

THE JUDGMENT OF BABYLON THE GREAT

As we consider the judgment of Babylon the Great, there are some considerations to make before we look at any details. First, as we've noted before, the book of Revelation is written chronologically. The apostle John was instructed to “*write the things which you have seen* (1:9-20), *and the things which are* (2:1-3:22), *and the things which shall take place after these things*” (4:22). Secondly, the Tribulation judgments of God begin in chapter six starting with the seal judgments, followed by the trumpet judgments, and ending with the bowl judgments in chapter sixteen. Third, within the last bowl judgment (Rev. 16:17-21), Babylon the Great is mentioned; God is going to especially pour out His wrath on her (Rev. 16:19b) but no immediate explanation is given as to what that is going to look like. Fourth, in chapters 17-18, the details of Babylon's sin and the exercise of God's wrath on her is recorded for us, thus filling in the details of, “...*the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath*” (16:19b). Therefore, chapters 17-18 are a pause in the chronological aspect of the book of Revelation. They serve as something like a parenthesis that gives us important details about world conditions caused by the harlot, Babylon. As we will see in future studies, chapter 19 picks up the chronology of the book by presenting the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Fifth, due to the material that is presented in chapter 17 and 18, it is clear the emphasis is not on God's judgment but on what He is judging.

With the understanding of the above, we would note there are two aspects of Babylon's sin that are presented in chapter 17 and 18. In chapter 17, the wicked religious influence of Babylon is on display. In chapter 18, we are pointed to the seduction of Babylon's worldwide commercial influence during the Tribulation period. In essence God will bring his fierce judgment upon Babylon for her heathenism, both religiously and commercially.

a. The judgment of religious Babylon the Great (Rev. 17).

Revelation 17 profiles Babylon the Great and her evil religious system during the Tribulation. It will be a religious organization filled with unbelievers who profess to be believers (2 Tim. 3:1-5). One needs to keep in mind that when the Tribulation starts it will usher in an apostate church because the true church will have been raptured (Rev. 2:22 3:10). When the Tribulation starts, there will be a great religious organization that will arise and be dominated by the “...THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS...” (Rev. 17:5). She will, with overwhelming success, seek to fill the God-void in every man's heart with idolatry, and for this she will be judged.

Before we look at the details of chapter 17, it will be helpful for you to have an understanding of the history of Babylon's influence in the world. In his great work on eschatology, *Things to Come*, Dr. J. Dweight Pentecost refers to Dr. Harry Ironside who traced the roots and development of Babylon's influence in man's history, noting the following: "The woman is a religious system, who dominates the civil power, at the least for a time. The name upon her forehead should easily enable us to identify her. But in order to do that, we will do well to go back to our Old Testament, and see what is there revealed concerning literal Babylon, for the one will surely throw light upon the other..."

... we learned that the founder of bab-el, or Babylon, was Nimrod, of whose unholy achievements we read in the 10th chapter of Genesis. He was the arch-apostate of the patriarchal age...he persuaded his associates and followers to join together in 'building a city and a tower which should reach unto heaven.' ...to be recognized as a temple or rallying centre for those who did not walk in obedience to the word of the Lord...they called their city and tower Bab-El, the gate of God; but it was soon changed by divine judgment into Babel, Confusion. It bore the stamp of unreality from the first, for we are told 'they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.' An imitation of that which is real and true has ever since characterized Babylon, in all ages.

Nimrod, or Nimroud-bar-Cush...was a grandson of Ham, the unworthy son of Noah...Noah had brought through the flood the revelation of the true God...Ham on the other hand seems to have been all too readily affected by the apostasy that brought the flood, for he shows no evidence of self-judgment...His name...means 'swarthy,' 'darkened,' or more literally, 'the sunburnt.' And the name indicates the state of the man's soul...darkened by light from heaven... [Ham] begat a son named Cush, "the black one," and he became the father of Nimrod, the apostate leader of his generation.

Ancient lore now comes to our assistance, and tells us that the wife of Nimroud-bar-Cush was the infamous Semiramis the First. She is reputed to have been the foundress of the Babylonian mysteries and the first high-priestess of idolatry. Thus Babylon became the fountainhead of idolatry, and the mother of every heathen and pagan system in the world. The mystery-religion that was there originated spread in various forms throughout the whole earth...and is with us today...and shall have its fullest development when the Holy Spirit has departed and the Babylon of the Apocalypse holds sway.

Building on the primeval promise of the woman's Seed who was to come, Semiramis bore a son whom she declared was miraculously conceived! And when she presented him to the people, he was hailed as the promised deliverer. This was Tammuz, whose worship Ezekiel protested against in the days of the captivity. Thus was introduced the mystery of the mother and the child, a form of idolatry that is older than any other known to man. The rites of this worship were secret. Only the initiated were permitted to know its mysteries. It was Satan's effort to delude mankind with an imitation so like the truth of God that they would not know the true Seed of the woman when she came in the fullness of time...

From Babylon this mystery-religion spread to all the surrounding nations... everywhere the symbols were the same, and everywhere the cult of the mother and the child became the popular system; their worship was celebrated with the most disgusting and immoral practices. The image of the queen of heaven with the babe in her arms was seen everywhere, though the names might differ as languages differed. It became the mystery-religion of Phoenicia, and by the Phoenicians was carried to the ends of the earth. Astoreth and Tammuz, the mother and child of these hardy adventurers, became Isis and Horus in Egypt, Aphrodite and Eros in Greece, Venus and Cupid in Italy, and bore many other names in more distant places. Within 1000 years Babylonianism had become the religion of the world, which had rejected the Divine revelation.

Linked with this central mystery was countless lesser mysteries... among these were the doctrines of purgatorial purification after death, salvation by countless sacraments such as priestly absolution, sprinkling with holy water, the offering of round cakes to the queen of heaven as mentioned in the book of Jeremiah, dedication of virgins to the gods, which was literally sanctified prostitution, weeping for Tammuz for a period of 40 days, prior to the great festival of Istar, who was said to have received her son back from the dead; for it was taught that Tammuz was slain by the wild boar and afterwards brought back to life. To him the egg was sacred, as depicting the mystery of his resurrection, even as the Evergreen was his chosen symbol and was set up in honor of his birth at the winter solstice, when a boar's head was eaten in memory of his conflict and a yule-log burned with many mysterious observances. The sign of the cross was sacred to Tammuz, is symbolizing the life-giving principal and as the first letter of his name. It is represented upon vast numbers of the most ancient altars and temples, and did not, as many have supposed to, originate with Christianity.

From this mystery-religion, the patriarch Abraham was separated by divine call; and with this same evil cult the nation that spring from him was in constant conflict, until under Jezebel, a Phoenician princess, it was grafted onto what was left of the religion of Israel in the northern kingdom in the day of Ahab, and was the cause of their captivity at last. Judah was polluted by it, for Baal-worship was but the Canaanitish form of the Babylonian mysteries, and only by being sent into captivity to Babylon itself did Judah become cured of her fondness for idolatry. Baal was the Sun-God, the Life-giving One, identical with Tammuz.

... the Babylon as a city had long been but a memory, her mysteries had not died with her. When the city and the temples were destroyed. The high-priest fled with a company of initiates and their sacred vessels and images to Pergamos, where the symbol of the serpent was set up as the emblem of the hidden wisdom. From there, they afterwards crossed the sea and emigrated to Italy... There the ancient cult was propagated under the name of the Etruscan Mysteries, and eventually Rome became the headquarters of Babylonianism. The chief priests wore mitres [a tall headdress worn by bishops and senior abbots] shaped like the head of a fish, in honor of Dagon, the fish-god, the Lord of life-another form of the Tammuz mystery, as developed among Israel's old enemies, the Philistines. The chief priest when established in Rome took the title Pontifex Maximus, and this was imprinted on his mitre. When Julius Caesar (who, like all young Romans of good family, was an initiate) had become the head of the State, he was elected Pontifex Maximus, and this title was held henceforth by all the Roman emperors down to Constantine the Great, who was, at one and the same time, head of the church and high priest of the heathen! The title was afterwards conferred upon the bishops of Rome, and is borne by the pope today, who is thus declared to be, not the successor of the fisherman-apostle Peter, but the direct successor of the high priest of the Babylonian mysteries and the servant of the fish god Dagon, for whom he wears, like his idolatrous predecessors, the fisherman's ring.

During the early centuries of the churches history, the mystery of iniquity had wrought with such astounding affect, and Babylonian practices and teachings had been so largely absorbed by that which bore the name of the church of Christ, that the truth of the Holy Scriptures on many points had been holy obscured, while idolatrous practices have been foisted upon the people as Christian sacraments, and heathen philosophies took the place of gospel instruction. Thus was developed that amazing system which for 1000 years dominated Europe and

trafficked in the bodies and souls of men, until the great reformation of the 16th century brought a measure of deliverance.”¹

With this history, we can see the enormous influence Babylon has had in the area of religion. During the Tribulation, God is once and for all going to bring an end to its evils.

The following are the things we know about religious Babylon:

- i. She will be characterized as a _____ (vv. 1-2)
Harlot is a metaphor for false religion (Nahum 3:1, 4; Is. 23:15-17; Is. 1:21)
- ii. She will have a position of great _____ to dominate the world (vv. 1, 15)
“many waters”(v.1) is defined in v.15 as “...peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.” The same terms are used in other passages to express a worldwide impact (Rev. 5:9; 7:9; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6)
- iii. She will make _____ alliances (vv. 2-3)
- iv. She will be wealthy and _____ (v. 4a)
- v. Purple and scarlet are colors of _____ and gold; precious stones and pearls are symbols of great _____.
- vi. She will be _____ with abominations (vv. 4b-5)
Abominations are the equivalent of idolatry (cf. 1 Kings 14:22–24; 2 Kings 21:1–9; Ezek. 20:30–33). During the Tribulation this false religious system will produce the worst abominations the world has ever seen.
- vii. She will _____ and _____ the Saints of God (vv.6-7, 14)
- viii. She is _____ with the Beast (vv. 8-15)
- ix. She will be judged by God and _____ by the Beast (vv. 16-18)

¹ Pentecost, J. Dwight, *Things to Come*, Grand Rapids, MI, Zondervan Pub., 1958, pp.365-367.

b. The judgment of commercial Babylon the Great (Rev.18).

- i. The _____ of judgment (vv. 1-3)
- ii. The call to _____ one's self from the world system (vv. 4-5)
- iii. The pay-back of _____ (vv. 6-8)
- iv. The _____ of judgment (vv. 9-19)
- v. The _____ of judgment (v.20)
- vi. The _____ of judgment (vv.21-24)

2. The book of Daniel and the Great Tribulation

A study of the end times would not be adequate without taking a look at the prophet Daniel's predictions of the Tribulation period. There are a few reasons for this. First of all, the Tribulation period is the time where God draws Israel back to the center stage of human history in preparation for their Messiah's return. Therefore, Daniel was concerned about the restoration of his people and the return of the Messiah (Dan. 9:20-23). Secondly, because of Daniel's concerns, God gave him a chronology of Israel's future history, which takes into account the period of the Tribulation. Thirdly, the Lord Jesus specifically mentions certain passages in the book of Daniel in reference to the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:15) and the apostle Paul also alluded to Daniel's prophecy in 2 Thess. 2:4. Clearly, from the perspective of Jesus and the apostle Paul, Daniel's prophecy serves as a type of end-times road map. The key verses in the book of Daniel that we will focus on are found in Daniel 9:24-27:

- a. The prophecy has a _____ timetable (v.24a).**
- b. The prophecy is concerned with a _____ people (v.24b).**
- c. The prophecy begins at a _____ time (v.25).**

d. The prophecy highlights two princes (vv.25-26):

- i. _____ the Prince
- ii. The _____ of the people

e. The prophecy is broken into five periods of time (vv. 25, 26):

- i. _____ weeks
- ii. _____ weeks
- iii. _____ broken into _____ equal parts

f. The end of the first two periods of time (69 weeks) will be marked by the Messiah being cut off and Jerusalem _____ (v.26).

g. The final week of prophecy will be marked by two major events:

- i. The prince of the people will make a _____ covenant with many Jews.
- ii. In the middle of the week, the prince of the people will stop all _____ of the Jews and _____ the Temple by forcing people to worship him (Matt. 24:15).

h. The completion of the seventy weeks will bring about a new age of _____ for Israel (v.24).

i. God will have accomplished six goals by the time the seventy weeks come to an end (v.24):

- i. To finish the _____
- ii. To make an end of _____
- iii. To make atonement for _____

iv. To bring in everlasting _____

v. To seal up _____ and _____

vi. To anoint the most holy _____