

DESTINY BULLETIN

A commentary sent to the supporters of the ministry of Christian Destiny.

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Dear “Special Friend” of Christian Destiny,

December 2002

THE DIVINE INTERVENTION--THE HOPE OF THE HOLIDAYS

Many things happened on that first Christmas morning two thousand years ago. Within, however, the events that could be seen and which were reported to us was an “inner event” so colossal that it defies adequate description and will not be fully understood until we attend that coming Bible class in heaven. The inner event was that God interrupted history and built into it a stupendous new component which was destined to forever change our understanding of life and salvation. No single point of doctrine and even no single verse of Scripture can totally explain what God actually did at Bethlehem by being born of the Virgin Mary. One of the pointed descriptions which we have in Scripture concerning this is given to us by the Apostle John. *“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).*

When the Scripture uses the expression “*the Word*” it means more than meets the eye. The original word is “logos” which means ultimate truth, final reality, that before which there is nothing else—yes, it means God Himself. The philosophers, the thinkers, the academicians in all of history have centered their quest and the colleges which they have founded, on, as they would say, the search for truth. We are happy to announce that, according to the Scripture, that search is over. Ultimate truth, final reality, wisdom in its essence, has been made available to us. It was “*made flesh*” in the incarnation of Christ.

We notice also that this greatest of all revelations by God of Himself was not just a glimmer, like lightning flashing across the sky. No indeed, for in Jesus Christ, the Word, having been made flesh, came to dwell among us. God in Jesus Christ came to earth to live a full and amazing life in our very midst. The men and women who lived in that generation and beheld the earthly life of Christ were stunned and amazed at what He said and did. Their witness continues, saying even to this generation, *“Never man spake like this man.”*

The Scripture also tells us that those who observed and conversed with Christ beheld His glory, the glory as of the only Begotten of the Father. In Jesus Christ, there was a window from heaven opened to us which shines a light that is brighter than the noonday sun and more fair than any summer morning. In Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness has arisen with healing in His wings. He came as a light to the nations, a divine illumination to the darkened soul of every man. Prior to His coming, certain chosen individuals had beheld the glory of God in some small ways. In Jesus Christ, all who lived could see the very image of God in knowing Him.

“But what about us in our time?” Happily, the answer to this question is more beautiful than many have discovered. Some suggest that the knowledge of Christ available to the believer today is inferior to that which came upon those who met Him personally. The fact is that our knowledge of Christ is greater, not lesser, than their’s. We are the ones, *“To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory; Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.”* So it is that the marvelous reality of the indwelling Christ, unknown to those who shared His earthly ministry, is ours today.

John cannot conclude his tremendous message about “*the Word*” without reminding us that our remarkable Savior, the Lord Jesus, is “*full of grace and truth.*” He is full of grace. By this infinitely precious promise we are reminded that Christ is the custodian of God’s unmerited favor, the bearer of this great gift from heaven. Grace means that Christ and His salvation is an absolutely free gift. It comes to me apart from any merit on my part except that I believe in Him and His work on the cross. To be saved by grace is to possess riches without measure and unspeakable joy. Understanding this, the world cannot help but give gifts to one another in celebration of the Savior who gave Himself for us. Even the degenerate man or dissolute woman in our world who gives another person a present is celebrating in some small measure the grace of Jesus Christ.

Christ is also full of truth. He came to bring us the truth, but He came also to embody the truth. So it is that the Creator of the universe brings to us all of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in His Person (Col. 2:3). Every quest for wisdom or some form of higher knowledge is vain unless that knowledge is sought in Jesus Christ.

In Jesus Christ is the answer to every question, the solution to every mystery, the solving of every problem. In fact, the difficulties faced by our present age are in exact proportion to the degree in which this age has ignored the Person of Jesus Christ and the wisdom which He brought from above. No solution to any problem will ever be found apart from the Word which was made flesh. If you are a Christian, rejoice again in that you know the hope of all mankind, Jesus Christ, in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

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WHAT ABOUT BABYLON?

Iraq: AKA Babylon

As the focus of the world turns to Iraq and the Middle East, pointed questions arise. “What do events in Iraq have to do with Bible prophecy? Could the problems we face with Iraq today be in fulfillment of prophecies relating to biblical Babylon?”

By now, most of us know that Iraq is the modern-day successor to the land of Babylon. Iraq sits astride the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, occupying the territory that once was the heart of the Babylonian Empire and housing the ruins of that once proud ancient city. The fertile Mesopotamian valley that lies between the two great rivers has long been called the cradle of civilization, and is thought to be the location of the biblical Garden of Eden. As you can see, it is difficult to separate Iraq from Babylon, and vice-versa. And so, from the physical perspective, one could say in the broadest of terms that Iraq is AKA (also known as) Babylon.

But what does modern Iraq have to do with the fulfillment of Bible prophecy? Could Iraq be the “*Babylon*” mentioned in Revelation Chapter 18, or are there different Babylons? Is it possible that Saddam Hussein, commonly believed to be the most ruthless and bloodthirsty dictator in the world today, could play a role in the fulfillment of Bible prophecy? Might he even be one of the dark characters mentioned in the Bible as a player in the end-time drama?

The Three Babylons In History

Deciding how Babylon fits into Bible prophecy is a little more complicated than it might appear. That’s because the term “Babylon” is used in prophecy to identify three totally different entities, although you could say that all three have their roots in the society of ancient Babylon. Babylon was first a political entity that began as a city, then became a kingdom, and finally expanded to become what was arguably the most pervasive empire in ancient history.

But Babylon was also a religious system. Going back to the Tower of Babel, which archaeologists believe was located somewhere to the south of where the city of Babylon was later built, Babylon stood for the belief that man could make it on his own without God. The purpose of the Tower of Babel was to reach into heaven, and make a name for the people that would rival that of God. *“And they said, Come, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach to heaven; and let us make us a name” (Genesis 11:4).* That idea, by the way, was so repugnant to the Lord that He confounded their language and scattered them across the face of the earth.

Finally, Babylon was an economic system. It was noted for its global trade routes and economic alliances--innovations that made it the envy of the ancient world.

The Three Babylons Today

Those three streams of Babylonian influence, all of which stand in opposition to the teaching of Scripture and the will of God for the world, continue to flow in our world today. Oh, they're not the same as they were during the Babylonian Empire, tied strictly to the land that is now known as Iraq. No, they've grown in scope and impact, until one could say that their influence on today's society is nothing less than pervasive!

Political Babylon -- creating a world unity based on human dreams and capability--now can be seen in the burgeoning European Union, the United Nations, and the overall call for a one-world system. Perhaps even the United States and our push for global participation in a worldwide democracy, could be considered part of the Babylonian political system.

Religious Babylon -- The idea that we could reach to the sky and become like God, even doing away with the need for worshipping the one, true God--is spreading so fast that we could easily find ourselves falling prey to that deceptive and humanly attractive philosophy. Of course, believing Christians are to be alert to the dangers of apostasy, and should never be duped into believing that we can make it on our own without God.

Economic Babylon has taken the form of the world system. Capitalism, responsible for much of the economic progress in the world today, is rapidly becoming the cement that holds together divergent cultures and provides common ground for negotiation and discussion. Today, as you strap yourself into the seat on a number of different airlines, you will hear the flight attendant say, “Welcome to the skies of the One-World Alliance.”

Could Attacking Iraq Lead To The End-Time Wars?

As you know, many prophecies in the Bible have what are called the former and the latter fulfillments. That means that the prophecies were fulfilled in a small way near the time that the prophecy was given, but remain to be fulfilled in total detail sometime later in history.

A good example of that principle is the destruction of the city of Babylon. The destruction of Economic Babylon was foretold in Revelation. *“For in one hour so great riches is come to nothing. And every shipmaster, and all the company of ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate” (Rev. 18:17-19).*

Note the many references to sailors and the sea. Ancient Babylon, and even Baghdad, which many have claimed to be the scriptural successor to the city of Babylon due to her size and economic influence,

was not located near the sea. The burning of Babylon could not be seen from ships on the ocean. And while Baghdad does control the sale of a lot of oil, it has done little to make all the seamen of the world rich. So while Babylon was destroyed in history, that could only have been what would be the former fulfillment of this prophecy. There yet remains the greater, latter fulfillment of this prophecy, and that must refer to the larger economic system that may find embodiment in one particular city by the sea that has yet to be totally and finally destroyed. The Bible is clear that a future battle in the Middle East will include Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Israel, and members of the European Union. Attacking Iraq could possibly be the spark that sets it all off. But there is no Scripture that I am aware of that would say it has to happen that way, and so I would suggest that you watch all events in the Middle East closely.

PLANNING THE FUTURE

In not many days, a new year will be upon us. The coming of 2003 is a reminder that the days are passing and we are moving, sometimes it seems with increased velocity, into the future. It is well to plan as much as possible the future so that the days of consequence in this year to come will not overtake us by surprise. In planning our tomorrows, what should we keep in mind?

- 1) Remember that God presides. One of our founding fathers said, "There is a just God who presides above the destinies of nations." This is true about nations and about individuals as well. Trusting in the Lord is, therefore, always the first component of any plan.
- 2) Remember also that God has a special plan for our personal lives. The Apostle Paul, at the end of his sojourn in this world, said, "*I have finished my course.*" By this, he indicated that there was a bright design that God was unfolding day by day that he was to fulfill. The great cause of his rejoicing at the end of his life was that his days were in fact fulfilling the will of God.
- 3) Ask the Lord, "*What will You have me to do?*" This question launched the life of the Apostle Paul and it is the key to spiritual significance for any one of us. Our own arbitrary plans will come to nothing. God wants to be the One who designs the future of our lives.
- 4) Remember, we are workers together with God. The winning combination in life is the fulfillment of the promise, "*It is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.*"
- 5) Ask, "What are my capabilities?" God gives us unusual gifts, but He also works in terms of our known possibilities. We have talents and abilities which He intends to translate into effective service for Him.
- 6) Ask, "What is my great desire in life?" The Bible says to committed people, "*He shall give you the desires of your heart.*"

Remember, finally, that the future cannot be entirely planned. If life teaches us anything, it is that it is full of surprises. Therefore, our ultimate confidence must be in the Lord and out of this confidence, He will give us the ability to deal with the exigencies of any given day. Remember, the ultimate pathway leads to heaven and the doings of earth must be done in the light of that final bright design.

We together wish to say a most heartfelt thanks to you for your prayers, your love and your support of Christian Destiny.

Now comes 2003! This could be the year when Christ returns for His Church. May we all be ready. In the time that remains, let us labor for our blessed Lord. Thank you for the privilege of being "*laborers together*" with you and the Lord.

FROM THE WRITINGS OF: DAVE BREESE AND ED HINDSON, WITH DAVE WEEDEN