

## Revelation 17

### Introduction:

Chapter 17:1-19:10 forms a parenthetical passage designed to give the reader details concerning the fall of Babylon. The pouring out of the 7<sup>th</sup> Vial Judgment (Revelation 16:17) is followed in time immediately by Revelation 19:11-21.

#### I. The Vision of the Doom of Babylon – vs. 1

##### a. The Fall of Babylon

- i. The fall of Babylon was previewed in Rev 14:8.
- ii. The fall of Babylon was produced in Rev 16:19.
- iii. The fall of Babylon is particularized in Rev 17 and 18.
- iv. The fall of Babylon is praised in Rev 19:1-4.

The apostle John is permitted to see in detail the collapse of Babylon.

##### b. The meaning of “Babylon”

It is evident from a study of the Book of Revelation that the reference to Babylon goes beyond that of a single, isolated city – although such a city will be a reality.

Babylon is a SYSTEM. It is:

A religious system – Rev 17:1-7

A political system – Rev 17:10-14; 18:1-10

An economic system – Rev 18:11-19

In a general sense, Rev 17 deals with RELIGIOUS Babylon, while Rev 18 deals with POLITICAL and ECONOMIC Babylon. Such an observation is based upon some differences seen in comparing both chapters:

Babylon – chapter 17

“Mystery” Babylon – vs. 5

Herself rich – vs. 4

Destroyed by man – vs. 16

Turned on by Kings – vs. 16

Babylon – chapter 18

“Babylon the Great” – vs. 2

“Makes others rich” – vs. 3

Destroyed by God – vs. 5-21

Lamented by Kings – vs. 9

##### c. The System of Babylon

###### Babylon in Genesis

The system of Babylon had a definite beginning in a definite location, and this is recorded for us in Genesis 10:8-10; 11:1-9. From this passage, we learn 3 things about the SYSTEM of Babylon:

- It is a system of REBELLION of man against God.

In Genesis 8:17, God commanded the sons of Noah to repopulate the entire earth. Instead, man congregated in the plain of Shinar. – Gen 11:2

This rebellion was led by one of the grandsons of Shem named Nimrod. Nimrod is a picture of the coming Antichrist in that:

- His name means “the rebel” – cf. II Thess 2:3
- He was highly exalted – Gen 10:9, cf. Dan 11:36-37

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- He is described as ‘mighty’ – cf. Rev 13:7
- He was a hunter – cf. Rev 13:10  
The term “before the Lord” in Gen 10:9 has the same connotation as Gen 6:11. i.e. his activities came to the notice of God.
- His headquarters was Babylon – cf. Isaiah 14:4
- It is a system of UNITY  
This is in itself opposed to God’s ways. God is seen as a God of diversity – ‘light and darkness’, Gen 1:4; ‘male and female’, Gen 1:27; ‘Egyptians and Israel’, Ex 11:7; saved and lost; church and state; etc. See: II Cor 6:14.  
In Genesis 11 we find the whole world speaking ONE language, with ONE speech – one common idea, UNITY.

Their plan was for:

- Political Unity – “a city” – vs. 4
  - Religious Unity – “a tower” – vs. 4  
Archaeologists refer to these towers (many of which have been discovered around Mesopotamia) as ‘ziggurats’. These were sacred pyramid-like temple towers, in later times dedicated to false deities.  
The building of the tower of Babel represented a religion of man seeking God (“...whose top may reach into heaven...”) through the works of his own hands (“...let us make brick...”).
  - Ethnic Unity – “a name” – vs. 5  
This shows that man resisted God-ordained division of the human race into 70 families, as outlined in Genesis 10.
- It is a system of CONFUSION  
Initially, the man devised name “Bab-El” meant ‘gateway to God’. In Genesis 11:9, the Lord changed the meaning to “confusion.”

Rebellion, unity, and confusion are the hallmarks of the Babylonian system in history and in prophecy.

### Babylon in Secular History

History records that the wife of Nimrod was responsible for the development of the Babylonian religious system. In summary form, the events occurred as follows:

According to the ancient lore, Semiramis outlived her husband Nimrod by some 42 years. After his death, she gave birth to a child – Tammuz. It was here that Semiramis began to formulate certain religious claims, namely that her conception was miraculous, that her son was Nimrod

reincarnated as the long-promised 'saviour.' From these claims developed a religious system with the following characteristics:

- Mother-Child worship  
Semiramis referred to herself as the 'Queen of Heaven', and the worship of herself and her son spread into all parts of the world:
  - o In Phoenecia – Ashtaroth (Ishtar) and Tammuz (Baal)
  - o In Egypt – Isis and Osiris (Horus)
  - o In Greece – Aphrodite and Eros
  - o In Rome – Venus and Cupid
  - o In Assyria – Rhea (Cybele) and Ninus
- Virgin birth, death and resurrection  
The birth of Tammuz was a result of licentious living – but a miracle birth was claimed. Tammuz was killed while hunting wild boar. His mother claims to have brought him back to life again by her power.
- Pagan rites and immoral practices  
A system of feasts, symbols, rituals, etc. eventually developed. Religious prostitution was practiced with the temple virgins. It is a 'mystery (secret)'.

#### Babylon of Israel's History

Baal is another name for Tammuz.

The worship of Israel is first corrupted in Judges 2:11-13. See also: Judges 6:25, 31.

Israel's kings introduced Babylonianism

For example, see: I Kgs 12:25-33; 16:31; 18:21

Jeremiah preached against Babylonian practices.

Jeremiah 44:16-19; 7:16-19

#### Babylon of Daniel's Day

The Book of Daniel takes us right into the heart of Babylon. What do we see?

- Linguistic Unity – Dan 1:4
- Ethnic Unity – Dan 1:7
- Religious Unity – Dan 3:1, 4
- Political Unity – Dan 2:37-38
- The Deification of man – Dan 4:30

#### Babylon of the Christian Era

The system of Babylon has long been dominant in many so-called 'Christian' denominations. Since the days of the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great (288-337 AD), the pagan system has taken over – merely adopting Christian names (Mary-Jesus) for pagan (Venus-Cupid).

The changes are as follows:

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COURTSHIP – AD 100

Church at Pergamos – Revelation 2:13

Church at Thyatira – Revelation 2:20-22

Marriage – AD 313

Union of Church and State

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### II. The Description of Religious Babylon – vs. 1-6

#### a. A Counterfeit “Church” – vs. 1

This religious system is referred to as a “whore” (harlot). This is in contrast to that given of New Testament churches – the ‘chaste virgin’ (II Cor 11:1-2), the ‘bride of Christ’ – (Eph 5:27).

Note: There are four women mentioned in the Book of Revelation:

- Jezebel – 2:20-23 – Representing the corrupting influences of Christendom.
- Woman Clothed with the Sun – 12:1-2 – Representing the nation of Israel.
- The Great Whore – 17:1 – Representing the apostate ‘church’ of the Antichrist.
- The Lamb’s Wife – 19:7-8 – Representing the Bride of Christ.

#### b. A Universal “Church” – vs. 1

This religious system sits upon “many waters”, which verse 15 interprets as the nations of the world. Another word for universal is “catholic”. By contrast, the Lord’s churches are (by definition) local assemblies.

#### c. A State “Church” – vs. 2

The Bible clearly teaches ‘separation of Church and State’, but here is a religious system which has intermarried government and religion. This was seen clear back in the Book of Genesis with the founding of Babylonian system – a ‘city’ and a tower’.

This is very much present with us today – especially between the years 500 AD and 1800 AD when the Roman Catholic ‘church’ and many Protestant ‘churches’ controlled and worked through civil government. Even today, the Vatican is accorded political status, and the ‘kings of the earth’ seem to be falling over themselves courting her favor.

#### d. A Seducing “Church” – vs. 2

The influence of this religious system will be to seduce mankind into accepting the Beast as God. The same spirit of seduction is present today – I Tim 4:1-3; II Tim 3:13; I Jn 2:18, 26.

The Roman Catholic system exercises a seducing influence over people, governments, theologians, the media, etc.

#### e. A Blasphemous “Church” – vs. 3

Blasphemy is ascribing the things of God to others. The blasphemy of the Antichrist will be to declare himself to be God – Rev 13:1; II Thess 2:4.

Consider also the present-day blasphemies of the Church of Rome:

- The Pope is the ‘Vicar of Christ’
- The Pope speaks infallibly for God.
- The Mass – re-sacrificing of Christ again and again.

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- Prayer through intermediaries.
  - Mary is the Mother of God – sinless.
- f. A Pompous “Church” – vs. 4  
Purple and scarlet are significant colors. Purple is a color of majesty (John 19:2-5), scarlet the color of sacrifice. These are also the colors in the vestments of the Cardinals and Archbishops of the Church of Rome.
- g. A Wealthy “Church” – vs. 4  
Already the treasures and wealth of the Roman Catholic system is fantastic. Its wealth is in real estate throughout the world, priceless treasures in the Vatican vaults, and in the money it pulls in through its blasphemous doctrine of ‘purgatory’.
- h. An Immoral “Church” – vs. 4  
The reference to the golden cup as to do primarily with spiritual adultery – which thing God hates! However, it is conceivable that in the Tribulation period, all kinds of immorality will be rife (in keeping with the general Babylonian religion). Certainly, history affords us a shocking tale of immoral popes and priests.
- i. A Pagan “Church” – vs. 5  
The term “MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT” gives the true nature of this religious system. No doubt it will pose as the pure form of Christianity (as does Rome today), but an examination will reveal nothing Christian at all. The term, “mystery” refers to the secretive nature of the system, where the secrets are only fully known to the priest-craft. Rituals, relics, regalia, altars, and oaths are the characteristics of the Babylonian religion.
- j. A Parenting “Church” – vs. 5  
This system is called “Mother”. To be a mother, there must be children. The Church of Rome fits this description for she has mothered many children – all of whom bear some resemblance to her. (e.g. infant sprinkling, hierarchical government, formalism, state churches, sacramentalism, etc.)
- k. A Persecuting “Church” – vs. 5  
As the world enters the Tribulation period, there will be many martyrs – those who refuse to worship the Beast, etc.  
In the last 1,700 years, the Roman Catholic Church has butchered over 50 million Christians – mostly Baptists – through its inquisitions and crusades. This does not take into account the wholesale slaughter of Jews and Muslims through other crusades. It was the Roman Catholic Church which invented the Rack and the Thumb-screws, which burnt so many at the stake, which devised cruel inhuman means of slaughter.  
Already this system is ‘drunk with blood’ – but more is to come.

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- I. The End Result of the Ecumenical Movement  
Proverbs 7:6-21 gives the actions of the Harlot. Today, there is an openly declared desire to unite all religions into one world “church.” This is known as the ecumenical movement. It is the children of Rome who are desiring to return home to mother.  
Whether this is completely accomplished before the Rapture is not possible to tell – but in the Tribulation period, the Church of Rome will be like a deep sewer into which all apostate Christendom and heathendom will drain.
  
- III. The Identity of Religious Babylon – vs. 7, 9, 15, 18
  - a. The Identity is to be Known – vs. 7  
It is not the Lord’s intention to keep the identity of this whore a secret.
  
  - b. The Seven Mountains – vs. 9  
The Seven Hills  
Aventine, Caelian, Capitoline, Ezquiline, Palatine, Quirinal, and Viminal.  
Historical reference to Rome  
Rome has been termed the “lofty city of seven peaks.”  
A coin of the Roman Emperor Vespasian (69-79 AD) represents Rome seated on seven hills.  
The Confraternity Bible  
This 1963 official Roman Catholic Version notes that it is Rome which is referred to in Revelation 17:9.
  
  - c. Rome is the Center of Apostate Religion Today.  
The Vatican wields world-wide influence (vs 15) over almost 25% of the world’s population today. It is the greatest center of religion in the world. A power behind kings, vs. 18.
  
- IV. The Power of Religious Babylon – vs. 8, 10-14
  - a. The Woman sits upon the Beast – vs. 3, 7, 9  
This indicates 2 things:
    - The woman’s power comes from the Beast. The woman is supported by the Antichrist and Satan.
    - The woman exercises control over the Beast.  
Just as any rider controls a horse, so this woman plays an influencing role in the shaping of the rise of the Antichrist. This can be seen today in the attempts of Christendom to mediate in worldly affairs.
  
  - b. The Identity of the Beast – vs. 8  
This is the Antichrist – the counterfeit Messiah who will in some way imitate death and resurrection. (see Rev 13:3)

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### c. The Seven Kings – vs. 10

These 7 kings do not correspond with the 7 heads in verse 9 because of the conjunction “and.” The interpretation of this verse is that these ‘kings’ are ‘world kingdoms’ or Empires.

“...five are fallen...” – Egypt (1600-1200 BC), Assyria (900-600 BC), Babylon (606-538 BC), Medo-Persia (538-333 BC), Greece (333-63 BC)

“...and one is...” – Rome

“...and the other is not yet come...” – Ten Nation Confederation

### d. The Ten Nation Confederation

- Referred to as ten horns – vs. 12, Rev 13:1
- The Ten Toes of Nebuchadnezzar’s vision – Dan 2:31-45
- The Ten Horns of Daniel 7 – Dan 7:24
- A short-lived kingdom – vs. 10, 12

### e. The Eighth King – vs. 11

- Identified as the Antichrist – vs. 11
- The ‘notable horn’  
Notice “...he is of the seven...”. See: Dan 7:20, 24, 25  
From this we learn that the Antichrist will rise up out of the revived Roman Empire.

### f. The Concern of the Ten Kings – vs. 13-14

- They will be instruments in the hands of Satan – vs. 13
- They will do all they can to enthrone Antichrist – vs. 13
- They will resist Christ – vs. 14

## V. The Destruction of Religious Babylon – vs. 16-17

### a. A “Showdown between two Totalitarian Powers” – vs. 16

It appears the following tribulation scenario will occur:

- The Apostate Religious system will assist the rise of the one world government and Antichrist.
- Perhaps Religious Babylon will attempt to gain total control.
- The Governmental system will destroy all religion

### b. Man Does God’s Work – vs. 17

The Lord often works this way. Cf. Ezekiel 39:1-6, where godless Russia and her allies will be destroyed, possibly by the Antichrist.