SESSION SEVEN / WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16, 2011

BABYLON

During the Tribulation seven-year period, following the Rapture of the Church, two hellish systems will rule the world for a time:

- a world-wide religious system
- a world-wide political/economic system

The name of both systems will be: BABYLON.

In Genesis 10, we read of events immediately following the great flood of Noah's time. God explicitly commanded those saved in the ark to disperse and begin to repopulate the Earth. But the descendants of Ham (one of Noah's sons), his son Cush, and the family that followed decided instead to stay in one place and build a power center, defying God's command. The insolent and disobedient ruler who came from that family was named:

NIMROD

Genesis 10:7-10

And the sons of Cush; Seba, and Havilah, and Sabtah, and Raamah, and Sabteachah: and the sons of Raamah; Sheba, and Dedan. [8] And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. [9] He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord. [10] And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel.

Genesis 11:1-9

And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. [2] 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. [3] And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them throughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. [4] 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. [5] And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men built. [6] 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. [7] Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. [8] So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. [9] 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.

That was the very beginning of nationalistic insubordination to God. "We don't care what YOU say, God; we will do what WE want to do and defy you to do anything about it!" It was that generation of Babylonians who set the pace for what Babylonians would be known for from that time to this.

While Nimrod and his ilk go back to more than four thousand years ago, it is the later epoch of Babylonian history that piques my curiosity the most. Very late in the Iron Age, came a list of Babylonian rulers who would stun the world - Dynasty XI - also known as the CHALDEAN PERIOD

1. Nabopolassar 626-605 BC
2. Nebuchadnezzar II 605-562 BC
3. Amel-Marduk 562-560 BC
4. Neriglissar 560-556 BC
5. Labashi-Marduk 556 BC
6. Nabonidus 556-539 BC

(Whose son was the ill-fated Belshazzar)

THIS ENDED THIS STAGE OF THE BABYLONIANS AND PAVED THE WAY FOR THE PERSIANS with their great first king Cyrus II 539-529 - who set the Jews free from their Babylonian exile circa Ezra, Nehemiah, etc.

It is Babylonian kings 2 and 6 that fascinate the Bible scholar for these were the days of Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar, arguably one of the top five kings of antiquity, was the tyrant who led the Babylonian army against Jerusalem three times - each time successfully - until finally in 586 BC Jerusalem was destroyed and multitudes of Jews from Israel were taken into captivity - including Daniel and Ezekiel. Nabonidus was the LAST KING of Babylon. His son Belshazzar was only the regent king. That’s why when Belshazzar saw the handwriting on the wall that frightened him so badly, he could only offer Daniel THIRD position in the kingdom because he, himself, was only SECOND. His father was on a field trip outside of Babylon the night the empire collapsed.

THE POINT IS: BABYLON IN SCRIPTURE INVARIBLY HAD TO DO WITH INSURRECTION OR REBELLION AGAINST GOD. Tonight we will discuss two
aspects of Babylon: the world religious system called Babylon and the world economic system scripture refers to as Babylon.

We remember from last week, Revelation 13 in which the advent of the Antichrist is described as well as that of his henchman, the False Prophet. Let's go back over the passage that refers to the False Prophet who will be the instigator of the world religious system:

**Rev. 13:11-18**

> And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon. [12] And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed. [13] And he performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men. [14] And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life. [15] And there was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast might even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed. [16] And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand, or on their forehead, [17] and he provides that no one should be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name. [18] Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six.

We now recall the Trinity from Hell:

- Satan, the Father
- Antichrist, the son
- The False Prophet - the unholy spirit.

The False Prophet will be energized by Satan with all the demonic powers resident in hell. He is depicted as having horns like a lamb, while speaking as a dragon. Using winsome words, persuasive language, he will elicit support and good will from people who no longer have followers of Jesus and the Church to undergird them (they have been taken in the Rapture).

What is his mission? To force humanity to worship the Antichrist in the Babylon of religion, a world-wide system that desecrates everything holy and righteous. Some will
worship Antichrist because they are sold on him; while others will worship Antichrist because they are forced to. The fact that the False Prophet uses miraculous signs and wonders, including fire from heaven, to establish the credibility of both him and Antichrist will result in millions upon millions falling in line to worship this hellish pair.

THE IMAGE

We read in Revelation 13 that the False Prophet will create an “image” of Antichrist. Does this mean some big statue? Some say, “Yes.” My response is, “I don’t think so.” Why not? Because today we see politicians developing an “image” they can sell to the public. You can go on the Internet and read many instructions on “How to Create A Political Image. Such as (from eHow:)

1. Research opinion polls from recent elections to determine what personality traits and characteristics most appealed to voters. You don’t want to portray yourself as an “every man” unless you want to appear indecisive as well. With the help of your political team, decide which traits will make up your political image.

2. Look to standouts in your part to help you create your political image. Their characteristics that are most noteworthy about them are the ones you should try to mesh with your own image.

3. Wear the right clothes. As a politician you will be videotaped and photographed everywhere you go and for many voters this is the only way they get to see the real you. For this reason, it is important that your wardrobe matches the political image you’re trying to create. Always go with dark colored suits and bold ties (or blouses for female candidates). Allow your patriotism to shine through by always donning a U.S. flag pin on your lapel.

4. Plan photo opportunities to make your image more believable. Whatever political image you create, you should create several opportunities to be photographed or videotaped engaging in an activity that’s true to your political image.

5. Live and breathe this image in public. Make sure that you always use the same type of speech when you’re in public so you won’t be accused of being inconsistent. Any time you appear in public, you will be wearing an outfit consistent with your political image or engaging in an activity that is true to your image.

This is part of the work that the False Prophet will do for Antichrist. He will initially make him look really good to the world’s eye.
Now the horror begins. Those who survive the terrors of the tribulation to this point will be faced with two hard choices. Those who refuse to worship the image of the beast will be subject to death, but those who do worship him will INCUR THE WRATH OF GOD.

The world deception and the final apostasy (turning from God) will be massive and the world will be caught up in it.

The False Prophet will seek to gain total economic control of the world. (This announces the beginning of the Babylon of Commerce.) All people on earth will be forced to be marked on their hands or foreheads in order to buy or sell. This edict, of course, will clearly identify the followers of the world religion promoted by Antichrist. How? Those who refuse to take the mark will be hunted down in order to be killed.

666

Many commentators believe that six is the number for humanity in Scripture. Possibly so, though I don’t put a lot of store in “number, number, who’s got the number.” They say also that 3 is the number for God. Therefore, they reason, the 3 6’s could very well refer to a man who makes himself god. That idiocy has been frequented often by despots and rulers from Rome to present-day nations. The truth you need to remember is this: if you fail to receive Christ into your life, and go into the Tribulation, DO NOT TAKE THE NUMBER!

THE FALSE RELIGIOUS SYSTEM

Just as there are many politicians who strive for a global world government and economy, there are those who strive for a global religious system. I suspect that most commentators would identify that system with Roman Catholicism. I do not. It is not the R.C. that has taken the virgin birth out of the Bible; it is not the R.C. that has removed the crucifixion of Christ from their dogma; it is not the R.C. that has removed Christ as the divine Son of God. No, that must hang around the necks of a cold, dead, dried-out mainline Protestant church world and also around the necks of Islam. So I tend to believe the Babylon false religious system will literally be Babylon - the countries of the Persian fertile crescent that spawned the false religious system of Islam nearly 700 years AFTER Jesus returned to Heaven from the Mount of Olives.

WHAT DO ALL THESE COUNTRIES HAVE IN COMMON: SUDAN, EGYPT, LIBYA, ALGERIA, MOROCCO, SOMALIA, SAHARA, SAUDI ARABIA, OMAN, NORTH YEMEN, MAURITANIA, BURKINA FASO, MALI, NIGER, SYRIA, IRAQ,
JORDAN, IRAN, AFGHANISTAN, PAKISTAN AND TURKEY? ANSWER:
THEY EACH HAVE A MUSLIM POPULATION OF AT LEAST 50 PERCENT. And
of those I listed, these have a Muslim population of at least 90 percent: Mauritania,
Sahara, Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Somalia, North Yemen, South Yemen, Saudi Arabia,
Jordan, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Turkey.

The largest bloc of untouched people as far as the Gospel is concerned is the Muslims.
When we read news articles or watch TV reports of difficulties in the Middle East, we
conjure up an Arab people - hate in their eyes, guns in their hands, screaming slogans
against America and democracy. On the other side of the coin, we may think of
megabucks oilmen, driving huge cars and living in palaces that boggle the mind. The
truth, as usual, lies somewhere in the middle. Only a tiny fraction of the Arab world is
involved in any form of terrorism. In fact, many Arabs themselves have suffered
property loss and even injury or death to family members as a result of terrorist activity.

Delmar Kingsriter, my good friend who headed up the Assemblies of God Center for
Ministry to Muslims, make some vital observations for those of us uninitiated in such
matters:

"Islam is more than just a religion. It is a law that governs the Muslim culture and
touches every facet of life - personal, social, economic, religious, and political. The
Islamic teachings create an atmosphere of the duties each Muslim must fulfill in all these
areas of his life. A Muslim belongs to a community in which he functions as a member.
From birth to death, he lives a life related to other members of his community. This is
one reason why it is so difficult for a Muslim to become a Christian."

GLOSSARY

ISLAM means “submission” to God.
MUSLIM means “one who submits” to God.
THE KORAN is the holiest book of Islam, believed by Muslims to be the final and
complete revelation of God to man. It is more important to them than all previous
revelations including the Bible.

We in the evangelical community have not readily opened our arms to the Muslim world
for several reasons. First, there is a warmth in most Christians’ hearts toward the Jews
and belief in the continuing promise of God to Abraham, his descendants and Israel itself.
The fact remains that Christians believe God will complete His ultimate redemption of
the world following the Rapture—through the specified ministry of 144,000 sealed Jewish
believers. (Revelation 7) Also, our Lord is the “Lion of the Tribe of Judah,” of the
seed of Jacob and David. These issues, believed as fact among us, have made it difficult
to sympathize with the children of Ishmael. If we are to make any inroads of friendship
and witness to the Muslims, we must gain a new understanding that Christ died for these
people, too! Our motivation cannot be political—nor can we remain hidebound to long-
standing prejudices.

ISHMAEL (THE DAY ABRAHAM CHOSE “PLAN B”)

Genesis 15:1-6

   After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying,
       "Do not fear, Abram,
       I am a shield to you;
       Your reward shall be very great."
[2] And Abram said, "O Lord God, what wilt Thou give me, since I am childless,
and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" [3] And Abram said, "Since Thou
hast given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir." [4] Then behold,
the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "This man will not be your heir; but one
who shall come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir." [5] And He took
him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are
able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." [6] Then
he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

Genesis 16:1-4

   Now Sarai, Abram's wife had borne him no children, and she had an Egyptian
maid whose name was Hagar. [2] So Sarai said to Abram, "Now behold, the Lord
has prevented me from bearing children. Please go in to my maid; perhaps I shall
obtain children through her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. [3] And
after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Abram's wife Sarai took
Hagar the Egyptian, her maid, and gave her to her husband Abram as his wife. [4]
And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had
conceived, her mistress was despised in her sight.

Genesis 16:11-12

   The angel of the Lord said to her (Hagar) further,
       "Behold, you are with child,
       And you shall bear a son;
       And you shall call his name Ishmael,
       Because the Lord has given heed to your affliction.
[12] "And he will be a wild of a man,
His hand will be against everyone,
And everyone's hand will be against him;
And he will live to the east of all his brothers."

Earlier in the biblical and remarkable story of Abraham, he had taken his family entourage south to Egypt (where he had no business being). He had panicked when it appeared that the economics of God’s land would not be sufficient for their needs. In Egypt, Abraham had gathered a great deal of wealth and, unfortunately, a beautiful young Egyptian woman named Hagar. She became the personal servant of Sarah—and later a pivotal character in the story that challenges our world today.

God promised Abraham a son by Sarah on numerous occasions from whom would spawn a great nation - Israel. However, the years went by and Sarah was not pregnant. So she was convinced that her time for bearing was over - after all, she was now in her 70's. Perhaps God’s Plan “A” needed some human modifying. Now it was a normal thing in those days for a childless wife to give her husband the alternatives of a concubine. But the world’s way and God’s way are usually not the same. The terrible sin Abraham and Sarah committed was that they stopped believing what God said.

Count on it, friend: our human “Plan B” is invariably stricken with disaster. GOD MAY ALLOW IT....BUT HE WILL NOT BLESS IT.

Ishmael was born and lived in Abraham’s camp until he and Hagar were banished from it. In later life, Ishmael would marry and have 12 sons, but little is heard of them. In fact, not much is heard from Ishmael. But brilliant writer JOHN PHILLIPS has observed: "Here was a man (Ishmael) who was rich and increased with goods, who felt his need of nothing. Here was a man who was destitute of spiritual wealth - poor, wretched, miserable, blind and naked in the things that mattered most. Like his half nephew Jacob, Ishmael founded 12 tribes. From these tribes sprang the Arab peoples who have contributed much to the world’s culture - and the world’s cruelty. The atrocious African slave trade was often the word of Araba. The abysmal spiritual darkness of Islam is yet another Arab contribution to the woes of the world. And perhaps to this day, Israel’s bitterest foes have been of Ishmaelite stock."

MOHAMMED

Six centuries after Christ in the city of Mecca (in Saudi Arabia) a child was born in the Kuriash tribe - a descendant of Ishmael. His name was Mohammed. Mohammed’s father Abdullah died just before Mohammed was born. And the mother, Amina, passed away 6 years later. The child was reared by his uncle - the chief of Mecca and the keeper of a pagan shrine. He used the boy as a sheep and goatherd near the city. Eventually Mohammed became a camel driver, accompanying his relatives on trading
journeys to Syria (and possibly even to Palestine).

When he was 25, Mohammed was hired by a wealthy widow named Cadija to manage her caravan to and from the city of Bosra near the Palestinian border. The young camel driver was so good at his job that the widow offered him her hand in marriage. Thus he became owner of the caravan and had a source of great wealth. He also became an astute observer of life around him.

"Through contacts with Christians and Jews on the trading journeys, Mohammed learned of the Jewish and Christian faiths. He appears to have had a growing revulsion to the paganism of his tribe and especially to the many deities they worshipped. Perhaps he was seeking for something to satisfy his heart's desire and was trying to understand Jewish and Christian practices such as fasting and regular hours for prayer."

DAVID IRWIN / WHAT CHRISTIANS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MUSLIMS

Mohammed soon came to the fervent conclusion that there was only one God - not many as his tribesmen believed. His wife Cadija believed her man’s message and became one of his earliest disciples. Soon Mohammed declared himself God’s prophet - great even than Moses and Jesus - and claimed he began receiving divine revelations. His book, the KORAN, was soon forthcoming.

Mohammed died in 632 A.D. and was succeeded by Abu Bekr. Before long Bekr dispatched Muslim armies into the coveted “fertile crescent of Arabia” with goals of military conquest. From there he went to Syria. His success was like wildfire and he began promoting the concept of world conquest. Not by reasoning, or logic, or even conviction – BUT BY FORCE. Among rabid Muslims today, that’s still the thrust of their belief system.

WHAT DO MUSLIMS BELIEVE?

1. God - named Allah
2. The angels of God - that God created them from light (while He made Satan from fire and man from clay)
3. The books of God - there 104 of them, though 100 have been lost in history. The four still in existence are: the books of Moses (Torah), Psalms of David, the gospels of Christ and the Koran.

BUT IT IS CRITICAL TO REMEMBER THAT MUSLIMS CLAIM WE CHRISTIAN HAVE ALTERED THE BOOKS IN THE BIBLE AND CLAIM THE KORAN CORRECTS THE MISTAKES.
4. Prophets - in two classes: Navi, anyone inspired by God and Rasul, the special ones called by God. Muslims claim Jesus is merely a prophet and certainly not the Son of God.

5. A coming day of judgment and resurrection

The growth of Islam is both incredible and scary. Today’s estimate of Muslims totals 1.66 billion people. The Bible teaches that the coming false Babylon world religious system will:

1. Reject all basic tenets of the Christian faith and all those who are followers of Christ. Islam qualifies here.

2. Enter into partnership with political, economic and social systems of the world. Take a look at the oil market alone! Again - Islam qualifies.


So - is Islam the coming harlot of Revelation, the false religious system? Yes, I believe that it is. But others disagree with me, holding Roman Catholicism responsible.

ANTICHRIST ENDS HIS TOLERATION OF THE RELIGIOUS SYSTEM

Rev. 17:16-18

"And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire. [17] "For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God should be fulfilled. [18] "And the woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth."

The ten horns in verse 16 constitute the Babylon commercial and political system.

Sometime during the Tribulation, Antichrist sees the religious system as a threat and no longer a help in his conquest of the world. John informs us here that the coalition of nations, the one-world government, determine that the religious system - which I believe is Islam - is a threat to its existence rises up and wipes it out.

But the global government itself has not much longer to survive either as we learn in chapter 18 of Revelation.

Rev. 18:1-24

After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illumined with his glory. [2] And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! And she has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every
unclean and hateful bird. [3] "For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the
passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of
immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth
of her sensuality."

[4] 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;
[5] for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her
iniquities. [6] "Pay her back even as she has paid, and give back to her double
according to her deeds; in the cup which she has mixed, mix twice as much for her.
[7] "To the degree that she glorified herself and lived sensuously, to the same degree
give her torment and mourning; for she says in her heart, 'I sit as a queen and I am
not a widow, and will never see mourning.' [8] "For this reason in one day her
plagues will come, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up
with fire; for the Lord God who judges her is strong. [9] "And the kings of the
earth, who committed acts of immorality and lived sensuously with her, will weep
and lament over her when they see the smoke of her burning, [10] standing at a
distance because of the fear of her torment, saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city,
Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour your judgment has come.' [11] "And the
merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their cargoes
any more; [12] cargoes of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls and fine
linen and purple and silk and scarlet, and every kind of citron wood and every
article of ivory and every article made from very costly wood and bronze and iron
and marble, [13] and cinnamon and spice and incense and perfume and
frankincense and wine and olive oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep,
and cargoes of horses and chariots and slaves and human lives. [14] "And the fruit
you long for has gone from you, and all things that were luxurious and splendid
have passed away from you and men will no longer find them. [15] "The merchants
of these things, who became rich from her, will stand at a distance because of the
fear of her torment, weeping and mourning, [16] saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city,
she who was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and
precious stones and pearls; [17] for in one hour such great wealth has been laid
waste!' And every shipmaster and every passenger and sailor, and as many as make
their living by the sea, stood at a distance, [18] and were crying out as they saw the
smoke of her burning, saying, 'What city is like the great city?' [19] "And they
threw dust on their heads and were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying,
'Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had ships at sea became rich by her
wealth, for in one hour she has been laid waste!' [20] "Rejoice over her, O heaven,
and you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced judgment
for you against her."

[21] And a strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the
sea, saying, "Thus will Babylon, the great city, be thrown down with violence, and
will not be found any longer. [22] "And the sound of harpists and musicians and 
flute-players and trumpeters will not be heard in you any longer; and no craftsman 
of any craft will be found in you any longer; and the sound of a mill will not be 
heard in you any longer; [23] and the light of a lamp will not shine in you any 
longer; and the voice of the bridegroom and bride will not be heard in you any 
longer; for your merchants were the great men of the earth, because all the nations 
were deceived by your sorcery. [24] "And in her was found the blood of prophets 
and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth."

The religious system and the political system on earth during the Tribulation will end 
quickly. God Himself will wipe them out. In the last month we have seen several 
governments topple at the hands of men within days, so this is not difficult for us to 
imagine. The armies of the world will also be destroyed, as we see in our next study, 
when they come together to fight at Armageddon.

This sets the stage for the second coming of Christ and the Millennium.

There will now be a month hiatus from this study as I will be gone next week to 
Springfield, Missouri, for Executive Presbytery sessions. I return for Saturday and 
Sunday services on March 26 and 27 and then leave Sunday night the 27th for Israel 
and Rome. So our next Wednesday night session will be April 20th. The subject: 

ARMAGEDDON, THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST 
AND THE MILLENNIUM