



Gregory John

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*“The truth about truth is that it never changes,
yet when we behold it, it shall surely change us.”*

~ Gregory John

Coming out of Babylon

When it comes to the city of Babylon mentioned in the book of Revelation, Seventh-day Adventists have equated it with the fallen state of Christianity today due to its corrupt and confusing doctrines which are contrary to the Bible. Where did this adopted idea of Christianity in a fallen spiritual-state first come about in America?

Charles Fitch, an American Congregationalist pastor and advocate for the Millerite movement, in 1843 preached a sermon titled, “Come out her my People”. In his sermon he focused on Babylon and its fall-

en state (Scriptural references: Revelation 14:8; 18:1-5) from which he brought forward four thought provoking questions for all Christians to seriously consider and to quickly act upon:

I. What is Babylon?

According to Fitch, Babylon was the spirit of Antichrist within the Churches that directly opposed Christ's soon coming and personal reign on David's Throne. Furthermore, the Churches that make up Babylon included the Roman Catholic Church and her harlot daughters: the Protestant Churches which held to the (non-Biblical) postmillennial belief and teaching of a thousand years of spiritual bliss and temporal peace upon the earth before Jesus' coming; therefore, rejecting the premillen-

nial “Millerite” message of Jesus’ soon coming.

II. What is the fall of Babylon?

Fitch viewed *Spiritual* Babylon as being in a fallen state of confusion and apostasy. His justification for this, was the spirit of Antichrist seen within the Protestant churches and among its ministers who were either antagonistic or oppressive towards anyone who questioned their Church’s postmillennial stance on Jesus’ coming.

III. What is it for God’s people to come out of Babylon?

Revelation’s warning to come out of Babylon was Fitch’s altar call for Christians to come out of Apostate Christianity and away from her non-Biblical teachings (primarily the belief in a millennium of spiritual bliss

before Jesus' return) and to be converted to the Bible's true teaching of Jesus' soon return and personal reign upon the earth.

IV. What will be the consequences of refusing to do it?

Revelation 18:4-8 speaks of the dire consequences for those who reject God's call to come out of Babylon. According to Fitch, those who remain in Babylon (Apostate Christianity) and who continue to reject the Millerite message of Jesus' soon coming will not only share in her plagues to come, but at Jesus' coming will face eternal damnation and hell fire along with Babylon.

For Charles Fitch and the Millerites, October 22, 1844, marked the day of Jesus' coming and His cleansing of the earth of sin and sinners with fire. In the absence of Jesus' anticipated return, a time of great disappoint-

ment quickly fell upon the Millerite movement which soon thereafter broke up into different factions. As for Charles Fitch, he was spared from this great disappointment in having died shortly beforehand.

Although the idea of Babylon being equated with Apostate Christianity still remained, there was a shift in understanding among one group of post-Millerites. The early Sabatarian Adventists came to belief that October 22nd marked the coming of Jesus into the holy of holies within the heavenly sanctuary. Furthermore, the announcement of, “the hour of his judgment is come” (Revelation 14:7), was viewed as the commencement of Jesus’ atoning work of cleansing the heavenly sanctuary of sinners’ confessed sins; in anti-typical fashion to the day of atonement (or investigative judgment) for God’s people.

When it comes to the Seventh-day Adventist's adopted belief that Babylon (Christianity today) is in a progressive fallen state of Apostasy, not to mention the future prison house of every unclean spirit (Rev. 18:2); it not only alienates us from other Christians, but adds cannon fodder for our critics to use against us when we are unable to clearly define and defend our position with what the Bible says.

In reexamining Charles Fitch's four questions, let's see what the Bible has to say about Babylon:

I. What is Babylon?

According to the book of Daniel, Chapters 2 and 7, as well as world history, Babylon was an ancient city that once ruled the world from 605 to 539 BC. Furthermore, Babylon was the first of two kingdoms to trample

down the city of Jerusalem, God's sanctuary, and many of His people (587 BC); the other kingdom was Imperial Rome in AD 70.

Later on, when Babylon no longer existed, it was the cryptic name used by the early Christians for the Imperial city of Rome that ruled the world at that time (See 1 Peter 5:13).

II. What is the fall of Babylon?

According to Jeremiah 51, and Daniel 5, the ancient ruling city of Babylon eventually came under God's divine judgment for its sins, and fell to Cyrus the king of Persia in 539 BC.

In the same literary style as the book of Jeremiah, Chapter 51, the book of Revelation speaks of Babylon's sins, fall, and desola-

tion. For John the Revelator and the seven churches he wrote to, Babylon would have been synonymous with the imperial city of Rome.

Knowing that neither Babylon nor imperial Rome (the cryptic name for Babylon) exists today, then how are we to interpret the second angel's message which announces, "fallen, fallen is Babylon that great city" (Revelation 14:8)? Is the text speaking of Babylon's physical or spiritual fall as suggested by Charles Fitch?

Looking back to history for an answer, we find that imperial Rome was eventually replaced by papal Rome as the ruling power in the western half of the Byzantine (Roman) empire. In AD 1870, the papal city of Rome and last papal state fell to the king of Italy,

thus ending the Roman papacy's temporal rule.

“With the political upheavals that followed the creation of Roman Republic in 1849, and the kingdom of Italy in 1860, which incorporated [the city of] Rome as its capital in 1870, the temporal principedom of the papacy shrank to the Vatican and its immediate environs, and thus it has remained ever since.”[1]

As for the papacy's temporal rule ending in 1798, as first suggested by William Miller, did the papacy's deadly head wound (see Revelation 13:3) inflicted by France prove to be the fatal blow to papal sovereignty? When it comes to the history of the papal states, the city of Rome came back under papal control in 1800, “Napoleon's victory [June 1800 battle of Marengo] made him de

facto ruler of Italy, but he did not interfere with Pius [VII] taking possession of Rome in July 1800. He hoped to make peace with the pope, and to incorporate the Church as an active part of his reign.... Unfortunately for any hopes of compromise, there were problems that would prove impossible to solve. One of these was the temporal sovereignty of the popes. This Pius absolutely would not give up: he believed that his independence as a religious leader depended on his independence as a sovereign. While he was willing to compromise on some of the outlying territories of the papal domains, he would not entertain the idea of giving up his claim to the temporal rule of the city of Rome.”[2]

When we look at the papal Rome’s fall in 1870, it is the only plausible event in history that correctly places the second angel’s

announcement, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city” (Rev. 14:8), after the first angel’s announcement of the Lord’s judgment hour which commenced in 1844 with Jesus’ coming into the holy of holies within the heavenly sanctuary.

III. What is it for God’s people to come out of Babylon?

In the book of Revelation, Chapters 17 and 18, Babylon is viewed as the great harlot city who not only commits fornication with the kings of the earth, but makes the nations drunk with the wine of the wrath of her fornication (Rev. 18:3). History shows us that the kings of Europe entered into an illicit Church-State union with papal Rome. Furthermore, the nations of Europe freely drank of papal wine (indulged in her false dogmas—the precepts of men), and entered

into false idol worship with papal Rome. Surely, kings and their nations were all fornicators with papal Rome!

When it comes to the sexual union between a man and woman, the Bible refers to it as, “going in to” (see Deuteronomy 22:13, Proverbs 6:29); therefore, the call to come out of Babylon, is for God’s people to quit *spiritually* fornicating with papal Rome—the mother of harlots! In other words, to come out and away from her confusing and corrupt doctrines (i.e. Sunday worship and the adopted pagan belief of immortality of the soul).

IV. What will be the consequences of refusing to do it?

Revelation 18:4-8 warns of the dire consequences for those who reject God’s call to come out of Babylon. In the time of

testing as it relates to the third angel's dire warning (Rev. 14:9-12), everyone will have to make a choice: Worship God in lovingly keeping his Commandments or worship the beast and its image in fearfully following his commandments: the papacy's false dogmas—the precepts of men. For those who choose not to follow God in keeping His commandments, the time of God's fierce wrath (the seven last plagues) upon the earth, will be met with the voice of wailing, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved" (Jeremiah 8:20).

Charles Fitch was a man with deep convictions, who loved the Lord, and longed to see as many souls as possible in the kingdom of heaven. As an advocate for the Millerite movement, he held to the belief that Babylon represented Apostate Christianity and its *spiritual* fall marked the time for God's

people to quickly come out of Babylon and into the Bible's truth of Jesus soon coming.

As with the first angel's announcement, "for the hour of his judgement is come" which commenced in 1844 with Jesus' *physical* coming into the holy of holies, so it is with the second angel's announcement, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city" which marks Babylon's physical and not spiritual fall. The papal city of Rome (the cryptic name for Babylon) fulfills this prophecy, in having *physically* fallen in 1870 to the king of Italy. Furthermore, the call to come out of Babylon (Rev. 18:4) before Papal Rome's final *physical* fall marks a time yet future when the third angel's dire announcement is to be preached with great power and glory (Rev. 18:1-3)— the loud outcry heard around the world just prior to the window of probation closing on man's salvation.

[1] P.G. Maxwell-Stuart, *Chronicle of the Popes* (London: Thames & Hudson 1997), 218

[2] Susan Vandiver Nicassio, *Imperial City: Rome under Napoleon* (Chicago, IL: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 2009), 26

About the author

Gregory John is the author of *Three Angels in the Midst of Heaven* which examines Daniel's timeline prophecies and how they relate to the Three Angels' Message of Revelation 14.

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