

Sabbath School Today **With the 1888 Message Dynamic**

Preparation for the End Time **Lesson 10. America and Babylon**

Before we begin our discussion of “America and Babylon,” please note a typographical error in Monday’s lesson, second paragraph. The *Quarterly* states: “This prophetic time period (using the day-year principle) began with the supremacy of the papacy, A.D. 38, and terminated in 1798 ...” You may notice that there appears to be an extra blank space before the 38. The date should read A.D. 538, which is when the political power of the last of the three Arian tribes that were in opposition to the papal position on the nature of Christ, was destroyed in Italy.

The Heruli, who accepted the Arian position controlled the city of Rome until A.D. 475, when the Ostrogoth king, Theodoric, destroyed their power in Italy, and assumed the kingdom. Theodoric was a benevolent and tolerant king who did not persecute persons of divergent religions. Under his rule, peace reigned throughout Italy, except in the city of Rome. There papal intrigue and religious strife continued. Appeal was made to the emperor of the eastern division of the old Roman Empire for political support of the pope’s claim to absolute authority over civil and religious affairs.

Emperor Justinian entered the fray, sending a letter of support to the pope at Rome that rendered all honor and authority to the “apostolic chair,” and recognized the bishop of Rome as the head of all churches in the empire. In June of 533 the Arian kingdom of the Vandals in North Africa was attacked by Justinian’s General Belisarius. Within a year, the Vandals were destroyed, and Belisarius turned his army toward Italy and the Arian Ostrogoths. A large army of the Ostrogothic nation assembled at Rome to defend against the invasion. They withstood the siege for over a year, but finally Rome was lost to Belisarius in March of 538.

The last of the Arian kings was destroyed, and the political and religious power of the bishop of Rome was firmly established through the union of church and state, supported by the army of the empire. The bishop of Rome became the corrector of heretics and the maker of kings. “The system [pagan Rome] which had been conquered [by Christianity] was that in which the State recognizes and makes use of religion only for its political value, and only as the servant of the State. This was paganism. ... The system which was established by the perversion of Christianity ... was a system in which the State is made the servant of the church. This was the papacy.” [1]

“Christ had set Himself before His disciples as the one possessing all power in heaven and in earth. ... This put Jesus Christ above the State, and put allegiance to Him above allegiance to the State; this denied the supremacy of Rome.” [2] “Babylon the Great, mother of harlots and abominations of the earth” (Rev. 17:3-6) came to full power in

A.D. 538, riding the beast of the civil government, through which she controlled the consciences of men. In fulfillment of the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, control of civil and religious affairs remained under papal power for 1260 years, until 1798 when a “deadly wound” was inflicted as a result of the French Revolution’s rejection of all things concerning the God of heaven—including the seven day weekly cycle established at creation.

From the conversion of Clovis, king of the Franks, in A.D. 508, to the crowning by the pope of Charlemagne as emperor of the Holy Roman Empire in A.D. 800, through all the French Catholic kings down to Louis XVI who was beheaded by the French revolutionaries, France had been the papacy’s strongest political supporter. But France inflicted the “deadly wound” in 1798 when its General Berthier took Pope Pius VI captive, and the papacy was stripped of both its ecclesiastical and civil power. With the election of a new pope, March 14, 1800, partial ecclesiastical power was reestablished, but only over a restricted territory in Italy.

In an effort to reassert herself as sovereign over all nations and peoples, the papacy began a series of political maneuverings and ecclesiastical proclamations. On December 8, 1854, Pope Pius declared that Mary was herself immaculately conceived by her mother in order to provide a sinless womb through which the Son of God could be born in sinless human flesh, untouched by the infirmities of fallen humanity (contrary to the biblical teaching of Heb. 2:14-18). During the ecumenical council called Vatican I, a declaration of papal infallibility was made on July 18, 1870. The Lateran Treaty between the papacy and the National Fascist Party in Italy controlled by Benito Mussolini, was signed on February 11, 1929. This political treaty created the Vatican State and formed the sovereign territory of the Holy See. But, this was not the healing of the “deadly wound.” That wound will not be healed until the papacy once again holds both civil and religious authority, controlling the consciences of men as it did for 1260 years.

In the years leading up to the 1888 General Conference Session in Minneapolis, there was much afoot in the United States that was leading toward union of church and state in this country. In 1861, a denomination in Pennsylvania known as the Covenanters, created a petition that complained that the U.S. Constitution made no reference to Jesus Christ and the law of God. Without considering that this was an intentional exclusion, designed by the founders of this nation to preserve full separation of church and state, this Presbyterian church group tried to draw a connection between the sin of slavery and the “religious deficiency” of the Constitution. They felt that if the name of God and a recognition of Him and His law were inserted somewhere into the Constitution, then we would become more Christ-like, and slavery, drunkenness, and debauchery would disappear from the nation. The Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and the National Reform Association (NRA) were formed and made this argument a nation-wide movement. They sought to have Congress write an Amendment to the Constitution that would make America a “Christian nation,” and “one nation under God.”

In the January 13, 1887 issue of the *Christian Statesman*, the official magazine of the NRA, it was stated: “Our remedy for all these malefic influences, is to have the government simply set up the moral law and recognize God’s authority behind it, and lay its hand on any religion that does not conform to it.” What “religions” did not conform to the NRA’s idea of proper religion? In a speech delivered at the 1873 National Reform convention by Jonathan Edwards, vice president of the Association, he said: “We use the word religion in its proper sense, as meaning a man’s personal relation of faith and obedience to God.” He went on to name those whom he thought did not have a “proper” relation of faith to God, and his list included the atheists, deists, Jews, and Seventh-day Baptists. “These all are, for the occasion, and as far as our Amendment is concerned, one class. They use the same arguments and the same tactics against us. *They must be counted together.*” [3]

Over 200 Amendment proposals seeking to make America a “Christian nation” were introduced to Congress between 1894 and 1984. The National Reform movement morphed into the Christian right in the late 1970s, and has been a notable force in politics since then. It is associated with several institutions and universities including the Moral Majority, the Christian Coalition, Focus on the Family, and the Family Research Council.

Under the “one nation under God” proposal, the First Amendment guarantee of both freedom of religion and freedom of speech would be annihilated. All persons, whether they wanted to or not, would be compelled to adopt the “religion” sanctioned by the State and prevented from speaking against it. At this point, the “deadly wound” will be healed, and the prophecy will come to fulfillment. The second beast that came up “out of the earth” (an uncivilized area of the world) at the “time of the end” (beginning in 1798 when the “deadly wound” was inflicted upon the papacy) will “speak as a dragon,” and then the “image of the beast” will be made and the prophecy will be fulfilled. Then will, “all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her [Babylon] fornication” (Rev. 18:3).

The Scripture tells us, “he exercises all the authority of the first beast [papal Rome] on his behalf and compels the earth and those who live on it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed” (Rev. 13:12, *Holman Christian Standard Bible* [HCSB]). When “Babylon the Great, mother of harlots and abominations of the earth” again “rides the beast” (Rev. 17:3-6), America will become the right arm of the papacy. “By the decree enforcing the institution of the papacy in violation of the law of God, our nation will disconnect herself fully from righteousness. When Protestantism shall stretch her hand across the gulf to grasp the hand of the Roman power, when she shall reach over the abyss to clasp hands with spiritualism, when, under the influence of this threefold union, our country shall repudiate every principle of its Constitution as a Protestant and republican government, and shall make provision for the propagation of papal falsehoods and delusions, then we may know that the time has come for the marvelous working of Satan and that the end is near.” [4]

But the good news is that when this comes to pass, the third angel’s message—the “most precious message” brought by A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner in 1888—will

have also come to full realization. The proclamation of Christ and His righteousness will be going forth around the world under Latter Rain power, calling all who will listen to “come out of her My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” (Rev. 18:4).

“The Lord God of heaven will not send upon the world His judgments for disobedience and transgression until He has sent His watchmen to give the warning. He will not close up the period of probation until the message shall be more distinctly proclaimed. ... The message of Christ’s righteousness is to sound from one end of the earth to the other to prepare the way of the Lord. This is the glory of God, which closes the work of the third angel.” [5] The proclamation of the 1888 message in all its glory is what will hasten the second coming of Christ. By our delay, “our careless, indifferent attitude” and hesitance regarding this message, we are compromising truth, and placing “the character of God and His throne ... into jeopardy.” [6]

Jones asked the congregation in 1893, “Are you living day by day, and hour by hour, in the presence of that terrible fact that it is time for God Himself to work, if His integrity is going to be maintained to all the world? It is a terrible fact; it is a fearful position. It brings us to the point of such consecration as not a soul of us ever dreamed of before; unto the place of such consecration, of such devotion, as will hold ourselves in the presence of God, with that fearful thought that ‘It is time for Thee, Lord, to work, for they have made void Thy law.’” [7]

—Ann Walper

Endnotes:

[1] A. T. Jones, *The Great Empires of Prophecy*, p. 372, 1898.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 350.

[3] See A. T. Jones, *The Two Republics, or Rome and the United States of America*, pp. 723-725 (emphasis in original), 1891.

[4] Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 451.

[5] *Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 19.

[6] See *1893 General Conference Bulletin*, p. 73.

[7] *Ibid.*

Notes:

Pastor Paul Penno’s video of this lesson is on the Internet at:

<https://youtu.be/leLkDivzpio>

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