thorough understanding of the truth or a genuine work of grace in the heart. These had gone forth to meet the Lord, full of hope in the prospect of immediate reward; but they were not prepared for delay and disappointment. When trials came, their faith failed, and their lights burned dim.

"While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.' By the tarrying of the bridegroom is represented the passing of the time when the Lord was expected, the disappointment, and the seeming delay. In this time of uncertainty, the interest of the superficial and halfhearted soon began to waver, and their efforts to relax; but those whose faith was based on a personal knowledge of the Bible had a rock beneath their feet, which the waves of disappointment could not wash away. 'They all slumbered and slept;' one class in unconcern and abandonment of their faith, the other class patiently waiting till clearer light should be given. Yet in the night of trial the latter seemed to lose, to some extent, their zeal and devotion. The halfhearted and superficial could no longer lean upon the faith of their brethren. Each must stand or fall for himself."¹²

"Our hopes now centered on the coming of the Lord in 1844. This was also the time for the message of the second angel, who, flying through the midst of heaven, cried, 'Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city' (Revelation 14:8). That message was first proclaimed by the servants of God in the summer of 1844. As a result, many left the fallen churches. **In connection with this message the 'midnight cry' [See Matthew 25:1-13.] was given:**

'Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him.' In every part of the land, light was given concerning this message, and the cry aroused thousands. It went from city to city, from village to village, and into the remote country regions. It reached the learned and talented, as well as the obscure and humble."¹³

According to this quotation, the "midnight cry" was a special message which brought revival in connection with the second angel message given in 1844. It was a kind of "loud cry" of the second angel message.

"I seemed to be surrounded with light, and to be rising higher and higher from the earth. I turned to look for the advent people in the world, but could not find them, when a voice said to me, 'Look again, and look a little higher.' At this, I raised my eyes, and saw a straight and narrow path, cast up high above the world. On this path the advent people were traveling to the city which was at the farther end of the path. **They had a bright light set up behind them at the beginning of the path, which an angel told me was the "midnight cry."** [See Matthew 25:6.] This light shone all along the path, and gave light for their feet, so that they might not stumble. **If they kept their eyes fixed on Jesus, who was just before them, leading them to the city, they were safe.**"¹⁴

We are told that the light which was behind the advent people was the midnight cry. This light actually proceeded from Jesus, the Light of the World.

The Lord's messenger explains:

"I saw that the present test on the Sabbath could not come until the mediation of Jesus in the holy place was finished and He had passed within the second veil; therefore Christians who fell asleep before the door was opened into the most holy, when the **midnight cry was finished, at the seventh month, 1844,** and who had not kept the true Sabbath, now rest in hope; for they had not the light and the test on the Sabbath which we now have since that door was opened. I saw that Satan was tempting some of God's people on this point. Because so many good Christians have fallen asleep in

the triumphs of faith and have not kept the true Sabbath, they were doubting about its being a test for us now."¹⁵

Here we find another very important hint about the "midnight cry". It is said that "the midnight cry was finished, at the seventh month, 1844." To which seventh month is this referring?

Between the first disappointment in March 1844 and the newly settled date of October 22, 1888, there was a lapse of seven months, at the end of which a great revival among the Adventist people occurred, being known as the "movement of the seventh month."

The Lord's messenger writes: "Near the close of the second angel's message, I saw a great light from heaven shining upon the people of God. The rays of this light seemed bright as the sun. And I heard the voices of angels crying, 'Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him!'

"This was the midnight cry, which was to give power to the second angel's message. Angels were sent from heaven to arouse the discouraged saints and prepare them for the great work before them. The most talented men were not the first to receive this message. Angels were sent to the humble, devoted ones, and constrained them to raise the cry, 'Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him!' **Those entrusted with the cry made haste, and in the power of the Holy Spirit sounded the message, and aroused their discouraged brethren. This work did not stand in the wisdom and learning of men, but in the power of God, and His saints who heard the cry could not resist it. The most spiritual received this message first, and those who had formerly led in the work were the last to receive and help swell the cry, 'Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him!'**

"In every part of the land, light was given upon the second angel's message, and the cry melted the hearts of thousands. It went from city to city, and from village to village, until the waiting people of God were fully aroused. In many churches the message was not permitted to be given, and a large company who had the living


testimony left these fallen churches. A mighty work was accomplished by the midnight cry. The message was heart-searching, leading the believers to seek a living experience for themselves. They knew that they could not lean upon one another."¹⁶

The midnight cry, led by the Holy Spirit, was indeed a powerful movement among those who were preaching the second angel's message that gave power to the message, before the last disappointment that happened on October 22, 1844.

In conclusion, we would say that the midnight cry was to the second angel's message what the loud cry will be for the third angel message: "*And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues"* (Revelation 18:1-4). *R*

References

- ¹ *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 406.
- ² *The Great Controversy*, p. 43.
- ³ *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 407.
- ⁴ *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 234.
- ⁵ *The Signs of the Times*, August 6, 1894.
- ⁶ *The Review and Herald*, December 22, 1904.
- ⁷ *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 412.
- ⁸ *Early Writings*, p. 260.
- ⁹ *Medical Ministry*, p. 331.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 333.
- ¹¹ *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 233.
- ¹² *The Great Controversy*, pp. 393, 395.
- ¹³ *Christian Experiences and Teachings of Ellen G. White*, pp. 50, 51.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 57.
- ¹⁵ *Early Writings*, pp. 42, 43.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 238.



The WINE of Babylon

By A. Balbach

The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication" (Revelation 17:4).

Why do we have to know exactly what is the spiritual "wine" of Babylon in the cup that the woman is holding in her hand? There is a strong reason why. The Babylonian wine is highly poisonous, making us unable to see the difference between truth and error. Once we become intoxicated, we lose our spiritual discernment. And, unconsciously, we allow the powers of darkness to lead us astray in spiritual matters. And what happens if we miss the way to the kingdom of God? We must know the answer.

Two churches

In the Bible, truth and error are associated with two symbolic women representing two churches—the true church and the apostate church. The true church, which upholds the truth, is symbolized by a chaste woman:

"I have likened the daughter of Zion to a comely and delicate woman" (Jeremiah 6:2).

"For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2).

The fallen church, which teaches and practices error, and which has exercised a strong influence on the nations of the world, is symbolized by a corrupt woman:

"For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath

done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink" (Hosea 2:5).

"I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns" (Revelation 17:3).

The fallen church does not stand alone. She is called "Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots" (Revelation 17:5). It is actually a family of

churches—the mother church and “seven” daughter churches who share her doctrines and principles. In biblical language, “seven” stands for a full number, meaning here all the apostate churches.

The prophet Isaiah describes this ecclesiastical family under the symbol of seven women who would be interested in only one thing—the name of Jesus:

“In that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach” (Isaiah 4:1).

Characteristics of the true church

1. She stands on the true foundation—Jesus Christ and the Word of God—the Bible.

Matthew 7:24, 25; Luke 11:28; 16:31; 1 Corinthians 3:9–11; Ephesians 2:20, 21; 1 Timothy 3:15; and so on.

2. She puts all religious questions to the test of “the law and testimony.” (Isaiah 8:20; Exodus 31:18). She does not ignore that the law of God, His testimony, which was the basis of the covenant, came forth from the right hand of Christ. Exodus 24:7, 8, 12; Deuteronomy 33:2; Malachi 3:1; Acts 7:38; 1 Corinthians 10:4. (Isaiah 8:14–20 refers to the Christian Dispensation.)

3. She understands that Christ established, taught, and urged His followers to honor the law that He had given at Sinai. Matthew 5:17–20; 15:3; 19:17; 22:36–40; Luke 16:17; Romans 2:12, 13, 18–23; 3:31; 7:7–23; 8:1–4, 7; and so on.

4. She may be persecuted. Revelation 12:13, 17.

5. She identifies herself with the threefold message of Revelation 14:6–12, which is to prepare a special group of believers for the coming of Christ.

6. She is prepared to meet Christ at His coming. 2 Thessalonians 1:7.

Characteristics of the fallen church

1. She is described as being “a cage of every unclean and hateful bird” (Revelation 18:2).

2. The mother harlot is “arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked



with gold and precious stones and pearls” (Revelation 17:4). She must keep a beautiful outward appearance.

3. She is “drunken with the blood of the saints” (verse 6). The role that she played during the centuries of the Inquisition is not to be forgotten.

4. She sits or rides on “a scarlet coloured beast” (verse 3). History says that, during the centuries of her supremacy, she held the reins of political power in her hands.

5. “The inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk” with the “wine” of her teachings (verse 2).

The wine of Babylon

“The human family have been made drunk with the wine of Babylon, and drunken men will not reason. They have taken large drafts of Satan’s sophistry, and they are determined that they will not see the foolishness of accepting another standard, while casting aside the law of the Lord of hosts.”¹

“The fallen denominational churches are Babylon. Babylon has been fostering poisonous doctrines, the wine of error. This wine of error is made up of false doctrines, such as the natural immortality of the soul, the eternal torment of the wicked, the denial of the pre-existence of Christ prior to His birth in Bethlehem, and advocating and exalting the first day of the week above God’s holy, sanctified day. These and kindred errors are presented to the world by the various churches.”²

“Prominent among these false doctrines is that of the temporal millennium—a thousand years of spiritual peace and prosperity, in which the world is to be converted, before the coming of Christ. This siren song has lulled thousands of souls to sleep over the abyss of eternal ruin.

“The doctrine of the natural immortality of the soul has opened the way for the artful working of Satan through modern Spiritualism; and besides the Romish errors, purgatory, prayers for the dead, invocation of saints, etc., which have sprung from this source, it has led many Protestants to deny the resurrection and the Judgment, and has given rise to the revolting heresy of eternal torment, and the dangerous delusion of Universalism.

“And even more dangerous and more widely held than these are the assumptions that the law of God was abolished at the cross, and that the first day of the week is now a holy day, instead of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment.”³

“The effort of seducers has been to undermine confidence in the truth of God and to make it impossible to distinguish truth from error. Wonderfully pleasing, fanciful, scientific problems [like the theory of evolution] are introduced and urged upon the attention of the unwary; and unless believers are on their guard, the enemy, disguised as an angel of light, will lead them into false paths.”⁴

Most of the Protestant churches have inherited from the Roman Catholic Church the belief that man is immortal and that "after death he lives on in the form of an immortal soul." It is believed that, when a human dies, his or her soul has only two possibilities—to go to enjoy the blessedness of heaven or to suffer the eternal torments of hell.

Baptism, according to the Catholic Church, has two main purposes: "Every child is . . . defiled at its birth with the taint of Adam's disobedience. . . . Hence baptism, which washes away original sin, is as essential for the infant as for the full grown man in order to obtain the kingdom of heaven."⁵ Many Protestant churches have inherited the practice of infant baptism from the Catholic Church.

Another practice received from the Catholic Church is the complete disregard of the dietary laws establishing the difference between clean and unclean flesh. For most Protestants it is all right to eat pork. They excuse themselves by quoting Matthew 15:18, 20 and other misunderstood New Testament verses. Some seem to believe that Christ died to purify not only human beings but also animals, even those that are declared unclean (toxic) and unfit for human consumption. See Leviticus 11. Christians should bear in mind the following verses that refer to the soon coming of Christ:

"Behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by his sword will the Lord plead with all flesh: and the slain of the Lord shall be many. They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 66:15–17).

"When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence

of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thessalonians 1:7–9).

Hereunder are some more ingredients coming especially from the "kitchen" of the mother church that have been added to the "mixed wine" offered to intoxicate the inhabitants of the world:

1. "Jesus, our Lord, founded but one church, which He was pleased to build on Peter."⁶

When Christ said, "Upon this rock I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18), He meant the Rock pointed out in prophecy (Isaiah 8:14; 1 Peter 2:6–8). He could not have meant Peter, whom He had to rebuke saying, "Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me" (Matthew 16:23).

2. "The primacy of St. Peter and the perpetuity of that primacy in the Roman see are dogmatically defined in the canons. . . . Peter and his successors have power to impose laws both preceptive and prohibitive, power likewise to grant dispensation from these laws and, when needful to annul them. It is theirs to judge offenses against the laws, to impose and to remit penalties. This judicial authority will even include the power to pardon sin."⁷

3. "The mass is the most important ceremony in the Catholic worship. It consists in the sacrifice of the body and the blood of Jesus Christ on the altar through the ministry of the priest."⁸ "The Eucharist is 'the source and summit of the Christian life.' The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch."⁹

4. Purgatory. "The souls who go to purgatory are saved. . . . In purgatory the souls can themselves wipe out their debt only by suffering."¹⁰

5. The invocation of saints is a very important aspect in the life of devout Catholics.

6. "Pius IX, in 1854, proclaimed the dogma of the immaculate conception."¹¹ This dogma teaches that Mary "was preserved free from all stain of original sin."

7. Auricular Confession. "Seek where you will, through heaven and earth and you will find but one created being who can forgive the sinner, who can free him from the chains of hell, that extraordinary being is the priest, the Catholic priest. . . . The priest not only declares that the sinner is forgiven, but he really forgives him. . . . So great is the power of the priest that the judgments of heaven itself are subject to his decision."¹²

"If men would consent to follow the Lord fully, if they were not confused with the wine of Babylon, they would see that to tamper with the Lord's standard, to depart from His commandments, is the worst species of rebellion. This is well represented as the wine of the wrath of the abomination of Babylon, the cup which she has presented to all nations to drink. Were it not for this, thousands, yes, millions, would be found in the path cast up for the ransomed of the Lord to walk in."¹³

It is not enough for us to be able to define the "wine of Babylon" and to specify its ingredients. God wants to rescue honest believers who are in the fallen churches that compose Babylon. And He wants to use us as instruments to help. Therefore, He sends a mighty angel, which represents a movement since 1844, to give the following message to the world:

"Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication" (Revelation 14:8). *R*

References

¹ *The Signs of the Times*, November 14, 1895.

² *Evangelism*, p. 365.

³ *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4, p. 235.

⁴ *Evangelism*, p. 359.

⁵ James Gibbons, *The Faith of Our Fathers*, p. 271.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

⁷ *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 12, p. 265.

⁸ Dictionnaire du Foyer Catholique, Art. *Messe*, p. 560.

⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, online: http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p2s2c1a3.htm.

¹⁰ Charles A. Martin, *Catholic Religion*, pp. 288–290.

¹¹ Dictionnaire du Foyer Catholique, Art. *L'Immaculée Conception*, p. 399.

¹² Michael Müller, *The Catholic Priest*, pp. 78, 79.

¹³ *The Signs of the Times*, November 14, 1895.



A Progressive Message

*A Bible and Spirit of Prophecy compilation,
with comments by Barbara Monteiro*

*We are responsible, not only for
all the light that God has imparted
to past generations through his Spirit and
word, but for the more abundant light now shining.*

To reject is to fall—to turn away is to tumble

Whenever something falls, it's obvious that it must have come from a higher level. The concept of Babylon as religious confusion is tied into the understanding that what is known as Babylon was once on a higher spiritual plane but then sank lower spiritually. Hence the term "fall."

How does an individual or group sink lower or decline in the spiritual sense? Some key Bible principles immediately come to mind:

"Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind. And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth" (John 9:39–41).

"It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made

partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame" (Hebrews 6:4–6).

"To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).

"The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all



The same situation is true for any and all in every age who rejects light from heaven when it comes.

"It is dangerous to utter a word of doubt, dangerous to question and criticize divine light. The habit of careless and irreverent criticism reacts upon the character, in fostering irreverence and unbelief. Many a man indulging this habit has gone on unconscious of danger, until he was ready to criticize and reject the work of the Holy Spirit."¹

"It is not alone those who openly reject the *Testimonies*, or who cherish doubt concerning them, that are on dangerous ground. To disregard light is to reject it."²

The second angel's message

We learned in this issue of the *Reformation Herald* that the second angel of Revelation 14 pronounces the fall of Babylon. When the religious bodies were provided with the light of present truth for their generation and they rejected it, their state of confusion was less "innocent" than it formerly had been. They experienced a moral fall. Why? Because the opportunity to be delivered from confusion had graciously been provided by God, yet the majority were not interested in accepting it.

Truth is progressive. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Proverbs 4:18).

"Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them" (John 12:35, 36).

"Light becomes darkness to all those who will not walk in it. In order to be accepted and blessed of God as our fathers were, we must, like them, be faithful. We must improve our light as the ancient, faithful prophets improved theirs. God requires of us according to the grace that He has bestowed upon us, and He will not accept less than He claims. All His righteous demands must be fully met. In order for us to

discharge our responsibilities, we must stand on that elevated ground which the order and advancement of holy, sacred truth has prepared for us."³

Does this principle apply to us today—upon whom the accumulated light of many centuries now shines? Absolutely!

"This generation is responsible, not only for all the light that God has imparted to past generations through His Spirit and word, but for the more abundant light now shining. We cannot be accepted and honored of God in rendering the same service and doing the same works that our fathers did. In order to be blessed of God as they were blessed, we must be faithful in improving the increased light, as they were faithful in improving the light that God gave them. Our heavenly Father requires of His people devotion and obedience according to the light and truth given them, and His claims are right and just. He will accept nothing less than He claims; all His righteous demands must be fully met, or they will remain in force against the transgressor.

"If rational beings really desire the truth, God will give them sufficient light to enable them to decide what is truth. If they have a heart to obey, they will see sufficient evidence to walk in the light. But if they in heart desire to evade the truth, He will not work a miracle to gratify their unbelief. He will never remove every chance or occasion to doubt. If they honestly, sincerely grasp the light and walk in it, that light will increase until lingering doubts will be dispelled. But if they choose darkness, their questioning and caviling over the truth will increase, their unbelief will be strengthened, and the light which they would not accept will become to them darkness, and how great will be that darkness! It will be as much greater than before the light came, as the light which was rejected was clearer and more abundant than the light which first shone upon them. Thus it was with the Jewish nation; thus it will be with the Christian world in every generation. The rejectors of light treasure up to themselves

men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness" (Acts 17:30, 31).

When Christ began His earthly ministry, the Pharisees were somewhat ignorant of His exact mission, but once the Light of the world came to them, they became keenly accountable for that Light brought to them. When they chose to reject it, they underwent a spiritual fall. They fell into a lower condition than they had been before.

wrath against the day of wrath. There are those who walk amid perpetual doubts. They feed on doubts, enjoy doubts, talk doubts, and question everything that it is for their interest to believe. To those who thus trifle with the plain testimonies of God's word, and who refuse to believe because it is inconvenient and unpopular to do so, the light will finally become darkness; truth will appear to the darkened understanding as error, and error will be accepted as truth. When thus shrouded in error, they will find it perfectly natural and convenient to believe what is false and will become strong in their faith.

"There are men who have so long rejected light and truth that, like Pharaoh, they have become hardened in heart and fastened in unbelief. They crave error; their appetite is for falsehood. They drink up scandal against those who believe the truth as an ox drinketh up water, while they reject, with demonstrations of anger, the truth, pure Bible truth, which would give health and vigor to the soul. When there are so many false teachers, who lead men away from the path of obedience into that of transgression, we need to pray constantly that we may be led into all truth, and that we may not hesitate to stand in defense of the truth. Those who transgress God's law will have much to say about charity; and when the truth is spoken they talk of the liberality and license given in God's word. But love for Christ and for the souls for whom He died will lead to the utterance of faithful warnings and appeals by the servants of God.

"Those who walk in the light will progress; they will grow up to the full stature of men and women in Christ Jesus. This is the result of sanctification through the truth, and this is what God requires of all. Truth is progressive; and those who are preparing for the last great day will go forward in accordance with the accumulated light which shines upon them from the prophecies and from the lessons of Christ and the apostles. No one will be condemned in the day of Judgment because of a lack of knowledge which he never had an opportunity to obtain. The light which

never shone upon him will never be his darkness. The truth which God's messengers have presented by pen and by voice, the treasures of the word of God which they have opened to the people, the light which has penetrated the darkened chambers of the mind, will, if rejected, be witnesses against them in the last great day. The testimony which will come with condemning power upon the sinner, and which will close his mouth before God and testify of his guilt, is the fact that he saw the light, but for various reasons in harmony with the carnal heart, would not receive it. He would not receive the truth that was given to save him. The greater the light, the greater the obligations."⁴

Examples of ways we must continue to come out of today's confusion:

In addition to the confusion on various issues, compromises on health reform, church order, the sanctity of marriage, and the violation of other biblical principles have caused some turmoil and confusion among believers in recent generations. In reality, when we come out of "Babylon," ultimately we will need to end up coming out of its various systems as they pertain to religion, economics, politics, health, and education. Sooner or later, God's people must be delivered from the confusing entanglement of systems that the Babylonian network has established.

"The Christian's life is one of progression. He goes forward from strength to strength, from grace to grace, and from glory to glory, receiving from Heaven the light which Christ, at infinite cost to Himself, made it possible for man to obtain. The Christian cannot let his light shine before men, unless he is ever receiving divine illumination. He must ever receive strength and glory from the accessible heavens, that he may be able to meet new temptations and bear heavier responsibilities. Untried events await the Christian, new dangers even surround him, and unexpected temptations continually assail him. Our great Leader points to the open heaven, bidding us

apply there for light and strength to enable us to overcome."⁵

The series of angels found in Revelation includes another angel depicted in chapter 18. With God's help, we will study about that other angel later this year in a future issue of the *Reformation Herald*. But suffice it to say that this angel repeats the message of the second angel of Revelation 14, with the additional mention of the corruptions that have been increasingly affecting the churches since the second angel's message was first given in 1844. The question for us is: Will we be part of this entire upward movement toward purity and holiness through the drawing of Christ and a departure from confusing Babylonish mentalities and practices—or will we fall by the wayside by rejecting heaven-sent truth as it increasingly pours forth from God's Word? The choice is ours.

"As God gives us light, we should make use of it; God will not give us a second ray, while the first is not appreciated. We must praise the Lord for the light already graciously given, and reflect it upon those around us. Then more light will shine upon us, and as we praise, we shall know that 'the path of the just is as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.' Do not say, I will praise the Lord when the Holy Spirit is poured out upon us. How will you know when the Holy Spirit is poured out, unless you walk in the light day by day? You are to go about your duties, advancing step, by step, according to the counsel of the Lord, and you will find that you will have light and peace and joy and will make melody in your heart unto the Lord. Thus the people of God will mingle their praises with those of the hosts of heaven and sing songs of thanksgiving with the angels of God."⁶ *R*

References

¹ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 323.

² *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 680.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 65.

⁴ *The Review and Herald*, January 5, 1886.

⁵ *The Bible Echo*, February 1, 1893.

⁶ *The Review and Herald*, October 11, 1892.

Rejecting the Rudiments of the World

Reformation Herald Editorial staff

The apostle Paul bids us, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Colossians 2:8).

Some of these worldly traditions include false ideas and teachings such as:

Any earthly mediators—male or female—that supposedly would come between Christ and humanity. Such presumption is a myth, “for there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5).

Temporal dominion and the doctrine of indulgences, whereby remission of sins could be supposedly bought or sold. On the contrary, there is only one price for our salvation: the precious blood of Christ. (See 1 Corinthians 6:20.)

Transubstantiation, whereby the Scriptural ordinance of the Lord’s Supper is supplanted by the idolatrous sacrifice of the mass, claiming that the symbolic bread and wine are the actual body and blood of Christ. In contrast, see 1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:23–26.

False teachings concerning the state of the dead and the end of the wicked. In contrast, see Job 14:7–14; Psalm 146:4; Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6, 10; Psalm 37:10, 20, 38; 145:20; Revelation 20:9. Popular theology teaches

that the redeemed are already in heaven, acquainted with all that takes place here on earth, especially in the lives of friends and family members. For the actual truth, see 1 Corinthians 15:50–55; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–17; John 14:1–3.

The notion of the world being created in an indefinite period of time, instead of in six literal 24-hour days, as recorded in Genesis as the evening and morning.

The false theory of a temporal millennium of peace and prosperity to offer the dead a second chance at redemption. But in reality, “it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27).

Universalism (teaching that all people will finally be saved) and the denial of the conditional nature of salvation in contrast to Matthew 7:21; Revelation 3:5; 22:14.



"It is not faith that claims the favor of Heaven without complying with the conditions upon which mercy is to be granted."

The false teaching of "faith, and faith only" in contrast to James 1:22–25; 2:14–17. "The desire for an easy religion that requires no striving, no self-denial, no divorce from the follies of the world, has made the doctrine of faith, and faith only, a popular doctrine; but what saith the word of God? . . . The testimony of the word of God is against this ensnaring doctrine of faith without works. It is not faith that claims the favor of Heaven without complying with the conditions upon which mercy is to be granted, it is presumption; for genuine faith has its foundation in the promises and provisions of the Scriptures."¹

The distorted doctrine of "once saved, always saved." Ezekiel 18:23–26; Matthew 24:13 shows the presumptuous nature of this error. Examples in 1 Kings 13:26 and 2 Peter 2:15–20 provide further clarification. "There is no such thing in the Word of God as unconditional election—once in grace, always in grace. In the second chapter of Second Peter the subject is made plain and distinct."²

The dangerous philosophy that humanity is self-sufficient and one needs only to develop his or her innate powers. We are warned against this in Jeremiah 13:23; John 15:5; Colossians 2:8. The peril is this: "If Satan can so beguile and deceive the human mind as to lead mortals to think that there is an inherent power in themselves to accomplish great and good works, they cease to rely upon God to do for them that which

they think there is power in themselves to do. They acknowledge not a superior power. They give not God the glory which He claims, and which is due to His great and excellent Majesty. Satan's object is thus accomplished, and he exults that fallen men presumptuously exalt themselves as he exalted himself in heaven and was thrust out. He knows that if man exalts himself, his ruin is just as certain as was his own."³

Titus 1:16 reveals that those whose mind and conscience are defiled may "profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate." Just as it was at the time when the tower of Babel was built, "there are tower builders in our time. Infidels construct their theories from the supposed deductions of science and reject the revealed word of God. They presume to pass sentence upon God's moral government; they despise His law and boast of the suf-

ficiency of human reason. . . .

"In the professedly Christian world many turn away from the plain teachings of the Bible and build up a creed from human speculations and pleasing fables, and they point to their tower as a way to climb up to heaven. Men hang with admiration upon the lips of eloquence while it teaches that the transgressor shall not die, that salvation may be secured without obedience to the law of God. If the professed followers of Christ would accept God's standard, it would bring them into unity; but so long as human wisdom is exalted above His Holy Word, there will be divisions and dissension."⁴

Mingling of church and state

Seeking the favor of secular governments by compromising scriptural principles to gain benefits from the state, professed Christianity enters into a spiritually adulterous relationship warned against in James 4:4; Revelation 17:1, 2.

And what of false revivals which are led by a spirit other than the Holy Spirit of God? This topic will be discussed further in the article to follow. *R*

References

¹ *The Great Controversy*, p. 472.

² *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1114.

³ *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 294.

⁴ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 123, 124.





Refusing False Revivals

Reformation Herald Editorial staff

Genuine revival or just a happy flight of feeling?

The second angel's message is a message of separation: The result of earnest believers seeking to come to higher ground in matters pertaining to God, while others remain behind by refusing the beams of light shining from the heavenly throne.

What is the result of genuine revival?

The apostle Paul declares: "Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves,

yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter" (2 Corinthians 7:9-11).

"If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live" (Ezekiel 33:15, 16).

"The most profitable meetings for spiritual advancement are those which are characterized with solemnity and deep searching of heart; each seeking to know himself, and earnestly, and in deep humility, seeking to learn of Christ."¹

The counterfeit: false revival

Those under the influence of false revival, as the Lord described to the prophet Ezekiel, behave as follows:

"They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not" (Ezekiel 33:31, 32). "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me" (Matthew 15:8).

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you:

but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:9–11).

"[Wherever the Word of God has been faithfully preached, genuine] revivals brought deep heart searching and humility. They were characterized by solemn, earnest appeals to the sinner, by yearning compassion for the purchase of the blood of Christ. Men and women prayed and wrestled with God for the salvation of souls. The fruits of such revivals were seen in souls who shrank not at self-denial and sacrifice, but rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer reproach and trial for the sake of Christ. Men beheld a transformation in the lives of those who had professed the name of Jesus. . . .

"But many of the revivals of modern times have presented a marked contrast to those manifestations of divine grace which in earlier days followed the labors of God's servants. It is true that a widespread interest is kindled, many profess conversion, and there are large accessions to the churches; nevertheless the results are not such as to warrant the belief that there has been a corresponding increase of real spiritual life. The light which flames up for a time soon dies out, leaving the darkness more dense than before."²

"The teachers of spiritualism will come in a pleasing, bewitching manner to deceive you, and if you listen to their fables you are beguiled by the enemy of righteousness and will surely lose your reward. When once the fascinating influence of the archdeceiver overcomes you, you are poisoned, and its deadly influence adulterates and destroys your faith in Christ's being the Son of God, and you cease to rely on the merits of His blood. . . . Satan has chosen the most certain, fascinating delusion, calculated to take hold of the sympathies of those who have laid their loved ones in the grave. Evil angels assume the form of these loved ones, and relate incidents connected with their lives, and perform acts which their friends performed while living. In this way they deceive and lead the relatives of the dead to believe their deceased friends are angels hovering about them, and

communing with them, which they regard with a certain idolatry. What they may say has greater influence over them than the word of God. These evil angels who assume to be dead friends will either utterly reject God's word as idle tales, or if it suits their purpose best will select the vital portions which testify of Christ and point out the way to heaven, and change the plain statements of the word of God to suit their own corrupt nature, and ruin souls. . . .

"Deceived mortals are worshipping evil angels, believing them to be the spirits of their dead friends. The word of God expressly declares that 'the dead have no more a portion in anything done under the sun' (Ecclesiastes 9:6). Spiritualists say the dead know everything that is done under the sun, that they communicate to their friends on earth, give valuable information, and perform wonders. . . . [Satan] works with all deceivableness of unrighteousness. He who could take up the Son of God, who was made a little lower than the angels, and place Him upon a pinnacle of the temple, and take Him up into an exceeding high mountain to present before Him the kingdoms of the world, can exercise his power upon the human family, who are far inferior in strength and wisdom to the Son of God, even after He had taken upon Himself man's nature. In this degenerate age Satan holds control over mortals who depart from the right and venture upon his ground. He exercises his power upon such in an alarming manner. I was directed to these words, 'Intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind' (Colossians 2:18). Some, I was shown, gratify their curiosity, and tamper with the Devil. They have no real faith in spiritualism and would start back with horror at the idea of being a medium. Yet they venture and place themselves in a position where Satan can exercise his power upon them. They do not mean to enter deep into this work, but such know not what they are doing. They are venturing on the Devil's ground and are tempting him to control them. This powerful destroyer considers such his lawful prey and will exercise his power upon them, and that against their will.

When they wish to control themselves they cannot. They yielded their mind to Satan and he holds them captive, and he will not release his claims. No power can deliver the ensnared soul but the power of God, in answer to the earnest prayers of his faithful followers.

"The only safety now is to search for the truth as revealed in the word of God as for hid treasure. The Sabbath question and man not immortal and the testimony of Jesus are the great and important truths to be understood, which will prove as an anchor to hold God's people in these perilous times. But the mass despise the truths of God's word and prefer fables. 2 Thessalonians 2:10, 11: 'Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.' "³

Infiltrated by spiritualism: Tongues and occultism

Most of the present-day church revivals do not come from God. "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:20–23).

"Some of these persons [who were in the 1854 movement with fanatical views] have exercises which they call gifts and say that the Lord has placed them in the church. They have an unmeaning gibberish which they call the unknown tongue, which is unknown not only by man but by the Lord and all heaven. Such gifts are manufactured by men and women, aided by the great deceiver. Fanaticism, false excitement, false talking in tongues, and noisy exercises have been considered gifts which God has placed in the church. Some have been deceived here. The fruits of all this have not been good. 'Ye shall know them by their fruits' (Matthew 7:16). Fanaticism and noise have been considered special evidences

of faith. Some are not satisfied with a meeting unless they have a powerful and happy time. They work for this and get up an excitement of feeling. But the influence of such meetings is not beneficial. When the happy flight of feeling is gone, they sink lower than before the meeting because their happiness did not come from the right source."⁴

The so-called gift of tongues in modern revivals is the same ecstatic utterance found among pagan religions, cults, and the occult. It is not the gift of languages bestowed upon the early disciples for the promulgation of the gospel among foreigners.

"The doctrine of man's consciousness in death, especially the belief that spirits of the dead return to minister to the living, has prepared the way for modern spiritualism. . . . While professing to bring the living into communication with the dead, the prince of evil exercises his bewitching influence upon their minds.

"He has power to bring before men the appearance of their departed friends. The counterfeit is perfect; the familiar look, the words, the tone, are reproduced with marvelous distinctness. Many are comforted with the assurance that their loved ones are enjoying the bliss of heaven, and without suspicion of danger, they give ear 'to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils' (1 Timothy 4:1)."⁵

"In those churches which [the enemy of souls] can bring under his deceptive power he will make it appear that God's special blessing is poured out; there will be manifest what is thought to be great religious interest. Multitudes will exult that God is working marvelously for them, when the work is that of another spirit. Under a religious guise, Satan will seek to extend his influence over the Christian world."⁶

"Spiritualism, which numbers its converts by hundreds of thousands, yea, by millions, which has made its way into scientific circles, which has invaded churches, and has found favor in legislative bodies, and even in the courts of kings—this mammoth deception is but a revival, in a new disguise, of the witchcraft condemned and prohibited of old."⁷

Since most professed Christian churches believe that the dead are in a state of consciousness, they are ripe to accept the delusions of spiritualism. "Wherefore hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves" (Isaiah 28:14, 15).

"As the teachings of spiritualism are accepted by the churches, the restraint imposed upon the carnal heart is removed, and the profession of religion will become a cloak to conceal the basest iniquity. A belief in spiritual manifestations opens the door to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, and thus the influence of evil angels will be felt in the churches."⁸

The churches will thus fall prey to "him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie" (2 Thessalonians 2:9–11).

"Not until this condition shall be reached, and the union of the church with the world shall be fully accomplished throughout Christendom, will the fall of Babylon be complete. The change is a progressive one, and the perfect fulfillment of Revelation 14:8 is yet future."⁹

The prophet Jeremiah foresaw a dreadful state of things: "I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah" (Jeremiah 23:14).

"The nominal churches are filled with fornication and adultery, crime and murder, the result of base, lustful passion; but these things are kept

covered. Ministers in high places are guilty; yet a cloak of godliness covers their dark deeds, and they pass on from year to year in their course of hypocrisy. The sins of the nominal churches have reached unto heaven, and the honest in heart will be brought to the light and come out of them. . . .

"[Commandment-keeping Adventists] profess to be standing upon the elevated platform of eternal truth, keeping all of God's commandments; therefore, if they indulge in sin, if they commit fornication and adultery, their crime is of tenfold greater magnitude than is that of the classes I have named, who do not acknowledge the law of God as binding upon them."¹⁰

"Fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints" (Ephesians 5:3).

The final distinction between the nominal churches and God's remnant people

"Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:12–14). "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12).

"It is soon to be known who is on the Lord's side, who will not be ashamed of Jesus."¹¹

"Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not" (Malachi 3:18). *R*

References

¹ *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 412.

² *The Great Controversy*, pp. 462, 463.

³ *The Review and Herald*, February 18, 1862.

⁴ *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 412.

⁵ *The Great Controversy*, pp. 551, 552.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 464.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 556.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 603, 604.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 390. [Emphasis supplied.]

¹⁰ *Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 449, 451.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 287.



Liberia

*New group of believers,
January 2013 (left).*

Kenya

*Missionary school in Nairobi,
November 2012 (middle).*

Brazil

*Delegation session
in Brasília, April
2012 (bottom).*



New Caledonia

*A group of believers,
October 2012.*



Indonesia

*General seminar
in Manado,
June 2012.*



Honduras

*Youth Convention
in Central
American Union,
December 2012
(below).*



P.O. Box 7240
Roanoke, VA 24019-0240

Return Service Requested

MOVING? Please let us know.



CHILDREN'S
CORNER

Confusion Is CORRUPTING

Dear children, have you ever heard the saying, “Babylon is Fallen?” What does it mean? Babylon was an ancient city that we read about in history books and in the Bible. The name “Babylon” comes from the tower of Babel. You may remember the story found in Genesis 11:1–9:

“The whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.

So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the

language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.”

The people building the tower of Babel were super proud, so if their plan had worked, it would have made the earth a very bad place to live. These people were rebelling against God—and if they had been able to finish building their gigantic tower, their selfish attitude of trying to be the “boss” of the whole world would have caused a lot of crime and suffering. That is why God mixed up their languages so they would not be able to complete their project. So, from that time on, the term “Babylon” has meant “confusion.”

Have you ever met people that are confused about Bible truth? They may claim that people go straight to heaven as soon as they die, or they may say that God has changed His holy day of rest away from the seventh-day Sabbath of the Bible. To try to mix Bible truths with false ideas causes confusion. Have you ever been confused? It’s not a good thing. How much better it is to follow Jesus who is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6)! With God’s Word as our Guide, we do not need to be confused. The psalmist gives a wonderful plan for the youth: “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psalm 119:9–11). Let us separate ourselves from confusion. Babylon is fallen, but we do not need to be down in the ditch together with her! *R*