

JUDGMENT UPON THE "HARLOT OF BABYLON"
Who is she? What does the Babylonian system represent?
What is the system of "This World or this present evil age"

In this chapter we find some of the more challenging passages to interpret in the book of Revelation:

A. The concept of Babylon.

1. **Revelation 16:19 and 14:8 have already declared Babylon's fall.** In Revelation 17 and 18, the fall of Babylon is carefully detailed.

2. **Babylon is mentioned 287 times in the Scriptures,** (more than any other city except Jerusalem.)

a. Babylon was a literal city on the Euphrates River. Genesis 11:1-10 shows that right after the flood, Babylon "was the seat of the civilization that expressed organized hostility to God." (Tenney) b. Babylon was later the capitol of the empire that cruelly conquered Judah. "Babylon, to them (the Jews), was the essence of all evil, the embodiment of cruelty, the foe of God's people, and the lasting type of sin, carnality, lust and greed." (Tenney) c. To those familiar with the Old Testament, the name *Babylon* is associated with organized idolatry, blasphemy and the persecution of God's people.

Rome Typified Babylon"In John's day Rome epitomized all the antagonism and opposition to the Christian faith." (Mounce) In some ways, the city of Rome was the clearest fulfillment of the "Babylon" attitude. If we had to pick one city today that most exemplifies the world system, perhaps we would say that Los Angeles is the "Babylon" of today.

Spirit of Babylon is magnified in Tribulation Times; 3. The concept of Babylon is greater than Revelation 17-18 and **in Antichrist's reign.** Babylon was present in John's day (typified by Rome), in our day, and throughout history, as the "world system." But under the Antichrist, Babylon (in both its religious and commercial aspects) will hold sway over the earth as never before.

B. The great harlot (religious Babylon) is described. (1-2) Described by the angel. "Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication."

As a religious system, Babylon came into being long before Christianity, In Satanic imitation it anticipated the coming true Messiah. According to religious history and legend, the Babylonian religion was founded by the wife of Nimrod (a great-grandson of Noah), named Semiramis. She was a high priestess of idol worship, and **she gave birth to a son who she claimed was conceived miraculously. The son, named Tammuz, was considered a savior.** Many ancient artifacts remain with the familiar motif of the mother Semiramis holding the savior-infant Tammuz, which predate Christianity. It was also said that Tammuz was killed by a wild beast and then miraculously brought back to life.

Baal was the local, Canaanite name for the Babylonian Tammuz.

** The Bible makes specific mention of some of the features of the classic religion of Babylon:

1. Ezekiel protests against the ceremony of weeping for Tammuz (Ezekiel 8:14)
2. Jeremiah mentions the heathen practice of making cakes for the queen of heaven (Jeremiah 7:18) and offering incense to the queen of heaven (Jeremiah 44:17-19, 44:25)

BABYLON sits upon many waters: Who sits on many waters: That is, she presides over many nations (compare with Revelation 17:15). **She has a universal, international character.**

Those of all forms of apostate religion are drawn into her influence. **This is unification of all false,** idolatrous religion. These include apostate Catholicism, Protestantism, and any other non Messianic religions of the world.

The final "World Religion" will draw all apostate religions of these into its orbit. As we see it encourages an amalgamation such as now evidence by Chrislam and the Immergent Church movement. It will appear the end days to be the perfect mixture of humanitarianism, god exaltation **within self;** (The nature of New Age Religion) and it will have an immense expression in the supernatural as well.

RELIGION THAT MAKES DRUNKEN: There is, in the mind of those who are fanatical or zealots, the loss of a measure of sanity who even descend into a mindless mob. This mindless mentality grows in fury until they try to annihilate another group or race who is outside of its own orthodoxy. **Religious intolerance or ethnic intolerance** has been in evidence throughout history, in countless civil wars leading to genocide. (Example. The 1994 civil war of Hutus against the Tutsies in Rwanda) **Religious fornication** seems to recall pagan idolatrous cults. These of course, had *worship* and *rituals* but were totally outside of a system expressing moral cleanness and moral virtue.

2. (3-6) What John saw. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast *which was* full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. And on her forehead a name *was* written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement. **WILDENESS:** John is carried away into the wilderness; the desolate nature of the wilderness is an appropriate setting for a vision of judgment.

SEVEN HEADS - TEN HORNS b. Sitting on a scarlet beast: The harlot rides the same beast and finds her exaltation and position with the Anti Christ previously seen in Revelation 13:1- she is in a dominant role and at least outwardly controls and directs the beast." (Walvoord) **Her association with blasphemy and the dragon's beast** are from God's perspective. But to the people of the earth she will look quite religious, and have the "faith" everybody wants.

RELIGION THAT REWARDS ITS LEADERS WHO LIVE LUXURIOUSLY The woman is clothed with emblems of luxury (purple . . . gold and precious stones) and government (scarlet). Yet she offers idolatry (abominations) and impurity (filthiness of her fornication) in this sumptuous setting.

Note: True-Pure religion: James 1:27: Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world. Isaiah 58:6-7: 6 Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? 7 Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?

Prostitute - Harlot. All things done are done purely for the motive of money and gain.

MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT: This title is its *spiritual* (mystery) representation, Satanically inspired and empowered is the source (mother) of all idolatry (abominations) and spiritual adultery (harlots). She is the embodiment of Satan's own ecumenical movement - the religion of the world system.

Drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: The woman not only persecutes, she *revels* in her persecution of the godly as a drunk revels in wine. **JOHN MARVEALS:** I marveled with great amazement: **Why is John amazed? Because this isn't pagan persecution** (such as he knew in his day), but religious error and persecution. This is a *psuedo-church*, thirsty for the blood of the saints. "False religion is always the worst enemy of true religion." (Walvoord)

We should never forget that some of the most vicious persecution conducted against true Christians has been done in the name of the church. In the days when the Roman Catholic Queen Mary ruled England (known as "Bloody Mary" for good reason), some 288 Christians were burnt at the stake for their stand for Christian truth between 1555 and 1558. The first of these martyrs was a man named John Rogers, who, as he stood chained to a stake, and the fire rose around him, up to his legs and shoulders, he rubbed his hands in the flames as if he were washing his hands in cold water. Then he lifted his hands to the heavens and held them high until he was completely consumed by fire. This barbarity was committed in the name of religion, in the name of the church. But Rogers went to the stake with such calm and dignity that the French Ambassador wrote that he went to his death "as if he was walking to his wedding." His courage was so evident that the huge crowd burst into applause when they saw him walking to the stake.

C. The great harlot is interpreted. (7) The angel tells John that the harlot will be explained to him. But the angel said to me, "Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her,

which has the seven heads and the ten horns." a. I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her: The focus of the explanation is on the beast. It appeared that the harlot ruled (*rode*) the Antichrist's system, but he is the dynamic factor, using her as tyrants have always used religion - as a mere tool to accomplish their purposes. The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. **(9) Seven mountains associated** with the beast. Here *is* the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits.

The seven heads are seven mountains: Many quickly associate the seven mountains with Rome and the Papacy, because Rome is well known as the city on seven hills. The **Greek word means mountains**, not *hills*. Return to Daniel's prophecy of Chapter 2: Mountains are sometimes a figure of governments (**kingdoms**) (such as in Daniel 2:35) The city of **Rome is built on hills**, not mountains. Better to see the seven mountains as the representing the seven kings and kingdoms described in Revelation 17:10. To associate Religious Babylon and Roman Catholicism is irresistible, yet it is flawed in the sense that there is no doubt that religious Babylon will incorporate a strong Roman Catholic element, but it will be *much bigger* than Roman Catholicism. Catholicism will undoubtedly be melded in this Babylonian religious system. The current Pope stated that the God of Islam is one and the same as the Judeo Christian God.

(10) Seven kings and kingdoms. There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time. This is one of the more difficult passages in the Book of Revelation. Some explain these seven kings, five past, one present, and one to come in the succession of Roman Emperors in John's era. But there are many historical difficulties with this approach. More likely, it is a reference to:

Five have fallen refers to the five world empires before John's day: Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Medo-Persia, and Greece

One is refers to the world empire of John's day: Rome

The other has not yet come refers to the one world empire to come: Traditional it has been presumed to be a revival of the Roman Empire: But more recent developments are placing this kingdom as the Islamic Caliphate that started in Arabia and found itself dominating a great portion of the globe by the time of the Ottoman Empire in the 1400s.

This seventh will quickly be taken over by an eighth - and will become the state of the Antichrist (Revelation 17:11).

(11) The beast (the Antichrist) is clearly identified as the eighth king. And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition.

Remember our presentation of John MacArthur on Islamic eschatology: This may provide the missing puzzle piece.

The Imam Mahdi is the anticipated messiah of Islam and will rule after a period of Tribulation. But his fate is clear. Perdition means "destruction," and the beast will be destroyed.

6. (12-15) Ten kings to come, allies of the Antichrist. "The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those *who are* with Him *are* called, chosen, and faithful." **Then he said to me, "The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues."**

Ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet: This probably alludes to a ten-nation confederation (as in the toes of the Daniel 2:24-45 image), (some take ten as a symbolic number.) They are ten kingdoms which shall arise out of the last great kingdom: We now presume **ten European powers**, which in the last time, shall make war against Christ. In the precise number and form here indicated they may be only embryonic now. Recent changes in the present European Union may bring them into the required tale and form.

There is little doubt of the credentials of the EEC to claim itself a successor to the ancient Roman Empire.

The EEC started in 1957. Originally six European nations met to talk about combining their nuclear, coal, and economic resources. They met together in Rome, and signed the treaty of Rome - the beginnings of the present EEC. In many places in Europe, the EEC flag is just as prominent as any national flag. **In the spiritual dynamic of things, it's no accident that on the back of the Eurodollar coin is a woman riding a multi-headed beast.**

d. The harlot presides over peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. This tells us that the harlot's influence is worldwide, through her connection to the beast. This will be a truly one-world religion.

D. The great harlot is judged. **(16)** Antichrist's allies turn on the great harlot. And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. **a.** These will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire: This violence probably takes place at the mid-point of the tribulation period. **Perhaps it is Here, that apostate religion discovers the true nature of the beast.**

Ultimately, the Antichrist will not tolerate any worship except of himself: *The son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.* **(2 Thessalonians 2:3-4)** **b.** Once his power has been consolidated, the Antichrist no longer needs the help of religious Babylon. He will then work to dismantle and destroy her and her one-world religion. This has always been the **goal of tyrants - to use religion for their purposes, then discard it.**

(17) Be mindful that it is God's hand who ultimately directs all this. For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled. **a.** God has put it into their hearts: God has directed the judgment against religious Babylon. God will sometimes use a wicked group (here, the ten kings) to be an instrument of His judgment against another wicked group (here, religious Babylon). **b.** To be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast: God has ordained the political support of these ten kings for the Antichrist. In doing so, God gives the world exactly what it wants: godless religion and godless rulers.

3. (18) **The great harlot is identified with Rome.. But *Babylon* - in the sense of the world system** - has always been that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth. The question for Christians is, "Does it reign over me? Or am I the citizen of a better city, the Jerusalem above?" (Galatians 4:26) **Rome was the ready personification of Babylon** - the world in rebellion against God - in John's day. Today, idolatry is just as strong, but more dispersed. Today, which city in the world is most readily identified with the world system? Hollywood? Wall Street? Washington?

HOW JESUS EXPRESSED IT TO HIS DISCIPLES: MARK 8:15

15And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod. Let's take a look at what that exhortation means:

Jesus in this passage of Mark's gospel makes an interesting exhortation to his disciples. It demarks two areas where deception and entrapment can occur for those who are accounted to be his True Disciples. The first is the snare of religion and religiosity which is the institutional brand of religion. Typified by the Pharisees, it is full of protocols, ceremonies, and outward show but lacks in intimacy and pure fellowship. It is the formalistic brand of religion full of rules and traditions but totally lacking the heart of spiritual fellowship and understanding.

THE LEAVEN OF HEROD corresponds perfectly to that which we find in the Babylonian world view of 'cosmos'. We have the lust power and might; the desire to indulge the senses; seeking for pleasure; public shows of success; a desire to elevated to honor resulting in public adoration and fawning; achieving a place of honor that comes from high office; those who have achieved this can then 'lord it over' the people who are thought to be servile and underlings.