



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Revelation 17:1-6; Zechariah 5:5-122

"Babylonianism - Past, Present and Future"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We are looking this morning at two passages Revelation chapter 17 and verse 6, which I am simply reading in the Scripture reading, we'll not seek to expound it and then Zechariah chapter 5, verse 5 through verse 11. As you probably can tell from the treatment of the Book of Revelation that I am giving, we have occasionally stopped from expounding the Book of Revelation and have expounded some passages that were important for understanding the particular section of the revelation to which we had come.

For example, when we came to chapter 13, we went back and spent two Sundays on Daniel chapter 7. That was so essential for understanding Revelation chapter 13 and what we did last week when we came to chapter 17 was to go back to Genesis chapter 11 where we have the original account of the raising of the tower of Babel and the beginning of the biblical story, in a sense, of Babylon, which looms large in the word of God and we are continuing that this morning. We'll read again Revelation 17:1-6, but we will spend our time on Babylonianism and briefly treat Babylonianism from the past that is from the tower of Babel, to the present time. So let's read now beginning at verse 1 of chapter 17 of the Book of Revelation, our first passage.

"Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me saying, 'Come here, I shall show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed acts of immorality, and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality.' And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality, and upon her forehead a name was written, MYSTERY (or secret), BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus and when I saw her, I wondered greatly."

Now let's turn to Zechariah chapter 5 and we'll read one of Zechariah's visions, verse 5 through verse 11. The prophet writes in the 5th verse of Zechariah 5,

"Then the angel who was speaking with me went out and said to me, 'Lift up now your eyes and see what this is going forth.' And I said, 'What is it?' And he said, 'This is the ephah going forth.' Again he said, 'This is their appearance in all the land (there's a little bit of a difficulty over the rendering of that particular clause and I recommend that you look at your margins for some ideas. If you're really interested, go to some of the commentaries on Zechariah and read some of the discussions that have been given of that, but we do not have to make the decision with regard to that in the exposition this morning, so we'll pass on). This is their appearance in all the land and behold, a lead cover was lifted up; and this is a woman sitting inside the ephah.' Then he said, 'This is Wickedness!' And he threw her down into the middle of the ephah and cast the lead weight on its opening. Then I lifted up my eyes and looked, and there two women were

coming out with the wind in their wings; and they had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heavens."

Reference to the stork is very interesting in light of the fact that Pliny [ph4:51], many centuries ago, made the comment that one of the characteristic things of storks was to go back to their former nests, and so that would be very fitting for this particular prophecy.

We read,

"And they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heavens and I said to the angel who was speaking with me, 'Where are they taking the ephah?' Then he said to me, 'To build a temple for her in the land of Shinar; and when it is prepared, she will be set there on her own pedestal.'" (The thing to note is simply this that Shinar, we have already seen, is one of the terms for Babylon. Babylon was in the land of Shinar so that is a prophecy that has to do with Babylon and Babylonianism.)

May the Lord bless this reading of His word, and let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we give Thee thanks for the word of God and we thank Thee for the light that we find in it. We thank Thee for the way in which the Holy Spirit has guided us very carefully and mercifully and lovingly to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ through which, through whom we have received forgiveness of sins, through whom we have been justified, declared righteous and possessed of a standing before Thee. How marvelous, how grateful we are. We ask, Lord, that if it be Thy will, that each one in this auditorium and those who hear this message whether over the radio or over the tapes that they too may have that experience.

We thank Thee for him who loved us and gave himself for us and who is a satisfaction having accomplished that which was necessary for us in His death for our sin. We thank Thee, too, Lord, for the day in which we live and the opportunity of being Christian witnesses in a day of growing darkness. We ask, Lord, Thy blessing upon the testimony of each one of the individuals in this congregation. Keep us close to our Lord and give us opportunities to glorify him in the testimony to His sovereign grace.

We pray for this country, again, we ask for our leadership. We pray that the decisions that are made may be decisions that are in harmony with the great principles of the word of God and we pray for the whole church of Jesus Christ for all who proclaim the word of God and for all of the bodies in which that word of God is proclaimed and in which the word of God is the instrumentality in the Spirit's hands for building up the saints of God.

And, Lord, we ask for the sick. We pray for the suffering. We pray for the perplexed. We ask Thy blessing upon each one of them and we remember especially those whose names are in our calendar of concern who have specifically requested us to pray for them.

We pray today for the unborn. We ask Thy blessing upon them by Thy grace. So providentially deal with them that they may see life and not only see life, but in their lives be brought to the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior too. We commit them to Thee. Now we ask Thy blessing upon us as we sing and as we hear the word of God, give us, Lord, responsive hearts, for Jesus sake. Amen.

[Message] The subject for today as we continue our exposition of the apocalypse is "Babylonianism - Past, Present and Future". We touch upon one of the most important, most astonishing, yet most neglected subjects in the Bible. Babylon, its origin, we have referred to that; its persistence, its demise in Old Testament times; its revival in Old

Testament times; and its ultimately catastrophic destruction set forth both in the Old and the New Testaments.

One commentator has suggested as a result of his own study that there is more devoted to Babylon and the fall than to any other secular occurrence. In fact, about ten chapters in the Bible are devoted to the subject of Babylon. Many of them, as you know from the reading of the Bible, are entire chapters; others significant parts of chapters. We are dealing with a subject from the standpoint of the content of the Scriptures is an important subject. The Bible, as we know, is one long admonition against idolatry. In fact, when Moses gave his law, the opening words as he recounts them are these.

"Then God spoke all these words, saying, 'I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.'"

And then in the New Testament times near the end of the completion of the Revelation found in the New Testament, the Apostle John, so far as we can tell, the last living author of Revelation, concludes the 5th chapter of his first epistle by saying, "Little children, guard yourselves from idols."

So it is true that the Bible is one long admonition against idolatry and Babylon is significant in that Babylonianism, Babylon is the source of organized rebellion against God. Going back to Genesis chapter 11 and the building of the tower of Babel, I made the comment derived from another commentator who said that when the Babylonians gathered together with their desire to build the tower, their purpose was unity. Their

program was united effort and the principle that moved them was human glory, not divine glory, but human glory. Let's make for ourselves a name. It was, in fact, a program that they hoped would be something like a counterfeit of the Kingdom of God.

Now in this message we are going to try to continue the story that began with Nimrod and the tower of Babel, so in my comments to you, I want to turn to the topic Babylon, from Babylon to the fall of the city.

Looking at the word of God, there are a number of places that make this comment, I think, justifiable, that Jerusalem was God's elect city from ancient times. From Jerusalem, there would ultimately come the truth of God. You read the prophets such as Isaiah the 2nd chapter, "And in the days of the Kingdom of God men shall go to Jerusalem because the word of the Lord shall go from Jerusalem out to the whole of the world." In Ezekiel chapter 5 and verse 5, we read these words, "Thus says the Lord God: 'This is Jerusalem; I have set her at the center of the nations, with lands around her.'" So when we think of Jerusalem, we think of the city of God and, in fact, the new Jerusalem still plays upon that particular sense of the term Jerusalem.

Jerusalem was called something like the navel of the world and in medieval maps, it was recognized. Their maps were often made with Jerusalem at the center of the whole world because Ezekiel had said, "I have set Jerusalem in the midst of the nations."

There is a tablet in the British Museum on which this city is represented as the center of the world. The navel of the world may still be seen today in the Greek Choir of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. In medieval times, maps were often constructed with the countries of the world placed around Jerusalem as their center, an obvious derivation from the text from Ezekiel that we have just read.

Now we Texans can understand all of that because our maps put Texas at the center of this country. When I came to the State of Texas from Alabama and South Carolina, I did not realize how important Texas is for the United States of America. I did not realize how large it was. I did not realize that these states around were just little

slivers on a map and that Texas was the giant of the states and the impression I got was a sense of deep depression as I thought about my many, many years before I came here and the opportunity to be a part of this great state. But then, I was cured of it all when I saw a map of Oklahoma and a fellow from Oklahoma had drawn a map with Oklahoma as the big state and then my lifelong ambition is to have enough time to make a map with Alabama or South Carolina as the important state and get back to truth. [Laughter] But in any way, we can understand how maps were made in the light of this, but in this instance, there is some justification from the word of God for it. I think it's rather interesting that the Garden of Eden was located in the general area of what is today Iraq and Babylon's ancient location.

Now someone has suggested that perhaps Satan's earthly headquarters were at Babylon since there from Babylon there is easy access to the east or to the west and it would be an ideal place from which to counteract the influence of Jerusalem. That may be imagination, but at least in the Bible, these two great cities are set over against each other; the city of Babylon and the city of Jerusalem.

Let me just refresh your minds on the history of the Old Testament story of Babylon to the captivity of Judah. Twice the Babylonian Empire ruled over the eastern world. In eighteen hundred and ninety-five B.C. to fifteen hundred and ninety-five B.C., the Babylonian Empire was supreme in the earth as we know it. The greatest monarch with whom you are, no doubt, familiar was Hammurabi.

Then after a period of loss of eminence, the Neo-Babylonian Empire came to world supremacy in the year 626 B.C. to about 538 B.C., which is the time when Cyrus captured the city of Babylon and the greatest monarchs of that period of time we are familiar with because they are referred to in the Old Testament. Individuals like Nabopolassar, the son Nebuchadnezzar or Nebuchadnezzar, as translated in some of our versions, Belshazzar, also the king of Babylon or at least one of the individuals in authority by virtue of his family, and you'll remember in Daniel chapter 5, Belshazzar is

told by Daniel that "the Lord God in heaven has granted sovereignty, grandeur, glory and majesty to Nebuchadnezzar your father." It was part of the sovereign determination of God and His divine providence that Babylon should have that particular significance.

Now reading the Old Testament prophets, you further see how significant Babylon is because Babylon during the captivities is the time of some of the greatest of the prophecies. Ezekiel was in the first convoy of the captives who left the land and were taken to Babylon. He and his prophecies railed against the false prophets who promoted resistance to the Babylonian Empire. He spoke of return and restoration.

Jeremiah spoke against the prophets as well. But Jeremiah also was given the privilege of prophesying the length of the Babylonian captivity, 70 years. It's from that, of course, that Daniel makes some observations and references in his prophecies.

Daniel prophesied the fall of Babylon in the 2nd chapter of his book and in the 7th chapter of his book, when he details the rise of the four great empires and then the ultimate destruction of them, included among them was Babylon. And so, he prophesied of the eventual ruin of Babylon, the fall. Furthermore, Daniel was given the privilege of describing the fall of the city under Belshazzar. And in Daniel chapter 5, the story is given in a great deal of detail. Let me just remind you of it. It's a remarkable story. You'll remember that when Daniel was in the captivity, Belshazzar at a particular point in time held a great feast for a thousand of the nobles and he was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand. And when he tasted the wine that came to him that it might be good to drink the wine out of the gold and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple that was in Jerusalem. So he gave commandment that they should be brought, they filled the vessels with the liquid and they drank the wine and they praised the gods of gold and silver of bronze, iron, wood and stone. Commercialism was rampant then as it is rampant today, and it was a godless commercialism as well.

But while they were enjoying themselves, suddenly in the midst of their entertainment, and of the great festival, there appeared a hand on the side of the wall, and when the hand emerged it began writing opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace and the king saw the back of the hand that did the writing and he recognized it that it was something supernatural. "His face grew pale. His thoughts alarmed him. His hip joints went slack and his knees began knocking together." Have you ever had a feeling something like that? Not quite as vividly described but nevertheless something like that?

Well, Belshazzar did the thing that came to mind. He called first for the charismatics and he thought that perhaps they would be able to interpret because they claimed the prophetic gift.

So he brought in the conjurers, the Chaldeans, the diviners, and he told them that anyone who can read this inscription and explain its interpretation would be clothed with purple and have a necklace of gold around his neck and have authority as the third ruler in the heaven.

So the king's wise men came in, they couldn't read the inscription. They couldn't even make sense of it much less interpret it. So he became greatly alarmed and his face grew even paler, and his nobles were perplexed. About that time the queen made her entrance, and when she found what was going on she on she said, "There's a man in your kingdom in whom a spirit of the holy gods lives, and in the days of your father." He'd forgotten all about his father. "Insight, wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods were found in him, and King Nebuchadnezzar, your father, your father the king, appointed him chief of the magicians, conjurers, Chaldeans and diviners." This was because an extraordinary spirit, knowledge and insight, interpretations of dreams, explanation of enigmas and solving of difficult problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belshazzar. "Let Daniel now be summoned and he will declare the interpretation." So Daniel was brought before the king. The king said,

"Are you Daniel who is one of the exiles from Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah? I've heard about you that a spirit of the gods is in you, that illumination, insight, and extraordinary wisdom have been found in you. And now these wise men they couldn't understand and interpret the message, but since I have personally heard about you, that you are able to give interpretations and solve difficult problems, if you do solve this problem then I will clothe you in purple, you'll have a necklace of gold around your neck, and you will have authority as the third ruler in the kingdom."

That sounds almost as if he was going to make him like one of our basketball stars [Laughter] in the United States of America, necklaces and all. So Daniel answered and the first thing he said was, "Keep your gifts for yourself, I go to Believers Chapel." [Laughter] He really didn't say that.

"Give your rewards to someone else; however, I will read the inscription to the king and make the interpretation known to him. O king, the Most High God granted sovereignty, grandeur, glory and majesty to Nebuchadnezzar your father and because of the grandeur which He bestowed on him, all the peoples, nations and men of every language feared and trembled before him; whomever he wished he killed and whomever he wished he spared alive; and whomever he wished he elevated and whomever he wished he humbled. But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit became so proud that he behaved arrogantly, he was deposed from his royal throne and his glory was taken away from him. (What a warning. What a warning for all of us. What a warning for those of us who think, well, we have finally arrived.) And it was at this moment that he was driven away from mankind, and his heart was made like that of beasts, his dwelling place was with the wild donkeys. He was given grass to eat like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until he recognized that the Most High God is ruler

over the realm of mankind and that He sets over it whomever He wishes. Yet you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this, but you have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven; you've brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines have been drinking wine from them; and you've praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which do not see, hear or understand. But the God in whose hand are your life-breath and your ways, you have not glorified."

What a picture of God, "the God in whose hand your life-breath is". I've many times referred to this, but years ago I heard a sermon preached by a young preacher, he hadn't even gotten out of theological seminary, but in the chapel at Dallas Seminary this young man stood up, and in the midst of his sermon he referred to this text and then he commented, "You are only assured of the present breath that you are drawing and no other one." "In whom your life-breath is."

Well, "Then the hand was sent from Him and this inscription was written out," Daniel says to Belshazzar. Now this is the inscription that was written. You know, I can just imagine that when those soothsayers and the divines and the wise men of Babylon came in and they looked at the figures on the side of the wall and the letters, they wondered since they couldn't make any sense out of them at all, how they should be read. And I can imagine they tried to read them from left to right, from right to left, from the bottom to the top, from the top to the bottom, they tried every way that they possibly could, they could not make any sense out of them whatsoever.

But now Daniel in whom is the Spirit of the Lord God he says, "This is the inscription: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN." These are Aramaic words and those, of course, are transliterations of them. The Book of Daniel is written in two languages, the Hebrew language and the Aramaic language. We are in the Aramaic portion of the Book of Daniel, which in chapter 2 and about verse 4 begins in Aramaic and continues through

the 7th chapter. It's very striking that in these chapters, the prophecy of Daniel has to do with the nations, but in the 8th chapter, and in the opening chapters, when the stress of the book is upon the things that concern Israel, the language is Hebrew. So fitting. So this is Aramaic, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. Now he was interpreting, he said,

"This is the interpretation of the message, MENE - God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it. TEKEL - you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient. PERES - your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and to the Persians."

Well, Belshazzar evidently recognized that this was from the Lord God. He gave orders, they clothed Daniel with purple, they put a necklace of gold around his neck, they issued a proclamation concerning him that he now had authority as the third ruler in the kingdom. What a massive instance of unbelief. What has he just been told? Your kingdom is numbered. Your kingdom is divided. Your kingdom has been given to the Medes and the Persians. Who wants to be the third ruler in a kingdom that now has been weighed in the balances and found wanting, has been given to the Medes and Persians? He forgot all about the prophecy that is given to him right there by Daniel and says, "Now we make Daniel the third ruler in the kingdom." No wonder Daniel wasn't interested and the very next text says, "That same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain."

So Daniel's rule lasted for just a few hours and Daniel, of course, understood what was taking place. What a magnificent picture of the sovereign determinations of the Lord God and of his disturbance within himself over godless commercialism. The apostasy of it is astonishing particularly in this case. Someone has said, "Whom the gods would destroy they first make mad." Belshazzar was mad and now destroyed. Everything within Babylon is empty.

I remember a story by Howard Butt [ph32:36], which I heard him tell in Edinburgh, Scotland. He said some boys were standing by some scales and people were walking down the street and they were weighing themselves and they had little wagers among themselves, no money but just bidding at what their weight would be, and as they came and stepped on the scales, they watched the scales and then they said, "I was right" or one said, "You were wrong," and they were having a good time guessing the weights of people. And, they looked down the street and here was a great big fellow who came to the scales and they were very much interested in him and he stood on the scales, they had made their little friendly wagers, and they watched as the hand went up fifty, hundred, hundred and fifty, two hundred, all of the sudden, there was a little kind of a noise and it went right back to the bottom, zero. One of the little boys turned to the other boy and said, "Golly, he's empty!" [Laughter]. What would we say? "He's an air belly today!" [Laughter]

Well, that's the kind of gospel that is being preached today when Jesus Christ is not made the center of it and Babylonianism is the ultimate rejection of the truth of the Lord God and of the divine revelation in the Word of God. This particular event was an historical event. Herodotus speaks about it in his histories, which I read when I was growing up and going through college. There is a proverb in the Book of Proverbs that tells the story very well, "A man who hardens his neck after much reproof will suddenly be broken beyond remedy," and Belshazzar, the Babylonian Empire, is a good illustration of that.

Babylon after the captivity, when the Medes and the Persians took over, continued its influence by religion; by a kind of thought control, because the religion that had become prominent at Babylon and had spread over the Near East became the religion of many other countries. Cyrus beautified the city. Alexander, when he conquered Babylon, planned to make it the capitol of his world empire, but he didn't live long enough to do that.

Now I'd like to say a little bit about Babylonianism from Babylon to Rome and I'd like to also say this, there've been a lot of things said about this, about which we should say, "perhaps". It's disturbing to me that we often speak as if we are giving out truth that is found specifically in the word of God when we give the opinions of individuals who do not have sufficient information in order to be sure about that of which they are speaking. Many evangelicals have made some very, I think, strong things about Babylon and its influence that cannot really be justified plainly from the facts of history as well as the word of God.

For example, it has sometimes been said that the specific prophecies of Genesis chapter 3 are reflected in Babylonian religion and that Semiramis and Tammuz and the relationships that they had one with another were attempts to fulfill the promise of the Redeemer. I don't think there's anything that can actually support that plainly, but this one thing is, I believe, true. In the worship of Babylon and Babylonianism and in the worship of the Near East, it's very plain to see that the principles of religion that became prominent at Babylon began to pervade not only all the Near East, but also in the west as well, in Greece, in Rome and ultimately from Rome throughout the world.

But, it is true, I believe, to say then in a general way, that the Babylonian religion had as one of its chief characteristics, the worship of a virgin goddess and a child. You can reflect on the Egyptian Isis and Osiris, Horus, others in various places under different names; they're essentially the same religion. In fact, it has been contended by some, I'm not sure it can be absolutely proved, it may be correct, as there have been contentions made that the worship of the Madonna and the sun is nothing other than the worship of Nimrod and his wife.

I think we can see this, that there has been a migration of Babylonianism to the west. We know Paul said "The mystery of iniquity doeth already work, it was working, has continued to work even to the present time". We do know from this Book of Revelation that in chapter 2 and verse 13 in the message to Pergamum it is stated, "I know

where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwelleth."

So the very fact that we have reference here to Satan's dwelling in Pergamum in the sense of the original text is that he has something of a permanent home there; that there is some evidence that the Chaldean priesthood moved to Pergamum to carry on worship there and when Attalus the Third, who was a ruler over that part of Asia Minor, willed his kingdom to Rome then, of course, you have justification for saying that some of the characteristic religious practices also made their entry in Rome, but they were already in Rome even before that.

When Julius Caesar assumed authority, he was made not simply the head of the state, but the head of the Roman religion and he was given the title of Pontifex Maximus. Pontifex Maximus is an ancient title. It is now a title accorded the Pope. He is the Pontifex Maximus. You know the meaning of those words Pontifex probably comes from the Latin noun pons and the fex from facere, which means "to make or do" and maximus is the superlative that means "greatest". So we have the greatest bridge builder. The idea is of mediation so that the greatest bridge builder is the one who can mediate between earth and heaven.

Now Caesar was given that title but now we've found it in the Roman church. I don't want to attack the Roman church entirely because Protestantism has undertaken to take a number of these things into themselves as well. Other facts that relate Babylon to Rome or there is any early temple to the Chaldean god on Capitoline Hill in Rome. Asia Minor was the origin of the Etruscans who influenced Roman religion as you who studied Roman history know.

The journey of the goddess Cybele, the great mother, in fact, part of great mother of the gods, she was ultimately, she came to Rome, she was from Chaldea originally, so that it's not surprising then to find something of an amalgamation of Babylonianism with

what was happening in Rome. And when we read in the 17th chapter in the 9th verse of the Book of Revelation that Babylonianism is associated with the City of the Seven Hills, then you can see that there is according to the writer of this book, a connection with Rome.

What is characteristic is a kind of secondary Christianity. Primary Christianity is Christianity grounded in what the Scriptures say. Secondary Christianity is a kind of Christianity sometimes true in its primary characteristics, but added to it are many secondary things that do not find support in the word of God.

It has been said by some that there are 29 institutions that have come from Babylonianism that have penetrated Rome and Protestantism. Some of them you will recognize such as the appointment of human priests, belief in the sacraments as life giving, confession to a priest, the signing with the form of the cross and the adoration of the same symbol, turning to the east, lights on either side of the alter but not in the center, incense, celibacy, apostolical succession, the tonsure, the use of holy water, virgin worship, worship of the Madonna and child, carrying of images in procession, and things such as this. These are things that are ultimately derived from Babylonian religion. It is, of course, possible for individuals to have the truth and to have a lot of accretions to it particularly when you have not made a study of it or do not understand that that is what has happened.

You may remember also that when Constantine was influenced so he said "By the sign that he saw in the sky when he was the leader of the western forces that were to meet the eastern forces at the Milvian Bridge, that he made a vow with the Lord that if he won that battle, he would convert to Christianity, he had had some connection with individuals who were Christians, and when he saw the sign, it is said that the sign was a cross with the Latin words below it, *In hoc signo vinces*, which means "In this sign, you shall conquer" that when the next day he won his battle, he converted to Christianity and the church has been grateful thereafter because of the great things that have happened

when Christianity became the religion of the Roman Empire, but what happened was probably one of the worst things that could have happened.

In fact, John Wesley said, "After many years of reflection upon that, he thought the worst thing that has happened to the Christian church has been just that fact." But, at any rate, what would happen when the priests of the Roman religion were paid by the state and the head of the state has now converted to Christianity, what do you expect? Well, you expect exactly what happened, that the priests of Mars and Venus now say they have been converted and so they proceed to their baptisms and retain their priesthood in the new religion.

So Caesar has become a Christian and the priests of Mars and Venus hasten to their baptisms and make their profession of Christianity. Emmanuel Deutsch referred to this transformation "as the time when the gods of Greece and Rome went into exile either degraded into evil spirits or promoted into Christian saints."

So Babylonianism, no wonder Luther wrote a book called *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. We don't have time to talk about that; in fact, our time is just about up. I'll make reference to the Zechariah 5 passage. The reason I chose that passage is because it is a prophecy of Zechariah by which he tells us that the ephah which was the symbol of commercialism and also identified as wickedness, so we will say godless commercialism, which was present in the land by the influence of the Babylonians upon the Jewish people in the time of the captivity. Zechariah prophecies that there is coming a day when God will cause the Babylonianism, the godless commercialism, the apostasy, to be removed again to its source in the land of Shinar. It will return to its own nest, as the storks carry the women, and as a result of that then beast and the kings of the earth will enjoy their greed and the profits from their godless commercialism detailed so plainly for us in chapter 18 of this book, the Book of Revelation.

So at that time, that will take place. God will be true to His covenantal promise. He will remove the evil from the land back to idolatrous Babel, Nimrod's city become the object of the greed of the beast and the kings in the final world capitol.

In chapter 18 of the Book of Revelation in the 4th verse we read this, "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, 'come out of her, my people, that you may not participate in her sins and that you may not receive of her plagues.'" We surely need this warning. We need this as Christians. We need to remember in our day of materialism, in our occupation with materialism, in the concerns that we have for money and possessions and property and influence, we need to be warned that there is one God, that He will not book any other gods before Him, "Little children, guard yourselves from the idols."

What's really important today? What is really important? Is it my standing materially or is it my relationship to the Lord God who has through Jesus Christ made it possible for men and women to have the assurance of the forgiveness of sins, to have their future settled and settled in a most glorious way of the forgiveness of sins and the eternal communion with the Triune God.

I think Daniel must have had a personal laugh when he reflected on the promises the next morning after the Medes and Persians had come in and through Euphrates into the city, overcome the city, I can imagine Daniel turning to his friends and saying, "I didn't rule with the king very long, did I? Hallelujah!"

So you and I, in our day, there are things that these prophecies say to us that are very fundamental to the kinds of life that we are living. Things that might help us to set our priorities right and have Jesus Christ and His interests and the interests of the purpose and plan of God in our day, preeminent in our lives. May the Lord enable us to do that?

If you are here and you have never believed in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, we remind you that the atoning sacrifice has been offered, the blood has been shed. It's finished, the blessings of the atonement, forgiveness of sins, justification of life, membership in the family of God, a priest of God, of the true God, not of the Babylonian

gods, but a priest of the living God through whom we may at any moment come to Him and have communion with Him, that is the promise that God offers to sinners. If by God's grace you've seen yourself as a sinner, that salvation is for you. Come to Christ, believe in Him, trust in Him and find eternal forgiveness. May God enable you to make that decision? Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the Word of God. We thank Thee for these great themes. We acknowledge we do not understand them perfectly, we pray that Thou would give us further enlightenment, but Lord we sense how important it is for us to come out of all that can be called Babylonianism into the relationship with Thee that means life and justification and eternal joy.

If there are some, Lord, who in this audience do not have the assurance of forgiveness of their sins, may at this very moment, as our heads are bowed, may they turn to Thee and acknowledge their need and receive as a free gift, not through any form of ordinate salvation, but as a free gift through faith, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We pray in his name, Amen.