

BABYLON'S PLAN FOR THE CHURCH

Reference: Daniel, Chapter Two

Babylon, the greatest city of ancient world empires. Babylon, the center of wealth and intellectual acclaim. Her streets filled with heavily laden cargos of the earth's bounty. Her heathen towers were providing a place for astronomers to plot the stars. Babylon, the square-built city that was 56 miles in circuit, with enclosing walls so wide they allowed ample room for a four-horse chariot to turn around atop them. Her one hundred gates of bronze could be seen for miles by approaching pilgrims. Royal palaces, elaborate temples, and the famous hanging gardens, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, all testified of her magnificence.

We find Babylon's beginning early in Holy Writ (see Gen. 10:10). The founding father was a descendent of Ham, son of Noah, who was prophesied to be cursed. And from this cursed vein came Nimrod, the founder of Babylon. The

spirit of Babylon was that of its originator. His name, Nimrod, was significant of his character, which means: "We will rebel." Nimrod was a mighty hunter upon the earth before the Lord. His prey was not the swift antelope nor the ferocious lion, but he was a hunter of men. With evil influence, he ensnared the minds; with cunning words, he enslaved their hearts, and they became his captives to will and command. Nimrod, it was with rebellious heart against God that got the building program of the tower of Babel underway.

This was the beginning of Babylon. Her very birth was marked with aggression against God, to which God added complete confusion. Thus Babylon, the great city of the world, with a heart of rebellion and a mind of confusion, began her climb of ungodly affluence.

The spirit of the mighty hunter of men is seen manifested again as this despotic empire reaches her grasping fingers into God's land of Israel and the beloved city of Jerusalem. Nebuchednezzar, a proud and arrogant ruler, directs his armies to besiege Jerusalem. His ungodly intentions turn first to the House of God

as he defiles it and removes the vessels from it that later will be placed within the treasure house of his gods.

The next desire of his heart was a sinister plot against the children of Israel. This plan was to consist of several parts, which were:

1. "...bring *certain* of the children of Israel, of the king's seed, and of the princes... no blemish... well favored... skillful in all wisdom... cunning in knowledge... understanding science... and such as *had* ability in them to stand in the king's palace..."

2. "...appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them for three years."

3. "...gave names: for he gave unto Daniel *the name* of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego."

4. Make them eunuchs.

This plan involved four fundamentals:

1. Deal first with the strong.
2. Change their diet.
3. Change their identity. And,
4. Remove from them the capability to reproduce.

This plan, if implemented, would produce a drastic blow against the future of Israel.

Babylon's towers have long since toppled to the ground; her magnificence is only history. But even though the visible has been dissolved, not so with her spirit. For even yet, Babylon's system, her rebellious nature, her spirit of apostasy and idolatry is still evident today. Her plans also remain the same. Her hunger for men's souls is still strong. Her purpose remains to corrupt, to destroy, to pull down and defile the things of the Most High God.

A. Deal First With the Strong: Nebuchednezzar started with the cream of the crop. Knowing that if you first destroy the strong, the weaker will present no problem. Throughout the rank and file of the Apostolic church, the forces of hell attack the most stout-hearted, the most

dedicated, the most prayerful. The righteous remain in constant combat. With every truth-bearing sermon comes an onslaught of hell; after every holiness message comes hell's reprisals.

We have lived to see the day when many strong men have become weak. Gallant men of the past have sheathed their swords and walked off the battlefield allowing the enemy to regain once conquered territory. Our hearts should be akin to David's when he learned of the death of King Saul and his sobbing words cut through the heart; "How are the mighty fallen and the weapons of war perished!" Yet, while many may have fallen, thank God for the stalwart band of New Testament gospel preachers that refuse to come under Babylon's influence.

B. Change Their Diet: Daniel and his companions were to be taken off the plain food of the Israelite and given the rich food off of the king's table. The table is spread today with Babylon's offers. The old prophet's voice echoes across the ages declaring that a famine shall come, not for food and drink, but for hearing the word of the Lord. We are warned to be not far removed from the simplicity that is in Christ

Jesus. When we lose our appetite for the simple fare of the gospel and our appetites care only for exotic, non-nourishing dainties, isn't that a good sign of a new diet? Should not our reply be, "...to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

C. Change Their Identity: "Daniel, whose name meant: "God is Judge," was given the name of Belteshazzar, meaning: "Prince of Baal." Hanniah, whose name meant: "Gift of the Lord," was given the name of Shadrach, meaning: "Command of Aku." To Mishael, whose name meant: "Who is what God is," was given the name of Meschech, meaning: "Who is as Aku." And to Azariah, whose name meant: "Whom Jehovah helps," was given the name of Abednego, meaning: "Servant of Nebo."

Every original name is an appropriate title for the New Testament blood-washed church. Babylon's plan is to destroy that identity and to change what the church stands for. The very word "Pentecostal" has little identity at all today. Once, it was automatic to associate it with holiness, exuberant worship, clean living, but not anymore; like a once pure color mixed so

much with other colors that it is impossible to remain pure and eventually ends up gray. Like a badly mutilated corpse at the morgue that even the family cannot positively identify; this is the state of Pentecostals today.

Pentecost has its advocates of what the church of today is supposed to look like. "It's different now," they tell us. But if the church of today doesn't look like the church of yesterday, it can't be the church of tomorrow! Above all else, we must maintain our identity as "epistles known and read of all men."

D. Remove the Ability to Reproduce: The final step of the plan was to make eunuchs of them. A eunuch is not made just by title, but he has been physically altered, thereby removing from him the essentials of reproduction. The devil's goal is to make extinct the true church, to make it sterile. The greatest shame of all is not being able to reproduce. Preacher, don't let hell lie to you; you can do more than just "hold the fort." When Zion travails, sons and daughters are born. Earnestly, we need to pray for an old fashion, soul-winning revival! Hell has no protected ground for nearly extinct species. It's

out to destroy the last trace of godliness. Extinction of your assembly is only a few unpreached messages away.

Daniel defeated the plot because he “purposed in his heart.” Though he was in Babylon, he succeeded in keeping Babylon out of himself.

Today is the day of victory for men only with purpose in their hearts. Sure it means a lion's den and maybe a fiery furnace, but thanks be unto God, it also means hearing, "...O Daniel, a man greatly beloved..." (Dan. 10:11).

--jlg--