

6,29,22 Rev. 17 & 18 The Final Destruction of Babylon

To begin this second study on Babylon, I want to set the stage by sharing some insights that will allow us to get a clear overview of chapters 17 & 18, so our interpretation will have a framework that will help us make sense of the details.

What I'm going to read first, by this author, was not originally intended to be a description of Babylon. He wrote it as a commentary on John 1:29 "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin (*singular*) of the world!" But what he wrote perfectly describes the underlying sin of Babylon which ultimately represents the world system. Here's his comments;

"What *is* the sin of the world? It is pride. You may not think so; you may not see it: but I would ask you to consider again and see if all that is called sin cannot be traced to this in some form of expression. For what is the root of pride? What is pride? It is selfhood come to life, risen up, active – that is the root of pride; and we then see the branches and fruit: jealousy, covetousness, wrath, and all the rest. Rebellion, stubbornness, prejudice, and much of our fear, are all traceable to pride. What are we afraid of? What are we fearing? If we examined our fears, why are we afraid? If we were utterly severed from personal interest – that is, if we could hand entirely over to the Lord and get out of the picture ourselves – would not a lot of our fear go?

"So may this be a word of interpretation as to why the Lord is dealing with us as He has and does – on the one hand, overcoming this evil thing, breaking, emptying, grinding to powder, until there is nothing of us left in the matter of self-sufficiency; on the other hand, giving Himself, increasing Himself. Now this is not a word, perhaps, of great inspiration, but I feel it to be a word of very great importance. This is the way along which the Lord will commit Himself. He will never give us anything to feed our flesh, to enlarge and strengthen our natural life. He will hold us to the way that keeps us safe where that is concerned. How wonderfully the Bible becomes alive when you look at it in this way! Pride was the original sin of the universe and it finds its corporate expression at the end in Babylon."

Ok, that's the *spiritual* foundation of Babylon.

As related to the Church, the deception of pride is just as determined against us as it is against the world. We won't take time to look at all the implications of this

now, but I want to share something we need to keep in mind as we move forward. This is from S.J. Andrews;

“Having ears to hear what the Spirit says to the churches, His children may know what the Lord is about to do, and be ready to take part with Him. But if they *have* no ears to hear, the Holy Spirit must cease to speak, and thus the Church knows not the place to which she has come in the progress of the Divine purpose; she knows neither her present duties nor her dangers. Just like the estimate which the Jews had of themselves at the time of the first advent of Christ, the estimate which the Church has of herself, as she approaches the time of His second advent, may be very unlike that of her Lord, as is shown in the epistle to Laodicea; she “knew not” that she was blind. When the Lord can speak to His people by those He inspires, as Jehovah spoke to the Jews of old, He can make known to them how they appear in His eyes and dispel the delusions begotten of ignorance and self-sufficiency. If He cannot so speak, they cherish their delusions and become more and more the children of pride, and are most boastful when the judgments of God are about to break upon them.”

Now, let’s begin to break down the details of Rev. 17 – we’ll start with the first 8 verses;

“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.’ 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. 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. 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. 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.'"

This is one of the most amazing sections of all Scripture, and apparently John was somewhat overwhelmed (vs. 6), "*When I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.*"

When earth is filled with those who profess to believe the only true religion and yet are idolatrous, that is spiritual Babylon.

She is called "mystery" because she is the final consummation of the Mystery of Iniquity that has been at work for thousands of years; Babylon is the culmination of all of man's mystery religions in one.

And as vs. 6 points out, this Mystery Religion has been killing God's true followers for thousands of years; "*I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of God's holy people, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus.*"

To really see the full reality of this global religious counterfeit and her influence we need to look at several facts given to us here:

1. She sits upon the Beast – she influences all political power (vs. 3). It is the perfect Church/State union.
2. The kings and inhabitants of this world have glutted themselves with her idolatry to the point of saturation (vs. 2)
3. As a system, her glory and material wealth are overwhelmingly impressive (vs. 4)

As we saw in our study of chapter 13, the Antichrist oversees this religion as the false or imitation Christ. This represents the thing God hates most. As C.A. Coates wrote,

“Whatever bears the name of Christ only to dishonor Him is the most hateful thing to God and nothing in the whole of Scripture is depicted as such an object of abhorrence to God as Babylon.”

Christ was remarkably patient with sinners and tax collectors and the only time His anger moved Him to violence was in the temple in Jerusalem.

There is something extremely evil and dangerous in religion; nothing else even comes close.

You might remember this from one of C.S. Lewis' books;

“The robber baron's cruelty may sometimes sleep, it may at some point be satiated; but those who torment us for our own good will torment us without end for they do so with the approval of their own conscience.”

Paul's greatest persecution came from religious Jews and religious Christians. It's been that way for the last 2000 years with all those who have held to the truth.

Babylon will be a global religious system that will justify, on religious grounds, the murder of millions of God's children.

And Jesus prophesied that this would happen in John 16:2-3; “. . . a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. They will do these things because they have not known the Father or Me.”

This next quote lays out the history of Babylon and also gives us an interpretation of vs's 8-13. So, first, here's the passage;

“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. Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. 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. The beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition. 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.

What I want to read now is the background of this section of Rev. 17. This is from a website that focuses on the *historical* context of prophecies in Daniel and Revelation;

“Chapter 17 deals with the harlot system of Babylon which goes all the way back to the time of Nimrod, and all these Gentile world powers have been her lovers and supporters. It’s likely that the seven mountains refer to seven successive Gentile kingdoms which go way back, far beyond Rome.

“Then to which nations do these refer? It refers to the major world empires up to the time of Rome and which also were connected with the nation of Israel and her enslavements. These were:

(1) Egypt: This was the first great world empire and the cause of Israel’s enslavement before entrance into the land.

(2) Assyria: Historically this was the next great empire which took the northern kingdom of Israel into captivity in 722 B.C.

(3) Babylon or the Chaldean empire: This is where Daniel’s prophecies begin and where we have the captivity of Judah, the southern kingdom. In Daniel’s prophecies he does not list the three preceding Gentile powers because his prophecies look forward only from his time in history to the final Gentile power and the return of the Lord.

(4) Medo-Persia: This Gentile power followed Babylon and was the kingdom under which a remnant of Israel was allowed to return to the land to rebuild the city and the temple (cf. Ezra and Nehemiah).

(5) Greece: This was the kingdom of Alexander and his successors who likewise ruled over the land of Palestine.

(6) Rome: The Roman Empire of New Testament times was the empire of the emperors who reigned from before Christ: Augustus (30 B.C. - A.D. 14), to Domitian when Revelation was written (A.D. 81-96), and afterwards. During this time, Jerusalem was destroyed and the Jews dispersed world-wide (A.D. 70 - A.D. 135). Later the Roman empire divided into the eastern and western divisions (the two legs of the image in Daniel 2) and finally fell, becoming fragmented into many nations.

“What about the seventh head? Revelation 17:10-11 explains the seventh head. It is a future kingdom though it has historical roots in the sixth kingdom. Revelation 17:10 says “five are fallen.” These five are Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia and Greece. “One is,” which is the sixth, the Roman empire of John’s day. “And the other is not yet come,” this is the *revived* Roman empire, the ten-nation confederation or the ten horns under the leadership of the white horse rider in the first half of the Tribulation.

“Compare 17:11 with 17:8, *‘The beast which you saw was (refers to his past history, old Rome), and is not (does not presently exist; from John’s standpoint it would soon pass from the scene, i.e., the fall of Rome), and is about to come up (refers to the revived Roman empire).’* Now in 17:11, this beast, the Roman empire represented by its king, becomes an eighth kingdom while at the same time being one of the seven, specifically, the seventh. The eighth refers to the imperial form of the revived Roman empire in the last half of the Tribulation under the power of the man of lawlessness, who is also called the Beast.”

Vs. 14 is self-explanatory, but just a quick comment as a reminder. Here’s the verse; *“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.”*

We’ll see this ‘war’ later in Revelation, but notice two things; first, in their deception they believe they can overcome the Lamb of God. And second, the verse says that when the Lamb overcomes them, there is a group of people with Him who are called, “chosen and faithful”.

Throughout the age of the Church, even though many are called, few are chosen in this sense. There has been a remnant in every generation who have been ‘faithful’ and who, with Christ, will rule the nations with a rod of iron sharing His throne.

(Rev. 2:25-27) “Hold fast what you have till I come. And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’ — as I also have received from My Father.”

But on the more immediate prophetic horizon, God causes the Beast who has up to this point been aligned with the harlot, to turn against her;

(Rev. 17:16-18) “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. 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. And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.”

We covered the ten horns in chapter 13, but just so we can have that fresh in mind here too, here’s what they stand for. This is a quote from that study;

“The first beast will rule an empire comprised of Gentile nations through ten kings. Because of the secession of empires listed by Daniel in Dan. 7, this final kingdom will be a form or reconstruction of the Roman empire, which was centered in Europe, and will be the headquarters of the global government in the Tribulation.”

“We also know from Nebuchadnezzar’s vision of the final kingdom (a revived Roman empire), that it will have ten end-time kings, represented by the ten toes in the vision;

(Dan. 2:31-32, 40-45) “The fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others. Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron . . . in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome. This image’s head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.”

“The ‘days of these kings’ mentioned in Dan. 2:44 corresponds to this passage in Rev. 17:12;

“And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast.”

That finalizes Rev. chapter 17. So, we can now move into 18 and as we’re going to see in the reaction of the world to Babylon’s destruction, the emphasis in this chapter is on Babylon’s *commercial* benefit to the nations. Something we’ve seen

throughout history, especially in Catholicism, is that when the Church unites with the State, you can always ‘follow the money’ to see the motive behind this union.

Barnhouse adds this,

“That which great Babylon typifies is a thing that is monstrously evil in the sight of God. It represents the world, of course, but particularly the world in the aspect of a gigantic system for the pursuit of wealth and pleasure. There is no one word that can fully express what is here symbolized. It represents commercialism, or industrialism; but neither of those words adequately defines the symbol, though they help to convey the idea embodied in it.”

Now, let’s look at vs’s 1-8;

“After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory. And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, ‘Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury’. And I heard another voice from heaven saying, ‘Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her. In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, ‘I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.’ Therefore, her plagues will come in one day—death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her.”

This section of Rev. 18 expands on the judgment of Babylon that we saw beginning in Rev. 17, only now it’s the final and full judgment coming from God Himself.

In other words, in chapter 17 she was *overthrown* by the ‘ten horns’, the ten kings of the earth, under the authority of the political Beast; now in chapter 18 she is *destroyed*. It’s the difference between losing your power to being completely wiped off the face of the earth.

All that's left of this once global kingdom is "*a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird.*"

Demons of every kind fill the vacuum left by Babylon's removal.

As Walter Scott paints this picture;

"Babylon having lost her public place of supremacy, being torn to pieces by the very powers which once formed her strength, is reduced to a state of desolation described in language of unexampled force."

I should mention that several commentators believe that this commercial aspect of Babylon resolves itself locally – in other words, it's centered in a city. It could be London or New York, or someplace yet to be fully developed commercially, but because of the response of the world's citizens to its destruction, it may help to visualize that destruction as the leveling of a city.

Babylon is global; it's much larger than one country or one city, but it could be *headquartered* in a city, just as the kingdom of Christ will be global but headquartered in Jerusalem.

So, let's look at the world's response to Babylon's destruction in vs's 9-19

"The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.' And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore: merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of ivory, every kind of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble; and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men. The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all. The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls! For in one hour such great riches came to nothing.' Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea,

stood at a distance and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What is like this great city?' They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate.'"

It's pretty obvious that Babylon was a global, commercial giant – the ultimate mixture of religious and monetary control over the whole world. This has been the dream of many of the world religions of the past and present – from the original Babylon to Catholicism and Islam in our generation.

Babylon will have achieved what they pressed toward but were only able, in the end, to be a part of.

Satan has always known that the secret in gaining the allegiance of humanity was to appeal to his greed for wealth and the pleasure that wealth brings. So, in the end he ensures that there will be a world-wide system that will combine both worship of himself and greater wealth than any that has ever existed in the past.

It's no wonder the world is devastated at its destruction – they had experienced the fulfillment of all they hoped for and now, suddenly, it's completely gone.

Its also no surprise that in vs. 4 we read this;

"And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, 'Come out of her, my people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues.'"

There's no doubt that many who belong to Christ during the Tribulation will be tempted to compromise their exclusive commitment to the Lord and draw from what Babylon offers.

That's obviously true today too, but it will be much more enticing once Satan has fully developed his final and greatest appeal to the flesh.

I found some information on this 'call to come out' that shows that this goes back thousands of years. The author's name wasn't given, but here's what he wrote;

"The call to depart from Babylon is first heard in Isaiah, and is heard seven times in all, the last being in Rev. 18:4. In each of these seven instances, the city of God (Jerusalem or Zion) is the context."

He goes on to list each of the seven times this call goes out, and I'll include those passages in the notes I send out, but what got my attention about this is the idea that since the beginning of time in the tower of Babel in Genesis all the way to Rev. 18, there has been a major cosmic battle going on between what is represented by the city of God and the city of Man.

(Isa. 48:20; 52:11; Jer. 50:8-9; 51:6,8; Zech. 2:6-7; 2 Cor. 6:17-18; Rev. 18:4)

In other words, from God's perspective one of the most important and constant desires He has had for His people is *separation from the world*.

He wants our hearts exclusively attached to Him. He knows how dangerous it is for us to have a divided heart, where we are 'church-goers' but spend a great deal of our time flirting with the world and having the same interests and pursuits that those outside of Christ have.

As Paul put it in Col. 3:1-4;

"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory."

That's not just good advice; it marks out one of the most important qualities or characteristics of one who is a disciple as over against one who simply a Christian with little or no understanding of what true discipleship is.

"Appearing with (Christ) in glory", rather than just making it to heaven, is dependent on detachment from the world system.

James makes this graphically clear in his letter.

(James 5:1-5) "Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. Indeed, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter."

Fortunately, this ‘set apart from the world’ condition of our hearts unto God is something the Lord knows we need help with.

We may *want* holiness and plead with God to get us there, and yet fail a million times along the way.

Some people just lower the standards and settle in to a position of *relative* holiness; partly because they are tired of battling their flesh and the influence of their friends, and partly because they have a secret love for some of the things of this world and see no harm in pursuing them.

Here’s Spark’s take on this;

“The call of God to ‘come out’ is a call to a fuller and higher acceptance of truth, testimony and witness; of surrender and experience. And this call will be definite and challenging. Once the call has sounded, the crisis has been precipitated. The issue is between the life which has been with its limitations known or unrecognized, and that which God offers. There may be a risking of reputation, a loss of prestige, a disfavor among men; being labeled as peculiar, extreme, unsafe. It may mean a head-on impact of all the prejudice, tradition, and disfavor of the religious world. It may involve exclusion, ostracism, and suspicion. These are the accompaniments of all calls of God to advance with Him beyond accepted standards. This is the price to be paid to be of higher value to God and men.”

There are several ways God helps us get to where we want and need to be. But there’s one very consistent means He uses for this; and it’s one that is more prominent now than at any other time in history – and that is pressure (whether physical, emotional, financial or relational).

Suffering refocuses us on our need for the Lord and causes the things of this world to grow dimmer in terms of their appeal to us.

The danger God faces (if I can use that phrase) when He allows suffering in our lives is that we would go under and lose our commitment to Him and end up bitter, confused and scared.

It’s because of that possibility that God has placed thousands of what we could call counter-arguments in the scriptures to Satan’s accusations of God having forsaken us.

And I guess it's important to remember that suffering ceases to be suffering if God constantly intervenes. But if He *doesn't* intervene, Satan fills the silence with his accusations of God's abandonment.

Here are some examples and then we'll need to close for tonight. I'm going to focus on passages that show God's faithfulness in spite of our weakness.

(Joshua 21:45) Not one of all the Lord's good promises to Israel failed; every one was fulfilled.

(Psalm 36:5) Your love, Lord, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies.

(Psalm 89:2) I will declare that your love stands firm forever, that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself.

(Psalm 119:90) Your faithfulness continues through all generations.

(Lamentations 3:23-24) Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. (*Don't forget the context in Lamentations of the one who wrote this.*)

(2 Timothy 2:13) If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself.

(Hebrews 10:23) Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

Finally, listen to these brief letters sent to a homebase in the states from a missionary in Siberia;

"A letter that lately came out of Northern Siberia, signed Mary, reads: 'The best thing to report is, that I feel so happy here. It would be so easy to grow bitter if one lost the spiritual viewpoint and began to look at circumstances. I am learning to thank God for literally everything that comes. Each time circumstances became lighter; I am tempted to break fellowship with the Lord. How can I do otherwise than thank Him for additional hardships? They only help me to have what I always longed for—a continuous, unbroken abiding in Him.'

"Another recent letter from Mary reads, 'I am still in the same place of exile. My sister in Christ, Barbara, accepted Christ as her personal Savior, and

testified before all about it. We both, for the last time, went to the meeting of the godless. I tried to reason with her not to go there, but nothing could prevail. She went to the front of the hall, and boldly testified before all concerning Christ. When she finished, she was taken hold of and led away.

“Two months later, another letter came from Mary: ‘Yesterday, for the first time, I saw our dear Barbara in prison. She looked very thin, pale, and with marks of beatings. The only bright thing about her were her eyes, bright, and filled with heavenly peace and even joy. How happy are those who have it! It comes through suffering. Hence, we must not be afraid of any sufferings or privations. I asked her, through the bars, ‘Barbara, are you not sorry for what you have done?’ ‘No,’ she firmly responded, ‘If they would free me, I would go again and tell my comrades about the marvelous love of Christ. I am very glad that the Lord loves me so much and counts me worthy to suffer for Him.’”

I realize that most of us feel like we are light-years away from this kind of faith, but my reason for reading this is that, as Barbara said, the path to this kind of spiritual life and relationship with God is suffering for Him in *any* way He desires to define it in our lives.

If we can find a way, in our hearts, to trust Him with the present and if we can, by faith, believe in the incredible glory that awaits us in the future, we can begin to rejoice in our trials.

The difference between Barbara and us is not that she’s a *superior* human being and we’re *inferior* human beings – the difference is simply that she believed what the Bible says about receiving God’s praise and being honored by Him in heaven for trusting Him now in this life.

These stories aren’t meant to show us superior people; they’re meant to show us the outcome of faith under pressure – they are the historical extension of Heb. 11.

And these trials and tests are the things God uses to ‘bring us out’ of the Babylon of our generation, so that we can finish our lives here loyal to our Lord.