

The Overthrow of Religious Babylon of the End Times

Revelation 17

Revelation 17 - *"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, ² with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication."³ So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. ⁴ 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. ⁵ And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.*

⁶ *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. ⁷ 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. ⁸ 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 *"Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ The beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition. ¹² "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. ¹³ These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. ¹⁴ 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."*

¹⁵ *Then he said to me, "The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth."*

Background Notes

Revelation 17 has a lot of detail that needs to be interpreted! The first mention of Babylon in the book of Revelation is in Revelation 14:8, where the coming judgment of Babylon was anticipated: *"And another angel followed, saying, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."* In

Revelation 17 and 18 we have the fall of “Babylon” of the last days. In brief, “Babylon” is the name used for the one world religion and one world government of the end times. In Revelation 17, we have the religious side of the end-time Babylon, and in Revelation 18, we have the commercial side of the end-time Babylon.

A major question of interpretation: Is the Babylon of Revelation 17 and 18 the literal Babylon on the Euphrates River, where the city has always been located? In the last days, will this city rise again to become a world religious and commercial center? Or is the name “Babylon” symbolic, as are many things in the book of Revelation? As ancient Babylon was the focus of the culture of this world, religious and commercial, against the one true God, so end time “Babylon” is symbolic of world religion and world commerce as it continues to oppose the God of the Bible.

If the “Babylon” of Revelation 17 and 18 is only a symbolic name for end-time anti-God religion and commerce, then the literal great city of verse 18, “...*that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth,*” is probably Rome, as many commentators believe. After all, when the true Church leaves at the Rapture, Rome would be a likely place for an apostate Christendom to be centered. The seven mountains of verse 9 seem to support this view, because Rome always been known as “the city on seven hills.” On the other hand, verse 10 seems to suggest that the seven mountains are not literal hills, but symbolic of seven kings or powers.

Furthermore, if a global movement to join Islam and apostate Christendom into one world religion takes place after the true Church leaves at the Rapture, what better place in the world to set up this New Age center than literal ancient Babylon? It’s still there, with building plans for expansion! So, we can’t be sure whether or not the rebuilt ancient city of Babylon is involved in these prophecies, but we can be sure of our doctrinal points from this chapter.

Doctrinal Points

1. Religious “Babylon” is the false religious system of the end times.

First of all, notice that end-time Babylon is pictured as a prostitute. The true Church is the Bride of Christ, and the true Church will leave this earth at the time of the Rapture. The false religious system of the end times is represented as a prostitute. She has caused the kings of the earth to commit spiritual fornication -- that is, she has led people away from the true way of salvation. False religion always looks good on the outside, as we see in verse 4, but it is evil on the inside. Verse 5 gives her true description: “*And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.*”

Think of all the evil that’s been perpetrated in the name of false religion throughout human history, including the murder and martyrdom of true believers. As we see in verse 6: “*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.*” This will continue during the Tribulation Period of the end times. Religious Babylon is the false religious system of the end times.

2. Religious Babylon will be overthrown by the Beast of the end times.

At the beginning of the chapter, "Babylon," the prostitute, is seen riding the beast. However, at the end of the chapter, she is overthrown and destroyed by the beast. Verse 16: "*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.*" Now who is this beast? We believe the beast here is the same as the first beast of Revelation 13, namely the revived Roman Empire. Notice the same ten horns and seven heads that we saw back in Revelation 13:1. Also, as verse 8 indicates, the Roman Empire was, but now is not, but will be revived -- and when it is revived it will be from the abyss. It will be evil and demonic.

Verses 9-10 tell us that the seven heads are seven mountains and seven kings. Five have fallen; one is, and the other has not yet come, and when he comes, he will continue for a short time. Do these seven mountains and kings represent different stages of world history, or different Roman rulers, or different forms of government, or something else? It's hard to say, but verse 11 indicates that the seventh becomes the eighth. This eighth seems to be not only the revived Roman Empire, but also the end-time ruler of the revived Roman Empire, namely the Roman Beast of the number 666 notoriety (Revelation 13).

In verse 12 we see that the ten kings (represented by the ten horns) will rule simultaneously under the Beast, but only for a short time. Verse 16 says that the ten horns or kings of the revived Roman Empire hate the harlot of Babylon because she has control over them (as represented by Babylon riding the beast). But the Roman Beast is able to overthrow Babylon, the great religious system of the end times, and make her desolate. This is probably at the middle of the seven-year Tribulation period.

When the seventh head of the beast becomes an eighth, and when the Beast with the number 666 overthrows all religion, the Beast will demand worship of himself --the worst kind of idolatry! Verse 17 tells us that God will work this into His purpose and His plan for bringing down the Beast himself. In our studies of Revelation we've already seen that many faithful believers who don't receive the mark of the Beast will be martyred during his rule.

Verse 14 says that the ten kings of the revived Roman Empire and the Beast with the number 666 will direct their forces against the land, but they will be overcome by the Lamb and His forces. In fact, the Beast himself will be thrown alive into hell (Revelation 19:20). The Beast is no match for the Lamb, because the Lamb is the LORD of lords, and KING of kings! "*These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings...*" So religious Babylon will be overthrown by the Beast of the end times. And the King of kings Himself will overthrow the end-time Roman Beast! Praise the Lord!

Practical Application

Can you find yourself in Revelation 17?

If you're a believer you can find yourself at the end of verse 14: "... *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.*" Notice that when the Lord returns to this earth to overthrow the Beast and set up His kingdom, others are with Him. Those who are with Him are "called and chosen and faithful." That **us** – that is, if you're a believer!

We see this truth again in Revelation 19:14, where we have a description of the Lord's return to this earth in judgment to set up His promised kingdom. Revelation 19:11-14, "*Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. ¹³ He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.*"

So, if you're a believer, you are in Revelation 17. Can you find yourself in Revelation 17?