

celebrated as the invincible guide and protector of Constantine” (Stephen Miller, *The Peculiar Life of Sundays*, p. 26). In A.D. 321, Constantine passed the first Sunday law. This Edict stated, “On the venerable day of the Sun let the Magistrates and the people residing in the cities rest, and let all workshops be closed” (Edict of Constantine, A.D. 321). The law did not enforce Sunday observance for all, but it did strengthen Sunday observance among the Roman population.

In succeeding decades, emperors and popes continued through state decrees and church councils to establish Sunday as the singular day of worship. “The Sun was a foremost god with heathendom.... Hence the church in these countries would seem to have said, ‘Keep that old, pagan name. It shall remain consecrated, sanctified.’ And thus, the pagan Sunday, dedicated to Balder, became the Christian Sunday, sacred to Jesus” (*The Catholic World*, vol. 58, p. 809).

In 1893, Dr. Edward T. Hiscox, author of the *Baptist Manual*, shocked hundreds of Baptist ministers with the following statement: “What a pity that [Sunday] comes branded with the mark of paganism, and christened with the name of the sun god, then adopted and sanctioned by the papal apostasy, and bequeathed as a sacred legacy to Protestantism” (*The Law and the Sabbath*, p. 93).

Even to the casual observer of church history, it is obvious that pagan practices have crept into most Christian churches. The good news is that God has millions of honest-hearted men and woman who love Him and long to know His truth. As they study God’s Word, their hearts respond.

The message of the second angel in Revelation 14 is, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen.” In Revelation 17, the woman dressed in purple and scarlet and identified as spiritual Babylon rides around on a scarlet-colored beast, sharing her wine cup and getting the world drunk with error. Falsehood prevails. Demons work their miracles to deceive. John the Revelator makes an urgent appeal for people in Babylon—those in apostate churches who go against biblical teachings—to “Come out of her, my people” (Revelation 18:4).

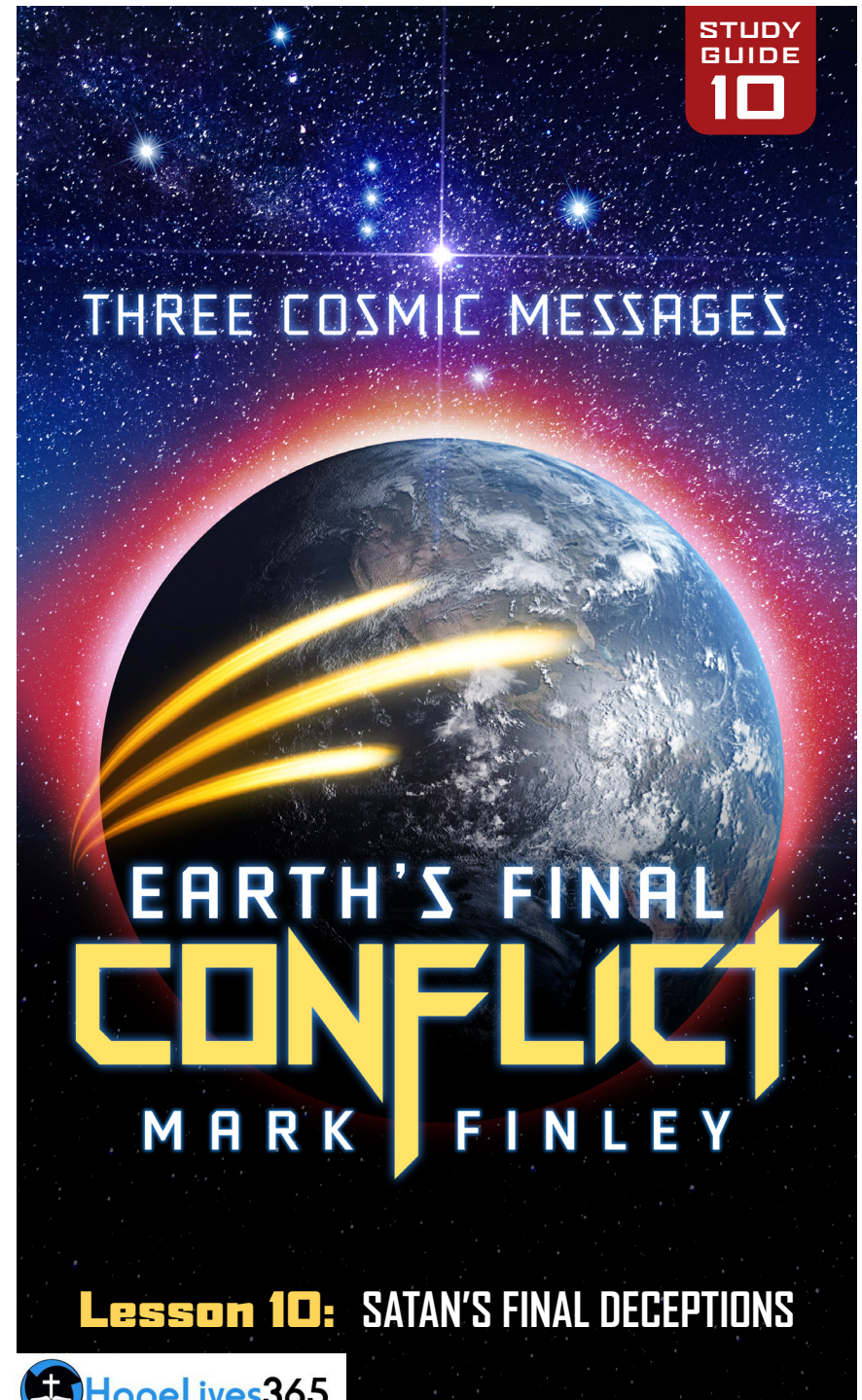
God is calling an end-time people who believe in coming directly to Jesus as their intermediary. They do not worship images, nor do they accept the unbiblical idea of the immortal soul. They long to see their saved loved ones again on that glorious resurrection morning. They worship and adore Him as the Creator of heaven and earth, and they worship Him on the Bible Sabbath.

Babylon’s erroneous teachings have impacted millions. As a result, God is giving His people, still entrenched in error, a final last-day appeal. Where are many of God’s people? They are in religious organizations that have compromised biblical truth. Heaven’s appeal is to come out of every church that does not teach faithfulness to Scripture and obedience to the law of God.

You may be the only one in your family or your community who now understands God’s last-day message and responds to His final appeal. God is calling you. He calls to you personally, “Come out of her, my people.” Would you like to bow your head wherever you are and respond to His call?

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IT WAS A GORGEOUS SEPTEMBER MORNING IN CHICAGO AS THE SUN ROSE OVER LAKE MICHIGAN.

While commuters battled heavy traffic and children made their way to school, a tragic story began to unfold that struck fear in the hearts of Chicagoans. People were getting sick and even dying just a few hours after taking Tylenol capsules. Tested capsules were laced with toxic levels of potassium cyanide injected by a deranged individual who had tampered with bottles on the shelves. Seven unsuspecting people died that day. Remarkably, a medication people normally used to achieve wellness led to sickness and even death. There's a strong spiritual parallel.

1. What warning does the Bible give us? (*Proverbs 16:25*)

According to the book of Revelation, millions of people will not suspect this final, fatal, last-day delusion but will be led astray by a popular religious power that appeals to the majority with its falsehoods.

In our last lesson, we studied the second of the three angels' messages. But Revelation 14:8 states, "And another angel followed, saying, 'Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.'" Babylon represents an apostate religious system that distorts truth and substitutes man-made theories for the teachings of the gospel. Revelation 17 reveals that the devil will attempt to forge a union of church and state to propagate his falsehoods and oppress God's people.

There are two central pillars in Satan's strategy to unite all religions and enforce the mark of the beast. This lesson's topic is "Mystery, Babylon the Great" (Revelation 17:5). There are parallels between the teachings of Old Testament Babylon and Revelation's spiritual Babylon. One of those is spiritualism.

2. What link is there between spiritualism and the fall of Babylon? (*Revelation 18:2*)

Babylon and Immortality

The ancient Babylonian belief that at death the disembodied spirit descended into the nether world did not come from Christianity.

3. How were some Israelites influenced by the Babylonian teaching on death and immortality? (*Ezekiel 8:13–14*)

Tammuz was known as the Babylonian god of vegetation. Babylonians believed that, when winter darkened the sky, Tammuz died but was resurrected in the spring. The Jews accepted this false, pagan idea straight from Babylon.

4. What clear instruction did God give His people about life after death? (*Ecclesiastes 9:5*)

The Bible teaching on death could not be any clearer. The doctrine of the immortal soul is not in the Bible.

5. How does Revelation describe the devil's working in the last days? (*Revelation 16:13–14*)

Satan will bring about the final union of church and state through spiritualism that will pave the way for the last deception of Satan in his attempt to control this planet. The three angels' messages warn against this deception by revealing the truth about death.

Revelation 14:13 declares, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." The verse continues: "'Yes' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.'" In Scripture, death is a rest, a sleep until the return of our Lord. The idea of the immortality of the soul greatly diminishes the doctrine of the second coming of Christ. The Babylonian understanding of death opens the way for the first deceptive influence of spiritualism. The second great deception focuses specifically on worship.

Babylon Was also the Center of Sun Worship

Sun worship was prominent in Egypt, Assyria, Persia, and Babylon. In his book *The Worship of Nature*, Dr. James G. Frazer writes, "In ancient Babylonia the sun was worshiped from immemorial antiquity" (vol. 1, p. 529).

6. What did the prophet Ezekiel write about the influence of sun worship in Israel? (*Ezekiel 8:16*)

The prophet Ezekiel declares, "Moreover I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and me, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them" (Ezekiel 20:12). But with their backs toward the temple of God, which housed God's law, His people began worshiping the sun toward the east. Satan, the master deceiver, substituted sun worship for worship of the Creator.

In Revelation 14 and 17, John describes a time when Babylonian religious practices, including sun worship, would slip into the Christian church. The casual conversion of Constantine in the early part of the fourth century caused great joy in the Roman Empire. But Constantine had a strong affinity for sun worship. Roman historian Edward Gibbon wrote, "The Sun was universally cel-