

INTRODUCTION

I'll never forget the first time I ever cooked rice. I was just a kid and I figured I could eat a couple of cups of rice myself and my brother was going to eat some too. I figured he would eat a couple of cups so I put four cups of rice in a pot and you can imagine what happened! That's kind of what happened as I began to study Revelation 17 again.

The book of Revelation is divided into three sections. Jesus said to John, "Write the things which you have seen." That was in chapter 1, the vision of Jesus. Then he said, "Write the things which are," which are chapters 2 and 3, the vision of the seven churches. Then, he said, "Write the things which shall be," and from chapter 4 on we are looking at the future. Now we are coming to the conclusion of the section that deals with the seven years of Tribulation. In the seven years of Tribulation from chapter six on, we have seen the seven seals that were opened; we have heard the seven trumpets that blew announcing judgement, and then we studied last week those seven bowls (vials) of wrath that have been poured out. Chapters 17 and 18 are not part of the chronological sequence. They are another one of those parenthetical passages that discuss what we have noted previously and that is the fall of Babylon. "Babylon the Great is fallen" and there is the "mystery Babylon." We've seen that a couple of times already and I told you to hold on, because there was going to be a very detailed message on it. So if you don't know what it's talking about when it says, "The Fall of Babylon," that's what we are going to study today.

Revelation 17:1-6. "One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, 'Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters. With her the kings of the earth committed adultery and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries.' Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names, and had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. This title was written on her forehead:

MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus. When I saw her, I was greatly astonished."

If you saw a vision like that, you would probably be greatly astonished as well. What does the prostitute riding on a beast with all these horns and eyes mean? Fortunately, this is one of those visions that is going to be interpreted in the scripture itself detail by detail later. We don't have to guess—it's there for us.

Verses 7-17. "Then the angel said to me: 'Why are you astonished? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast she rides, which has the seven heads and ten

horns. The beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and will come up out of the Abyss and go to his destruction. The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast, because he once was, now is not, and yet will come. This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for a little while. The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction. The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast. They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.

Then the angel said to me, 'The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages. The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to give the beast their power to rule, until God's words are fulfilled.'

I. THE FALL OF RELIGIOUS BABYLON

If you still don't know who or what the woman is, verse 18 is for people like me who need to be slapped across the face. "The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth." Today I'll be talking about the fall of religious Babylon and later we'll study the fall of economic Babylon. You are saying, "I still don't understand what Babylon is. I know that in history there was a nation called Babylon which is modern day Iraq." That's exactly right. But Babylon really represents a system, a mindset, a philosophy.

A. "Babylon" comes from Babel

Babylon comes from the word "Babel." Most of you know the story of the tower of Babel in Genesis 11. There were some people who got together and decided they were smart enough and had enough skill that they could build a tower that would reach unto God. *Bab* in Hebrew means "gate." *El* means "God," Literally "the gate to God." They thought they were going to build a tower that would be their gate to God by their own wisdom and strength. That is the attitude, the mindset, of Babylon or Babel. The idea that "I can establish contact with God on my own! I don't need anything or anybody else. I am good enough I can reach where God is and I can become as God." And you remember what happened. Everyone was speaking one language and God said, "Well I'll just do something about that." and ZAP! Suddenly they were all speaking different languages and they could no longer build the tower, so they separated into the nations of the earth.

But that's not all. Let me tell you "the rest of the story." The Bible says the ringleader in the building of the tower of Babel was a fellow named Nimrod, who was a great hunter. Nimrod had a wife named Simiramus. Nimrod died, but Simiramus lived on and became a very important

leader. She was a female, of course, and she gave birth to a son named Tammuz. That's in the Bible because the prophet Jeremiah is lamenting over the fact that the children of Israel are gathering around and weeping for Tammuz in Jeremiah 44:19 and Ezekiel 8:14. Tammuz was the son of Simiramus and Nimrod. The legend is that Tammuz was killed by a wild boar, but Simiramus took his body, laid it out and for forty days, she fasted and wept over the body of her son. The legend says after forty days, Tammuz came back to life. So Simiramus and Tammuz became a religion. Not a religion God sanctioned, but a false religion, worship of a mother and a son. This became the cult of the worship of a mother and a son that spread throughout all of the ancient civilizations. Have you studied ancient history or comparative religions? Every major civilization had this myth, this legend of a mother goddess who gave birth to a child god. The Phoenicians called her Ashtorath. And her son's name was Baal. The Egyptians called the mother Isis and her son was Osiris. The Greeks called her Aphrodite and her son's name was Eros. The Romans named the mother goddess Venus and her son's name was Cupid. This religion developed in all the pagan countries and was a very detailed religion that had a lot of ceremonies and practices. Most of them revolved around the spring of the year. They would worship this risen god and for forty days before the vernal equinox, which is in the spring, they would weep, and fast, and pray.

They had a symbol. Have you ever seen the symbol of an egg on a pedestal? An egg represented fertility and they didn't understand how an egg worked and so they worshiped the egg. The unusual thing about this egg is that it is standing upon its small end, balanced. This is like the theory of relativity that somebody told me this morning. Somebody told me years ago that at midnight of the vernal equinox, you can take an egg and stand it up on the small end. I've never tried it. I'm never up at midnight on the day of the vernal equinox. Maybe you want to try that sometime. I don't know it may or may not work. Somebody just told me that. This was their ancient symbol. Have you seen these around the necks of people even today in symbols? That's what it is. It was the symbol of this religion of Babylon.

1. The woman = a city

Having said all of that, let's see how it applies to what we just read here. Let's see what each of these things represent and see if you can get a picture of who this prostitute, this woman this false religion is. Number one the woman represents a city. Look at verse 18. It says, "the woman is a great city that rules over the kings of the earth."

2. The seven heads = seven hills and kingdoms

The seven heads represent seven hills. There is one major city in the world known as the city on seven hills: Rome. Rome is the great city on seven hills. These seven heads also represent seven kings according to verses 9-10. "The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman" (which is a city) sits. They are also seven kings." The angel is trying to help John here, but we don't know history maybe as well as John does. Five of these kingdoms have fallen. I believe he is talking about the Egyptian Kingdom, the Assyrian Kingdom, the Babylonian Kingdom, the Persian Kingdom, and the Kingdom of Greece. Those five had fallen when John had this vision. He said, "one is," which is the Roman Kingdom and then he says, "There's going to be one more," which

could be the "Re-federated" European Kingdom. Then he said, "The eighth is going to be the kingdom of the beast."

3. The ten horns = ten nations

The beast is the Antichrist in Revelation. So the seven heads are seven hills and seven kings; these seven kings are confederated with the beast. What are the ten horns? Verse 12 says the ten horns on the beast represent ten nations that are in verse 12. These are all symbols. Daniel also prophesied that during the time of the Antichrist there would be ten kings who gave him power and ruled with him. I'm not really into this like some people are, but most people who have studied this say they believe it is some kind of a revived European economy, some kind of a revived European unity. I don't have to tell you what's happening in our world history. There used to be two major world powers, the Soviet Union and the United States. It's hard to call the Soviet Union an economic power anymore, so it's more like Japan and America. But there is a great move in Europe right now to unite all of these European nations into a European Economic Confederation—one monetary system; one kind of loosely confederated government and if that happens they are going to be a world power. It could be that ten of these kingdoms will come out of the European Confederation.

4. The water = many people

5. The beast = Antichrist

What about the waters upon which she sits? In verse 15, the Bible says it is many people; there many people upon which this woman is sitting. They represent "peoples, multitudes, nations and languages." and as I said earlier the beast is the Antichrist. We've already been introduced to him.

B. Religious Babylon is an apostate system centered in Rome

This woman is a religious system an apostate religious system. Look at verse 5. "She is the mother of prostitutes and of the abominations of the earth." An abomination means religious apostasy (abandonment). She is riding on the beast. In other words, she and the beast are king together. This false religion and the Antichrist are teammates. We know that this false religion, is called a prostitute, which means she has sold herself and is not pure. She has committed spiritual adultery and is located in a certain place, and it's a city called Rome.

Religious Babylon is an apostate system centered in Rome (the city on seven hills) involved in world politics. Look at verse 2 again. "With her the kings of the earth committed adultery and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries." She is involved with the kings the governments of the world—she is politically involved. She is centered in Rome, involved in world politics, and possessing great wealth. Verse 4. "The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand." So this religious system is very wealthy. This religious system has also been guilty of persecuting Christians. Verse 6. "I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus."

The last thing we can know about this false religious system that is going to be operating during the time of the Tribulation is it will be betrayed by the Antichrist. That's the amazing thing. God won't have to destroy it. The Antichrist will destroy it. Look at verse 16. "The beast and the ten horns that you saw will hate the prostitute." Now she is riding on it, but the beast is going to turn on her. "They" meaning the Antichrist and these other kings "will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire."

Let me tell you what I believe and what many other people believe is represented by this apostate religious system this Babylon-ish system. I believe it is the structure and the system of the Roman Catholic Church. I cannot escape from that; knowing the Roman Catholic Church and from studying what the scripture says. First, the history of the Roman Catholic Church. When John wrote this, there was no Roman Catholic Church. For the first three hundred years of the early Christian church, the church was persecuted terribly by the Roman Empire. But in the year 313 Roman Emperor Constantine was going into battle and had a vision. Up in the sky he saw these Latin words, "In hoc signo vinces," which means, "By this sign, conquer!" and he saw a cross. This was an amazing religious experience for Constantine so he said, "I'm going to fight this battle in the name of the cross." and he goes out and wins the battle. So Constantine issued a decree saying, "From this point on everybody in the Roman Empire is to be a Christian! No choice. No question. You are to be a Christian!" At first thought you might say, "Well, that's wonderful because Christians were no longer persecuted." He meant to legalize Christianity. What actually happened was Christianity became paganized. Remember the religion of Babel I mentioned? Do any of the elements of this mother-child worship exist today in the Roman Catholic Church? Sure they do. It's all over it. I could give you many, many examples. You study this Babylonian religion that I talked about of Simiramus and Tammuz. They had the presence and the practice of what they call "holy water." They ate little wafers as part of their worship. Their priests were not married. I'm talking about the pagan religion; it involved the use of what they called "vestal virgins," women so committed to that practice of religion they would never marry. Does any of that ring a bell with any of you about what's happening in the Roman Catholic Church?

If you say, "Are you saying that everybody in the Roman Catholic Church is lost?" No I am not. I believe there are many Roman Catholic Christians. I think there are many people today in the Roman Catholic Church who love the Lord who believe in Jesus and who believe the Bible more than they do church traditions. I have talked with some of them who are upset about some of the things in their traditions I am talking about a *system*. I am not even talking about current Roman Catholics—I am talking about the ones who are going to be here *after* the church has been raptured out. I think there are going to be some Roman Catholics raptured out of here with other believers. I'm talking about the system that exists today and all the things in it that are absolutely identical with this religion of Babel.

What about it? What about this worship of a mother and her son? Some of the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church involving Mary are nowhere to be found in scripture. For instance, the doctrine of an immaculate conception, which says Mary was a perpetual virgin. She was a virgin before Jesus was born and she remained a virgin after Jesus was born. She never had intercourse with Joseph and she never had any other children. That's the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, which has to ignore in the gospel the presence of half brothers and half sisters of

Jesus. There is also the doctrine of the bodily assumption of Mary. They believe and teach Mary was assumed up into heaven bodily, just like Jesus, and she is called the "co-mediatrix." Jesus is the mediator and she is the co-mediatrix.

I have been to Rome on two occasions. I have been in St. Peter's Basilica on the square of the Vatican and as you walk in St. Peter's Basilica, there is a beautiful church. You turn to the right and there is one of Michelangelo's sculptures, "The Madonna" also called "The Pieta" It is a sculpture of Mary holding the body of Jesus after he has been taken down from the cross. It is a very tender, touching sculpture, because Jesus is obviously dead and Mary is obviously hurt and weeping and she is holding him in her arms. If you look at that sculpture to scale, Mary is so much bigger than the adult Jesus. If Jesus were 6 feet tall, then according to that sculpture, Mary would be 9 feet tall. Was Michelangelo that bad? No. I think he was trying to communicate something that basically was a doctrine of the Catholic Church—that Mary was larger than life. There are five main Catholic basilicas in Rome; all of them are ancient and beautiful. There is one called The Cathedral of St. Mary's. As you walk in and turn and look up to the top just over the front portico there is a life-size crucifix. On one side of the crucifix, Jesus is crucified but on the backside of the same cross Mary is crucified.

This doctrine of the worship of a mother and a son has its roots in these pagan religions. A lot of the festivals and a lot of the practices they instituted we even practice today ourselves basically come from some of that pagan religion. Christmas was originally a pagan worship called Sol Invictus. Do you think Jesus was born December 25th? We don't know exactly when he was born, but we doubt seriously he was born December 25th, because the shepherds were out tending their sheep at night. You don't do that in Bethlehem and Judea in the middle of winter. It's as cold over there as it is here. That was only done in the spring, summer and fall. Then why do we celebrate Christmas on December 25th? There's a real reason for it. After Constantine made it the edict, one of the pagan religions was this festival of Sol Invictus. Ancient man used to worship darkness and light not understanding it and they would notice that in the fall of the year, darkness seemed to be overtaking the daylight every day. We know what's going on. We know about the rotation of the earth on its axis, but they did not. All they knew was that darkness was winning over light. "Oh, no! Darkness is going to win and we're going to have nothing but darkness!" but on or about our December 21st, something happens that's called the winter solstice? That's when there is the longest period of darkness and the shortest period of light and after that day, it starts to reverse itself. So on or about December 25th, they would have a wonderful celebration called Sol Invictus. After the whole Roman Empire became Christians, they didn't want to have these pagan celebrations anymore so guess what? They just made it a Christian celebration the birthday of Jesus.

Does that mean we are wrong to celebrate the birth of Jesus on December 25? I don't think so, because we don't know when he was born, so anytime we want to celebrate it is as good as any other time. As long as you don't get involved in some of these pagan things, you can celebrate the birth of Jesus any time you want.

We know for certain about the resurrection of Jesus. But where do you think we got the name "Easter?" From the Phoenician goddess, Ishtar. Where do you think we got all these things about eggs and things? That just became part of the system. Why do you think the Roman Catholic

Church spends forty days praying and fasting before Ishtar/Easter? Because that was part of the Babylonian religion.

This is simply what I think the system the Antichrist is going to use. There is already a movement in our world for ecumenism, which is for a one-world church. There are a lot of liberal Protestants who would gladly jump in with the Roman Catholic Church right now. You ought to thank God every day that Southern Baptists never have been and never will be a part of The World Council of Churches or The National Council of Churches. So I'm not just talking about a Roman Catholic system, because by this time it will be all the church systems united into one One-World Government, One World Church based in Rome!

Religious Babylon is an apostate system centered in Rome that's obviously involved in world politics. There is one church in this world that has an embassy that sends out ambassadors, that has its own state. Did you know that the Vatican in Rome is a country? It is a world state and just a few years ago the United States recognized it as a state. The Vatican has a seat in the United Nations! Recently, they have sent their ambassador here to America. You see that church is already involved in world politics. The Bible says the woman possesses great wealth. It is estimated that in America alone, the Roman Catholic Church controls \$34.6 billion in assets. That's more than AT&T before their divestiture. Most of it is in real estate banking. Worldwide it is estimated the Roman Catholic Church controls \$70 billion in assets.

What about persecuting Christians? Certainly the Roman Catholic Church has never persecuted Christians. Read your history books. I wish everyone studied religious history. When I took church history, my professor called it, "The Period of the Pornographic Popes." It was a time during the Dark Ages when nobody was reading the Bible, especially the Roman Catholics or the Popes and they were involved in criminal activities, sexual immorality and so many amazing things you wouldn't believe it! They should have been thrown in jail for what they did. These were the leaders of the church. It was because people were not reading and believing the Bible.

Then as people began reading the Bible, pockets of Christians began to jump up and say, "The Church is wrong!" That's why the whole Protestant Reformation took place, because Martin Luther could not stomach the selling of indulgences for people to go to heaven. So pockets of believers said, "Hey that's not true!" and began to rebel against the church. The church said, "Well you can't do that and we're going to squash you!" Thus began one of the darkest times in history known as the Inquisition. It's in the history books. Tens of thousands of believers were killed by whom the Roman Catholic Church. Tomas de Torquemada, who was called "The Inquisitor General," was the bloodiest of all. The day Pope Sixtus IV named him as "The Inquisitor General" his gift to the Pope was the heads of 2,000 rebellious Christians. It is estimated that two hundred thousand Christians were killed during the Inquisition.

Have you ever seen some of these old movies with torture racks and torture chambers? That was from the Inquisition. They were very creative in how they did it. There it is. John predicted centuries before that they would look persecute Christians. Verse 6. "I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus." So this is that Babylonian system. What's going to happen to it?

The Antichrist is going to use it. Any good politician uses all his allies. He's going to use it to establish his world power, but the time is going to come when he will no longer need this religious Babylon so he will turn on it and destroy it. You say, "Pastor, this just all seems like it's going to be getting out of control. It's going to be awful and terrible!" Well it is going to be awful and terrible, but it's not going to be out of control. I want you to know *God* is in control. Verse 17. It says, "For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to give the beast their power to rule, until God's words are fulfilled." God is still in control.

The final good news is in verse 14. "They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings." Which group are you going to be in? Are you going to be a part of this false church that is still going to exist after Jesus comes back? Look at the last part of verse 14. "And with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers." Can you say, "That's who I am! I am called. Jesus has called me out of darkness into light and I trust him as my Lord and Savior. He has chosen me and I am a faithful follower of Jesus Christ." It's going to be an amazing time! And I want you to look around you and I want you to see the world getting ready for all this to take place.

OUTLINE

I. THE FALL OF RELIGIOUS BABYLON (vs. 17:1-18)

A. "Babylon" comes from Babel (Genesis 10:11)

1. The woman = a city (vs. 18)
2. The seven heads = seven hills (vs. 9) and kingdoms (vs. 10)
3. The ten horns = ten nations (vs. 12) (See Daniel 2:36)
4. The water = many people (vs. 15)
5. The beast = Antichrist (vs. 8)

B. Religious Babylon is an apostate system centered in Rome (vs. 9); involved in world politics (vs. 2); possessing great wealth (vs. 4); persecuting Christians (vs. 6); which will be betrayed by antichrist (vs. 16).

NOTE: The second half of this outline is covered in "The Coming Meltdown of the World System, part 2":

II. THE FAILURE OF ECONOMIC BABYLON (vs. 18:1-24)

A. The cause of destruction (vs. 1-3)

1. Demonic
2. Intoxicating
3. Immoral

B. The call for separation (vs. 4-8)

C. The cry of mourning (vs. 9-19)

D. The chorus of rejoicing (vs. 20-24)



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes