

Babylon's Blasphemy

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The Seven-Head Beast Is Also Called Babylon

Shortly after the horrific destruction caused by the first four trumpets, the religious and political leaders of the world will create a crisis government to appease God's wrath. This government is the seven-headed beast of Revelation 13:1. Among other names, the book of Revelation calls the beast "Babylon" for good reasons. Any attempt by mankind to appease "one God" will cause endless confusion, because this planet is religiously opposed and politically diverse.

Modern day Babylon will parallel the ancient story in the book of Genesis about the Tower of Babel. Remember, its builders had to quit because of confusion. They got off to a great start when, **"the whole world had one language and a common speech** [but they defied the Lord after He had promised that never again would He send a flood to destroy the Earth by building a city with a tall tower] . . . **So the Lord** [came down from Heaven and confused their language so that they could not understand each other. Then He] **scattered them from there over all the Earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel – because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world.**" (Genesis 11:1,8,9, insertions mine)

There is another reason for calling the seven-headed beast, "Babylon." Several situations during the Great Tribulation will parallel events which occurred in ancient Babylon. For example, the king of ancient Babylon (Nebuchadnezzar) commanded everyone to bow down and worship his golden image or be put to death. (Daniel 3:6) During the sixth trumpet, the king of modern Babylon (Lucifer) will also command everyone to worship the image he has set up or be put to death. (Revelation 13:14,15)

The Religion of Babylon

The ancient Babylonians were deeply religious. Their religion was a mixture of superstition, astrology, Chaldean traditions, the occult, and revelations from their gods. Magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and astrologers conveniently "cooked up" these revelations when they were needed. (Daniel 2:2; Jeremiah 50:2) The Babylonians believed their god, Marduk (also called Bel), was the most-high god, superior to all the gods whom other nations worshiped. The notion that Marduk was superior was derived from Nebuchadnezzar's amazing wealth and prosperity. His capital city, Babylon, had no equal in the ancient world and his military was believed to be unbeatable.

In ancient times, military prowess was more than a matter of ego. The ancients believed that repeated military victories proved that the god (or gods) of the victor was greater than the god (or gods) of the defeated. From its beginning as a nation, Israel believed this concept. Moses told Israel, **"When you go to war against your enemies and see horses and chariots and an army greater than yours, do not be afraid of them, because the Lord your God, who brought you up out of Egypt, will be with you. . . . For the Lord your God is the one who**

goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory.” (Deuteronomy 20:1,4, italics mine)

About 600 B.C., Jesus gave the king of Babylon a disturbing vision. Nebuchadnezzar saw the image of a metal man. The image had a head of gold, chest of silver, thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet of iron and clay. As the king gazed at the metal man, a stone came from the sky and destroyed it. When the king awoke he was disturbed because He sensed the dream was important but he could not recall it. Nebuchadnezzar was certain that Marduk had given him an important prophetic message.

Nebuchadnezzar summoned the experts: his magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and astrologers. He had a simple request, “tell me the dream and its meaning.” The experts were alarmed by the king’s demand and he was infuriated by their response. They had to admit that his request was impossible. For years, King Nebuchadnezzar had relied on these men. They claimed to be intimately connected to Marduk, the great god of the Babylonians, and convinced Nebuchadnezzar that Marduk had revealed unknown things to them. Nebuchadnezzar had won many victories, just as they predicted, so He believed these “experts.” However, their problem now was more complicated. They had to reveal what the dream was! They had to confess that they (and by extension, Marduk) could not reveal what was dreamed. The disillusioned king felt betrayed and bitter. Angrily, he ordered that all of Marduk’s priests and prophets be put to death if they could not tell him the vision and its meaning.

After the king’s confidence in Marduk and his religious experts had been shattered, Jesus revealed the vision of “the metal man” to a young Jewish captive. (Daniel 2:23) Daniel was about 20 years old when he was brought before King Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel told the king there was a God in Heaven who reveals mysteries. Daniel did not speak disparagingly of Marduk or Babylon’s clergy. Instead, he told the king “the Most High God” had revealed the dream so that the king could understand some of the plans of “the Most High God.” The metal man represented six kingdoms that would follow in succession. Daniel explained that when the time came for the seventh kingdom, the God of Heaven would destroy everything that remained of the man-made kingdoms to establish His own eternal Empire.

Nebuchadnezzar was deeply moved because Daniel revealed every detail the king saw. The king stepped down from his throne and bowed before Daniel, a Jewish captive, because the king knew without doubt that Daniel’s God was genuine. He was the Most High God! In his joy, the king did something that exasperated everyone in the king’s administration; He elevated Daniel over the whole province of Babylon! If you understand the Babylonians despised the Jews, and Daniel was barely 20 years old, you can appreciate that the clergy of Marduk were greatly incensed with Daniel’s promotion. For them, to bow to a Jew (or the God of the Jews) and obey Daniel’s future directives was outrageous.

During the months that followed Daniel’s exaltation, the clergy of Babylon connived to eliminate him from his position. Since everyone in Babylon wanted to know why the king had promoted a “Jew,” of all people, to the highest position over the province of Babylon, and everyone wanted to know about the king’s dream, the clergy were delighted to repeat the vision and its meaning. They thought that if everyone knew about the dream it would motivate Nebuchadnezzar to

remove Daniel from office. However, the clergy's efforts backfired.

The clergy knew that a monarchy can only exist for as long as people are loyal to the king. In ancient times, maintaining loyalty to a weak king was a recipe for death because arising kings typically destroyed everyone who reserved the slightest loyalty to the former king. Before long, Nebuchadnezzar's satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all of the other provincial officials, learned about the vision and its meaning. They did not know what they should do or to whom they should direct their loyalty. When Nebuchadnezzar learned of this vulnerability spreading throughout his empire, he had to move quickly to cover up the truth. He could not allow his subjects and administrators to think that Babylon would fall to another king!

A Golden Image Setup

Nebuchadnezzar was clever. Since the contents of his dream had been widely told, the best thing he could do was to obfuscate the truth. In his dream, the metal man's head was made of gold, the chest silver, the thighs bronze, the legs iron, and the feet and toes of iron and clay; each metal represented succeeding empires. The king chose to change one detail hoping to convince his subjects to remain loyal. The king made a metal man entirely of gold! One golden man meant one golden empire, enduring forever!

Because thousands of administrators were involved, Nebuchadnezzar issued an order to erect a golden image that stood about ninety feet tall and nine feet wide! After the image was completed, the king called his administration together on the Plain of Dura. Thousands of men gathered. After much boasting about Babylon's victories, great prosperity, and military might (something like a state of the union address in the United States), King Nebuchadnezzar announced that when the music sounded everyone must bow down and worship the image to show loyalty to the king and his enduring kingdom. This, the king assumed, would resolve any questions about his dream and the future of Babylon. Moreover, it would isolate anyone who was not loyal. In the Babylonian culture, if someone showed any sign of disloyalty, people were encouraged to tattle on them, and if the information proved true, the king would richly reward the informer (something like corporate whistle-blowers or confidential informants). Nebuchadnezzar encouraged spying because every seed of rebellion had to be detected and terminated before it could affect the empire.

Three young Jews were in the crowd that day. Bible students believe that Nebuchadnezzar excused Daniel for obvious reasons, but given the time necessary to build the image and the many details involved with arranging the event, the king overlooked the presence of Daniel's three friends. When the moment came for everyone to bow down and worship the golden image, Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego defied the king's order. Spies in the crowd hastily reported the three young men's defiance and the king summoned them to appear before him. The ceremony abruptly ended as thousands watched an even more interesting drama. The golden image was upstaged! The faithfulness of three young men who defied the great king of Babylon eclipsed the towering statue of the metal man.

Nebuchadnezzar was embarrassed and frustrated because he knew these young men. He

knew that, like Daniel, they were upright and trustworthy servants. He generously offered the three Jews another chance to save face (and their lives), but they refused. The king of Babylon became furious, no one would refuse his sovereign authority in public and live. He ordered the smelting furnace be made seven times hotter! With the furnace roaring and every eye watching, a startling event occurred!

First, the intense heat killed the soldiers who bound and threw the three young men into the furnace. The soldiers' deaths confirmed to every onlooker that an inferno was burning in the furnace. This fact would be needed in days ahead to keep anti-Jewish sentiment from changing the story. Then, as everyone watched, a fourth person suddenly appeared *inside the flames* standing with Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego. When the king saw four men walking around in the furnace, the Holy Spirit came upon him; He realized the fourth person in the furnace was a "Son of the gods." In the presence of thousands of administrators who believed that Marduk was Most High God, the king called out, "servants of the Most High God come out." Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego walked out without injury or the smell of smoke in their clothing. Everyone was flummoxed. The God of the Jews had plainly shown Himself to be superior to Marduk. No god had ever done such a thing! While the golden image was supposed to be the object of awe and adoration that day, the story carried to the far-flung corners of the empire was the miracle inside the furnace.

Faith that Saves (Salvific Faith)

Three young men demonstrated their faith in God. Salvific faith means obeying God, doing what is right in His sight and leaving the consequences with Him. Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego believed God when He said that bowing down to idols was wrong; and when Nebuchadnezzar commanded them to worship the golden image, they chose to do right in God's sight and leave the consequences with Him. At Mt. Sinai the Lord proclaimed: **"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in Heaven above or on the Earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments."** (Exodus 20:4-6) When man's laws conflict with God's laws, faith means obeying God rather than men! Centuries later, Peter and the apostles would say to the Jewish leaders who were persecuting them, **"We must obey God rather than men!"** (Acts 5:29)

Once we understand the story of Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego, we can better grasp the coming war over worship. The 144,000 will proclaim the testimony of Jesus, which is everyone must worship the Creator, Jesus Christ, on His holy seventh day Sabbath; the basis for this demand is found in the Ten Commandments. Meanwhile, the seven-headed beast will make a series of demands regarding worship and will punish everyone who chooses to disobey. (2 Timothy 3:12; John 16:1-4) The good news is that every saint who obeys the gospel and suffers for Christ will be blessed by Jesus' presence within the furnace.

After the Antichrist appears (the devil and his angels will physically appear at the fifth trumpet) the world will be forced to worship an "image" which the devil will set up. All who refuse are to

be killed. **“Because of the signs [and miracles] he [the devil, the modern king of Babylon] was given power to do on behalf of the first beast [that is, miracles done on behalf of the seven-headed beast], he [Lucifer, the Antichrist] deceived the inhabitants of the Earth [into thinking that he really is Almighty God]. [When his deception is widespread] He [the Antichrist] ordered them [the inhabitants of Earth] to set up an image in honor of the [seven-headed] beast who [had a head that] was wounded by the sword and yet lived. He [the Antichrist] was given power to give breath [life, authority, power] to the image of the first beast [the seven-headed beast], so that it could speak [make laws] and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed.”** (Revelation 13:14,15, insertions mine)

At this point, we have not discussed the coming Antichrist (modern king of Babylon) or the image of the beast which he will set up. Even if you do not understand these matters, you can easily gather from the text that some beastly authority will impose a death decree upon all who refuse to *worship the image that he sets up*.

Parallels between Ancient Babylon and the Babylon to Come

The book of Revelation sometimes refers to the seven-headed beast as “Babylon.” This title is used for several good reasons! First, after Noah’s flood, God considered the construction of the tower of Babel to be an act of defiance; so, He ended the project with confusion by suddenly making the builders appear to “babble,” that is, speak different languages. When the seven-headed beast is formed, it will be totally confused. We are a world of many languages, religions, cultures, and politics, and this diversity will plague the seven-headed beast with endless babble.

Second, because of the Babylonians amazing prosperity and military achievements, they believed their god, Marduk, was the Most High God, superior to all other gods. When the Great Tribulation begins, the religious leaders of the world will be compelled by circumstances to admit there is one angry God, even though he is worshiped and called by different titles. This convenient falsity will simplify the mission of the seven-headed beast, which is to appease God’s wrath so that His judgments will cease. This situation will play into the hands of the 144,000 who will deliver the testimony of Jesus! The “gottcha” will be a contest over worship. Will people bow down and worship the *imaginary* god of the seven-headed beast (represented as the imaginary god, Marduk) or will they worship the God of the 144,000 (the living God who walked in the furnace with Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego)?

Finally, the story about the fiery furnace parallels an end-time event. A time is coming when everyone on Earth who refuses to worship “the image” established by the modern king of Babylon (the Antichrist) will be killed. Because of these three parallels, the book of Revelation sometimes refers to the seven-headed beast as “Babylon.” For example, **“A second angel followed and said, ‘Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great [meaning, the seven-headed beast is advocating lies and blaspheming the Creator with insults, there is no truth in its claims], which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries.’ ”** (Revelation 14:8)

Full Cup Principle

Another key parallel between ancient and modern Babylon merits attention. While the ancient kingdom of Babylon was in its prime, God revealed to Jeremiah that He would destroy the empire because of its sin and guilt. (Jeremiah 25:12) About 60 years later, God's patience ran out. During a great party celebrating Marduk, the "Most High God of the Babylonians," King Belshazzar insulted the God of Heaven with insolence and blasphemy. Belshazzar instructed his servants to retrieve the sacred vessels Nebuchadnezzar took from God's temple in Jerusalem. He did this to elevate Marduk in the eyes of his nobles. Thinking there would be no consequence, Belshazzar wanted to show contempt for the God of the despicable Jews.

Belshazzar had a problem. Nebuchadnezzar exalted the God of Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego when they came out of the fiery furnace; and later, before he died, Nebuchadnezzar again said the God of the Jews was above *all other gods*. (Daniel 4:34-37) Belshazzar wanted to erase the memory of Nebuchadnezzar's conversion and confession. It was a matter of national honor and religious pride. Belshazzar's servants delivered the golden vessels, and the king ordered the vessels filled with alcohol and served to his guests. This was an outrageous act of blasphemy because no alcohol was permitted the sacred vessels. When the king, along with a thousand nobles, lifted his hand in a toast to the great god of Babylon, another hand was also lifted; this hand wrote a cryptic message on a large wall so that everyone could see it, but no one could read or explain the message. The toast was forgotten and after some awkward silence, Belshazzar summoned Daniel (who was an old man) to explain the handwriting on the wall.

He said to Belshazzar, **"You have set yourself up against the Lord of Heaven. You had the goblets from His temple brought to you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines drank wine from them. You praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or understand. But you did not honor the God who holds in His hand your life and all your ways. Therefore He sent the hand that wrote the inscription. . . God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end. . . You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting. . . Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians. That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain."** (Daniel 5:23-28,30) That night, the prophecy God gave Jeremiah sixty years earlier was fulfilled.

This story will have a parallel with modern Babylon. A day is coming when the king of modern Babylon (Lucifer, the devil, the Antichrist) will set himself up against the Lord of Heaven and convince many, with his miracles and promises, that his theocracy will last forever. For a few months it will appear that the devil and his kingdom are invincible, but the God of Heaven has numbered Lucifer's days. The kingdom established by the Antichrist will surely come to its end, but not by human power. (Daniel 8:25) A Divine Destroyer will abolish it in a single day.

The prophetic sequence given to Nebuchadnezzar 26 centuries ago (the vision of the metal man) is still unfolding. A day is coming when Jesus (the rock cut out of the mountain) will destroy the whole world at His appointed time. Jesus is the Rock that will destroy the kingdoms of men. His appearing at the Second Coming will be overpowering and frightening! Because of the bold and unflinching ministry of the 144,000 prior to the great day of the Lord, everyone will anticipate His arrival. When they see Him, the wicked will frantically run for cover. **"Look, He is**

coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the peoples of the Earth will mourn because of Him. So shall it be! Amen.” (Revelation 1:7)

The 144,000’s Second Message: Babylon Has Fallen

When Jesus steps into mankind’s affairs during World War III, everyone on Earth will realize that something extraordinary has occurred. There will be awesome signs in the Heavens and all over the Earth; a global earthquake will follow which will destroy much of the world’s infrastructures. Life on Earth will dramatically change. The 144,000 will begin their ministry on that day. I call this day, “Day 1” because there will be 1,334 days to follow.

I anticipate world leaders will create the seven-headed beast 30 to 60 days after the global earthquake. I believe the seven-headed beast will begin to function during the darkness caused by ejecta from many volcanoes during the fourth trumpet. The seven-headed beast will move quickly to outlaw any behaviors that religious leaders determine offensive to God. Because the nations will be governed by martial law, law enforcement personnel will essentially become “religious police.” They will brutally do their jobs, enforcing Babylon’s laws and persecuting those who do not comply.

Babylon’s leaders will require God be worshipped. Muslim dominated countries will enforce laws regarding worship on Friday. Israel will implement laws regarding Saturday worship. Catholic and Protestant countries will enforce laws regarding the sacredness of Sunday. The seven-headed beast will dictate that businesses cannot operate on days reserved for worship. It will force nations, which do not have a traditional holy day each week, (Hindus, Buddhists, Communists, and tribal nations) to set aside a day of the week to worship God. Of course, after some of the dust settles and fear wears off, many people will rebel against the religious demands imposed by the seven-headed beast. When Babylon’s authority is challenged, the furnace of persecution will be made seven times hotter. The leaders of Babylon will meet each challenge to its authority with stiffer penalties.

Circumstances created by such a hostile atmosphere will divide people into three groups. Many people will comply with Babylon’s laws because they are sheep-like followers. Their religious leaders and experts endorsed the formation, purpose, laws, and mission of Babylon so the followers accept Babylon without question. This group will avoid persecution because they will do whatever Babylon’s leaders want. A second group of people will resist Babylon’s laws because they refuse to be controlled by religious laws or religious authorities. Nothing is more galling and detestable than to have one man force his religious views upon another. Communists and atheists will comprise a large segment of this group. A third group of people will also defy the laws of Babylon, but for moral and spiritual reasons. This group of people will consist of people who love and worship Jesus on the Sabbath and follow His testimony which the 144,000 share.

The differences between rebels will not deter Babylon’s leaders. Babylon will not care whether a person disobeys its laws for religious or nonreligious reasons. Anyone who disobeys its laws, for whatever reason, must be severely punished or “God’s wrath will surely continue!”

When Babylon begins to persecute people for refusing to obey its laws, the 144,000 will add a second message to their proclamation (“Worship the Creator”). When these two messages are combined, the people of Earth will be further alienated and polarized. The 144,000 will say, **“Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great** [meaning, the seven-headed beast is advocating lies and blaspheming the Creator with insults, there is no truth in its claims], **which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries.**” (Revelation 14:8)

Life in Babylon

During Israel’s 70 years in Babylonian captivity, Jewish families multiplied. Some families experienced the birth of three generations! Many young Jewish people intermarried with the Babylonians and embraced the Babylonian religion. When the 70 years of Jewish captivity ended, many Jews born and raised in Babylon did not want to return to Jerusalem. Babylon was their life, religion, culture, and language. Moreover, Jerusalem was a heap of ruins and Judea was a lawless desert overrun by warlords and squatters. Therefore, many of the Babylon-born Jews did not want to give up the abundance of Babylon and their jobs. For them, it made no sense to leave home and live in deplorable conditions 700 miles away.

Of course, God knew this situation would develop when He placed the Jews in Babylonian exile; He gave this warning through the prophet Jeremiah long before Babylon would fall to the Medes and Persians: **“Flee from Babylon! Run for your lives! Do not be destroyed because of her sins. It is time for the Lord’s vengeance; He will pay her what she deserves. Babylon was a gold cup in the Lord’s hand; she made the whole Earth drunk. The nations drank her wine; therefore they have now gone mad. Babylon will suddenly fall and be broken. Wail over her!”** (Jeremiah 51:6-8)

Jeremiah’s message to the Jews in ancient Babylon has a very interesting parallel with which the second message given by the 144,000, requires a decision. Consider my paraphrase: The 144,000 will say words to the effect, “Flee from modern Babylon, separate yourself from it and run for your lives. Do not join Babylon and be destroyed because of its sins. Babylon is comprised of seven false religions and its mission is a false endeavor. Babylon’s leaders have blasphemed and insulted the Creator. Jesus will repay modern Babylon double for every crime. (Revelation 18:6)

The seven-headed beast was a gold cup in the Lord’s hand at one time (meaning, it was valuable and important to Him). He brought about circumstances so that mankind would create the seven-headed beast. The Lord did this to bring the religious and political leaders of the world together in one accord and to simultaneously expose all religious systems of the world as false. The maddening wine of Babylon is the doctrine that *mankind can appease God’s wrath so that His judgments will end*. This is a lie. God’s wrath cannot be appeased; a total of fourteen plagues will occur! Moreover, God will not accept forced repentance or worship. Babylon’s laws are an insult to the Creator! The religious systems of the world are fallen and corrupt. People who drink in Babylon’s wine cannot worship God in spirit and truth. The leaders of Babylon do not know God’s character, purposes, or plans. Even though Babylon will appear to be great and powerful, God promises it will surely fall after forty-two months. All who remain loyal to Babylon will wail over its destruction and their own doom. Have nothing to do with the

seven-headed beast! Run for your life!”

A Painful Awakening

The Father will fulfill several objectives during the Great Tribulation. One objective is to reveal Jesus Christ as the Creator of everything in the Universe. Another revelation is that Jesus is an Almighty God just like the Father. Another revelation is that all the religions of the world are false and corrupt. Another purpose is to separate the sheep from the goats. The Father will meet all of these objectives through a war over worship. Even though we cannot currently see this development, the subject of worship will soon become an inflammatory matter. Jesus will speak through the 144,000 and those who love truth will embrace it. Those who love religion, family, culture, and possessions more than Jesus, will reject the truth. **“Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life [by compromise] will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”** (Matthew 10:37-39, insertion mine) Paul wrote about the wicked saying, **“They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.”** (2 Thessalonians 2:10)

The number of people who will abandon their cherished beliefs about God after He has revealed His truth remains unknown. From a human point of view, we could say that Noah did something foolish when he built the ark because it had never rained. We could say that Abraham did something foolish when he left home not knowing where he was going. Again, we could say that Abraham did something foolish when he attempted to sacrifice Isaac on Mt. Moriah. We could say that Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego did something foolish when they boldly defied King Nebuchadnezzar. The list goes on because responding to God’s voice appears foolish to those who cannot hear it. (1 Corinthians 2:14) This simple fact will have enormous ramifications in days to come.

During the Great Tribulation, Jesus will require each person to abandon his religious heritage. Jesus wants Muslims to renounce Islam; Catholics to renounce Catholicism; Hindus and Buddhists to renounce Eastern Mysticism; and Atheists and Protestants to renounce their religious beliefs. This is because most people do not realize their religion is their God! This is fascinating. . . *Only those who live by faith will obey God when He requires an action that is outside the boundaries of religion.* When Jesus calls everyone to come out of Babylon, He will demonstrate to the universe that there are people within every religious system who live by faith. They will respond to His call even when it appears totally foolish to everyone else!

Remember, Jesus will begin judging the living after the first global earthquake (Day 1). The Father has predetermined the judgment process will follow this process: Each person will be given an opportunity to hear the testimony of Jesus and a period of time during which he will have to make a decision about whether or not to obey the gospel. If the person decides to obey, his faith will be tested by persecution. All who pass the test of faith will be sealed (sinful nature removed). All people who stand firm in their faith will be made heirs of the promises God given to Abraham. Yes, all Israel will be saved! (Romans 11:26)

The first message given by the 144,000 will be inflammatory. Religious people will be enraged when they are told that Jesus is the Creator and Savior of the world, and that He demands worship on his holy seventh day Sabbath. The second message given by the 144,000 will be appalling. Many religious people will refuse to separate themselves from their religious systems, even though they know their religious system is blasphemous in God's sight! Separating those who follow the Spirit from those who cling to their religion is a difficult process. Nevertheless, an innumerable host of people will receive the gospel of Jesus and through faith, be saved! (Revelation 7:9-17)

Long ago, Jesus made an interesting statement that will have peculiar importance during the Great Tribulation: **“The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant. It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the Lord made the Heavens and the Earth, and on the seventh day He abstained from work and rested.”** (Exodus 31:16,17) The Sabbath will become a sign between Jesus and everyone who walks by faith. Faithless people will not be able to keep the Sabbath because they will not be able to withstand the persecution that goes with it. The devil will do everything possible to keep people from honoring the Creator's holy day. This is why Jesus said, **“He who overcomes [the sinful nature] will inherit all this [the new Earth], and I will be his God and he will be my son. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars -- their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”** (Revelation 21:7,8, insertions mine) Satan and his followers will punish the saints who keep God's Sabbath, but Jesus will walk in the furnace of persecution with each of His children. **“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”** (Matthew 28:20)

When the time arrives, the first two messages that the 144,000 give will be easy to understand. Each person who loves God with all his heart knows the voice of the Holy Spirit. All who love truth will eventually discover that the seven-headed beast is an evil monster representing the seven false religions of the world. They will see that Babylon's mission and purpose is false and the nations intoxicated with religious and political ideas insult God. Finally, when religious and political leaders commit adultery (form an adulterous union, getting in bed together), millions of honest hearted people will flee Babylon and escape its doom.

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