

Read Revelation!

“Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.” (Revelation 1:3)

Chapter 17-18: “BABYLON THE GREAT”!

Part of the plague poured out of the seventh vial will be judgment on a city called “Babylon.”

“The great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.” (Revelation 16:19)

Judgment on “Babylon” was announced earlier, in Chapter 14.

“Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.” (Revelation 14:8)

Of course, the ancient city of Babylon is no more. However, the concept of “Babylon” is greater in scripture than the city. Babylon is Babel of Genesis 11, the city built by Nimrod to be the capital of the world. The original effort to maintain mankind as one nation with one capital was foiled by God because He was left out of the plans. Babel and Babylon became symbols of the desire of men to unite in rebellion against the Lord. In the Book of Isaiah, the doom of Babylon is predicted in mysterious terms (Read, when you can, Isaiah 11, 12, and 13). Isaiah 21:9 is quoted in Revelation 14:8. Around 600 years before Christ, the kingdom of Babylon took over the middle-eastern world, and, according to the Book of Daniel, was given rule over the world by God (2:36-38). Eventually, the Babylonian empire fell, but God’s plan for the domination of the world continued through the succession of the Persian, Greek, and Roman empires. In terms of Bible prophecy, the spirit of the Roman empire continues to this day in ten European nations. Study this in Daniel 7. At the end of this age, the Antichrist will revive the Roman empire with these ten nations, and all of this has to do with “Babylon.”

I. Religious Babylon (Chapter 17).

The 17th Chapter of Revelation shows us a “*great whore*” sitting on a beast that looks a lot like the beast out of the sea in Chapter 13 as it swims in the water (17:1-6). This immoral woman is named “MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT,” and she is called “THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.” We can understand who she is if we will compare her with the woman in Chapter 19. There we see “*the Lamb’s wife*” (See Chapter 21, too), a virgin arrayed in white for her wedding. She represents the true Christian church. The term *church* is used first in our Bible back in Matthew 16 and 18. It is translated from a Greek word that means a congregation, and

that's exactly what the true church is. It is a congregation of baptized believers in Christ, working to fulfill the Great Commission under the leadership of God-appointed elders (pastors). The true church can be seen again and again in the Book of Acts. It is local (not universal) because it congregates; that's what a congregation does! It is visible (not invisible) because it is made up of real people. The true church was found in many places in the early days after the ascension of Christ! When Christ comes for His saints, every believer of every age will congregate at His feet. This form of the true church is future, and is pictured in Revelation 19. The harlot church is a perversion of Christ's virgin Bride, the true church. It began to develop in the first century through the entrance of the doctrines of Balaam and the Nicolaitans (Revelation 2). Nicolaitanism exalted and empowered the pastors of the churches beyond their scriptural authority. Balaamism brought pagan ideas and practices into the Christian churches. The exaltation of pastors led to the formation of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the confession of sins to clergy, and the invention of a "Christian" priesthood. The inclusion of paganism led to the use of images, the doctrine of the mass, and a multitude of abominations in the church. When Emperor Constantine made the defiled church the official religion of the Roman empire in A.D. 313, the harlot imposter became a complete reality. It was "catholic" (universal) rather than local; it was sacramental (dispensing grace) rather than evangelistic. Revelation 17 pictures the harlot church as committing "*fornication*" with governments (uniting church and state—v. 2), decked with gold and pearls, arrayed in purple and red (v. 4), and drunk with the blood of martyrs (v. 6). The false church will reach its zenith when it allies itself with Antichrist, the beast of Revelation 13.

We are told in verses 7-9 that the seven heads on the beast are "*seven mountains on which the woman sitteth.*" A map of the city of Rome will show that it is built on seven hills. Verse 10 speaks of five fallen kings, one reigning king, and one to come. When John saw this vision, five emperors had reigned in Rome and died unnatural deaths (Julius Caesar, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero). Domitian was the Roman emperor in John's final days. "*The other . . . not yet come*" will be the Antichrist! The city that will be the center of power, both religious and political, in the first part of the Tribulation period will be Rome. The story of the rise of Antichrist with the help of the false church is told in verses 11-15. Ten nations will join with the Antichrist to reorganize the Roman empire with the help of the world-wide apostate church. However, verses 16-18 tell us that the political alliance will turn against religious Babylon and destroy her. Perhaps the False Prophet will replace the phoney Christian religion with beast-worship (See this in Chapter 13), and the European federation will turn against the apostate church when this happens.

II. Commercial Babylon (Chapter 18).

Religious Babylon will be an ecclesiastical system based in Rome. There will also be a commercial Babylon that will be the economic center of the world during the Great Tribulation. The fall of Commercial Babylon is depicted in Revelation 18. Most Bible students think that both Babylons are the same city, but some think they are two separate cities. These men (including J. Vernon McGee) point out that religious Babylon is burned by the kings in 17:18 and that commercial Babylon is bewailed by the kings in 18:9 when she burns. They think that religious Babylon will be Rome, but that commercial Babylon

will be some other great city, perhaps the ancient city rebuilt! However it is possible to conceive of this Babylon as one city, both the religious and economic center of the world. Right now the Pope has his headquarters in a separate section of Rome ("Vatican City"). If the Vatican were the seat of the final form of the apostate church, that part of Rome could be destroyed in Revelation 17, and the rest in Revelation 18!

Notice that it will be the financial powers that will run the world in those days.

"Thy merchants were the great men of the earth . . ." (verse 23)

Down thorough history, important financial figures have had much to do behind the scenes to build up nations, to foment wars, and to topple governments. This will definitely be true of the last great world system.

Notice that occultic activity will have much importance in the future Babylon.

". . . by thy sorceries were all nations deceived."

The word translated "*sorceries*" in the Book of Revelation refers to the use of drugs to induce a state of mind conducive to occult experiences.

Notice that the destruction of commercial Babylon will be the judgment from God for her sins and her persecution of His people.

"Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her . . . Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her." (verses 8 and 20)

Perhaps religious Babylon will be destroyed in the middle of the Tribulation by the rulers who had used her to gain power, and commercial Babylon will be destroyed at the end of the Tribulation by Jesus Christ Himself!

Revelation 18:4 calls upon believers to separate from Babylon. Too many Christians today are entangled in the harlot church system or in secular organizations that are dedicated to the ungodly "let's-all-unite" spirit. This is the spirit of Babel, the spirit of rebellion against God, the spirit of Antichrist!