

The Coming Meltdown of the World System Part 1 • Revelation 17 • By Dr. David O. Dykes. Part 23 in the series Revelation: Unveiling the Truth

INTRODUCTION

The passage in Revelation 17 is about the great fall of religious Babylon. Revelation 18 is about the fall of economic Babylon. Babylon was a city in ancient Middle East history, but it is also a symbol that represents a mindset, system, and philosophy that is opposed to God. Babylon comes from the word “babel,” (which means “gate to God” in Hebrew). You are familiar with the story of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 10 and 11. Some people decided they were smart enough to build a tower that would reach God. In other words, by their own wisdom, their own strength, and their own abilities, they were going to reach God. That is the attitude and mindset of Babylon in Revelation.

And you remember what happened? Everybody was speaking one language at the time, and God said, “I’ll do something about that.” And suddenly they were all speaking different languages, and they no longer could build the tower because they didn’t understand each other. And so they separated and dispersed among the nations of the earth.

Let me tell you the rest of the story. Do you know who the ringleader was in the building of this tower? It was a fellow by the name of Nimrod, who was a great hunter. The Bible says Nimrod had a wife named Semiramis, and she gave birth to a son named Tammuz. The prophet Jeremiah lamented the fact that the children of Israel had wept for Tammuz (Jeremiah 44 and Ezekiel 8:14) when he was killed by a wild boar. According to legend, his mother fasted and wept over his body for 40 days, and he came back to life. So they became a false religion about the worship of a mother and son, and it spread throughout all ancient civilizations.

Have you studied ancient history? Have you studied comparative religions? Every major civilization had this myth of a mother goddess who gave birth to a child god. For instance, the Phoenicians called her Asherah, 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 Ares. The Romans named the mother goddess Venus, and her son's name was Cupid. This religion developed in all the pagan countries with ceremonies and practices revolving around the spring of the year when they would worship this risen god. And for 40 days before the Vernal Equinox, which is in the spring, they would weep and fast. Their religion had the symbol of a pedestal and on the pedestal was an egg balanced on the small end to

represent fertility. They didn't understand how fertility worked, so they worshipped the egg.

Have you seen these eggs around the necks of people even today? That's what it is. It is the symbol of this religion of Babylon. Now having said all of that, let's see how this applies to the symbols in Revelation 17.

I. SYMBOLS IN REVELATION

1. The woman represents a city. (17:18)

The woman in this passage is a great city that rules over the kings of the earth. The seven heads represent seven hills. Now there is one major city in the world that is known as the City on Seven Hills—Rome. The seven heads also represent seven kings (17:9-10). The angel in this passage is trying to help John understand this, and we don't know history as well as John does! Five of these kingdoms have fallen, he says. I believe he's talking about the Egyptian kingdom, Assyrian kingdom, Babylonian kingdom, Persian kingdom, and the kingdom of Greece. Those five had already fallen. When John got this vision, the Roman kingdom was active. And then he says there's going to be one more, which could be the European kingdom. And then he said that the eighth is going to be the kingdom of the beast. The beast, of course, is the Antichrist in Revelation.

2. The 10 horns are 10 nations (17:12)

The 10 horns on the beast represent 10 nations. Daniel also prophesied that during the time of the Antichrist, there will be 10 key things that gave him power and ruled with him. Most people who study this believe that it is describing some kind of revived European economy and 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 United States. Regarding the Soviet Union, it's hard to call them an economic world power anymore. But there's a great move in Europe right now to form these European nations in a European economic confederation with one money system. And if that happens, they're going to be a world power. And it could be that 10 of these kingdoms will come out of the European Confederation.

3. The waters are the peoples (17:15)

There are many waters upon which this woman is sitting. They represent peoples, multitudes, nations, and languages.

II. BABYLON IS AN APOSTATE RELIGIOUS SYSTEM

1. The woman symbolizes a religious system (17:5)

In verse 5, she is the mother of prostitutes, the abominations of the earth. Abomination means religious apostasy. She is riding on the beast. In other words, she and the beast are teamed together. This false religion and the Antichrist are teammates. Now we know that this false religion is called a prostitute, which means she has sold herself. She's not pure. She has committed spiritual adultery. She is also located in a certain place, and it's a city called Rome. Religious Babylon is an apostate system centered in Rome, a city on seven hills, that is involved in world politics.

2. The religious system is impure (17:2)

In verse 2, it says with her the kings of the earth committed adultery. She's politically involved with the kings and the governments of the world.

3. The religious system is wealthy (17:4)

She also possesses great wealth, according to 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. This religious system is very wealthy.

4. This religious system has also been guilty of persecuting Christians (17:6)

The woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus.

5. This religious system operates during the tribulation (17:16)

The last thing we can know about this false religious system is that it is going to be operating during the time of the tribulation. And it will be betrayed by the Antichrist. Now that's an amazing thing. God won't have to destroy the system. The Antichrist will destroy it. The beast and the 10 horns that John saw are going to hate the prostitute. Now she's riding on it, but the beast is going to turn on her. The Antichrist is going to turn on her, and these other kings will bring her to ruin and leave her naked. They will eat her flesh and burn her with fire.

III. RELIGIOUS BABYLON IS THE STRUCTURE AND SYSTEM OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Now, having said all of that, let me tell you what I believe and what many other people believe is represented by this apostate religious system. Babylon 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. Now, you must understand several things. You must understand the history of the Roman Catholic church. When John wrote this, of course, there was no Roman Catholic church during the first 300 years of the Early Church (that was persecuted

terribly by the Roman empire). But the Roman emperor Constantine was going into battle, and he had a vision in 312 AD. Up in the sky, he saw a cross and these Latin words “in hoc signo vinces,” which means “by this sign conquer.” 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. And so Constantine issued a decree and said, “From this point on everybody in the Roman empire is to be a Christian, no choice, no question. You’re to be a Christian.” And at first thought you might say “that’s wonderful” because Christians were no longer persecuted. He meant to legalize Christianity. But what actually happened was that Christianity got paganized.

Do you remember this religion of Babel that I mentioned earlier? Do any of the elements of this mother, child worship exist today in the Roman Catholic church? Sure they do. I could give you many, many examples. The Babylonian religion had the practice of using “holy water.” They also ate little wafers as part of their pagan worship and had Vestal virgins who were so committed to this practice of religion that they would never marry. Does any of that ring a bell about what’s happening in the Roman Catholic church?

Am I saying this is true about everybody in the Roman Catholic churches? No, I’m not. There are many Roman Catholic Christians and 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 tradition. I’ve talked with some of them who are upset about some of the things in their tradition.

I’m talking about a system and, listen, I’m not even talking about current Roman Catholics. I’m talking about the ones who are going to be here after the Church has been raptured. I think some Roman Catholics will be raptured with other believers. I’m talking about the system that exists today and all the things in it that are identical with this religion of mother and son.

Did you know that some of the doctrines of the Roman Catholic church involving Mary are nowhere to be found in scripture? For instance, the doctrine of immaculate conception, which says that Mary was a perpetual virgin. They say she was a virgin before Jesus was born and she remained a virgin after Jesus was born. She never had intercourse with Joseph. She never had any other children. That’s the doctrine of the immaculate conception, which ignores what the gospels say the half-brothers and half-sisters of Jesus.

There is also the doctrine of the bodily assumption of Mary. They believe and teach that Mary was assumed up into heaven bodily, just like Jesus. And she is called a co-mediatrix of our faith where Jesus is the mediator and Mary is the co-mediatrix. I’ve been to Rome on two occasions. I’ve been in St. Peter’s Basilica on

the square of the Vatican. As you walk into St. Peter's Basilica, you turn to the right and there is one of Michelangelo's sculptures, The Madonna, a sculpture of Mary holding the body of Jesus after he's been taken down from the cross. And it's a very tender, touching sculpture because Jesus is obviously dead. And Mary is obviously hurt and weeping, holding him in her arms. The only thing is, if you look at that sculpture to scale, Mary is so much bigger than the adult Jesus. If Jesus was six feet tall, according to that sculpture, Mary would be nine feet tall. Was Michelangelo that bad? I think not. 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's one called the Cathedral of St. Mary's. And as you walk in and turn and look up to the top, just over the front portico, there is a life-size crucifix. And on one side of the crucifix, Jesus is crucified. But on the backside of the same cross, Mary is crucified. This doctrine of a worship of a mother and a son has its roots in pagan religions.

There are a lot of the festivals and a lot of the practices that they instituted that we even worship today. Some holidays come from some of that pagan religion. Christmas, for instance, was from pagan worship. We don't know exactly when Jesus was born, but we doubt seriously he was born December 25th because of the shepherds tending their sheep at night. You don't do that in Bethlehem or Judea in the middle of winter. It's as cold over there then as it is here! This was only done in the spring and summer and fall. There's a reason why we celebrate Christmas on December the 25th. After Constantine made the edict, they rethought one of the pagan religions that featured the festival of Sol Invictus when ancient man worshipped darkness. They didn't understand darkness. But they would notice that in the fall of the year, darkness seemed to be overtaking the daylight every day. Now we know what's going on. We know it's the rotation of the earth on its axis. They did not. All they knew was that darkness was winning over light and that darkness was going to win. On December 21st, something happens called a Winter Solstice, right? That marks the longest period of darkness, the shortest period of light. The day after that, it starts to reverse itself. And so on or about December 25th, the pagans would have a wonderful celebration festival 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 into a Christian celebration, the birthday of Jesus. Does that mean we're wrong to celebrate the birth of Jesus on December 25th? I don't think so. You know why? We don't know when he was born. So anytime we want to celebrate it is as good as any other time.

So long as you don't get involved in some of these pagan things, celebrate the birth of Jesus anytime you want to.

We know for certain about the resurrection Jesus, but where do you think we got the name Easter? From the Phoenician goddess Ishtar. And where do you think we got all these things about eggs and things that just became part of that holiday system? The Roman Catholic church spends 40 days praying and fasting for Easter (Ishtar) because that was also part of the Babylonian religion.

Now having said all of that, I want you to understand that this is simply the system that the Antichrist is going to use. There's already a move in our world toward ecumenism. That is, for there to be a one-world church. And there's a lot of liberal Protestants who would gladly jump in with the Roman Catholic church right now, the world Catholic church. I mean the World council of churches would do so; the National council of churches would do so. You ought to thank God every day that Southern Baptists never have been part of the World council of churches or the National council of churches. And 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 and one world church.

IV. RELIGIOUS BABYLON IS AN APOSTATE SYSTEM CENTERED IN ROME

There is one church in this world with an embassy that sends out ambassadors and 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. They have a seat in the United Nations. The Vatican recently sent their ambassador here to America. You see, that church is already involved in world politics.

Religious Babylon possesses great wealth, and it's estimated that in an America alone the Roman Catholic church controls \$34.6 billion of assets. That's more than ATT before they're divested. It is also involved in real estate banking worldwide. It is estimated that the Roman Catholic church controls \$70 billion of assets.

Religious Babylon persecutes Christians. What about that? You say, "Certainly the Roman Catholic church has never persecuted Christians." But read your history books. I wish everyone would study religious history. I took church history in college, and our professor called the Dark Ages the "period of the pornographic pope." Nobody was reading the Bible, especially the Roman Catholics popes, and they were involved in criminal activities and sexual immorality. You wouldn't believe it. They should be thrown in jail for what they did. These were the leaders of the church. But people were not reading and believing the Bible.

But then as people began to read the Bible, groups and pockets of Christians began to spring 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. The believers said, "Hey, that's not true. We're going to rebel against the church." And the church said, "You can't do that. And we're going to squash you." Thus began one of the darkest times in history called the Inquisition. Tens of thousands of believers were killed by Rome. Torquemada, named the Inquisitor General, was the bloodiest leader of all. The day that Pope Pious named him as the Inquisitor General, his gift to the Pope was the heads of 2000 rebellious Christians. It's estimated that 200,000 Christians were killed during the Inquisition. Some old movies show some of these torture racks and torture chambers Where did that come from? That was from the Inquisition.

CONCLUSION

What's going to happen to this system? The Antichrist is going to use it, as 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 no longer will he need this religious Babylon. So he will turn on it, and he will destroy it.

Now you say, "Pastor, this just all seems like it's going to be getting out of control. It's just 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. Verse 17 reminds us that God is in control. It says, "For God put it in 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. Look at verse 14 of chapter 17. The final good news is that they're going to war against the Lamb, but the Lamb is going to overcome. Why? 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 will still exist after Jesus comes back? Look at the last part of that verse. It says in verse 14 that he's going to be with his called ones, his chosen and faithful followers.

Can you say that? Jesus called me out of darkness into light. And I've trusted him as my Lord and Savior. He has chosen me, and I am a faithful follower of Jesus. Look around you at what's happening. I want you to see the world is getting ready for all this to take place.

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