

Revelation, Part 23

In chapter 17, we saw the destruction of the apostate, ecumenical, religious, system version of Babylon at the hands of the ten-nation European federation and Antichrist. We have also seen that Babylon is identified as a city in Revelation 17:18, and that city, for the second half of the Tribulation, is Jerusalem.

An important point to understand is that Mystery Babylon, as a religious system, is a “shapeshifter”. It changes and takes whatever form it needs to take to suit the situation. In the first half of the Tribulation, it was an ecumenical, worldwide, religious system with considerable financial clout and political influence. It was the driving force controlled by Satan that helped propel Antichrist to his position of power in the world. It was (and is) a system of worship focused on various forms of idolatry. Unfortunately, there are no details given in Scripture of what exactly that will look like during the first half of Tribulation much beyond some form of ecumenicalism. We have only the historical examples of Babylon as a system of idolatry to speculate from. During the Great Tribulation, however, we have a pretty good idea of the idolatrous nature of this system since its focus of idolatry will be Antichrist.

Babylon, the apostate religious system of the first half of the Tribulation, is destroyed by Antichrist and the ten-horned beast (revived Roman Empire or European Federation) around the time of the Abomination of Desolation halfway through the Tribulation. It didn't die but merely morphed into a new version of apostate idolatry with the Antichrist and ultimately Satan as the focus of worship.

As we go through chapter 18 verse-by-verse, we will see details of the destruction of this final version of Babylon that takes place very near the end of the Tribulation and at the Second Advent.

Rev 18:1 After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory. 2 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! 3 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.”

4 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. 5 For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. 6 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. 7 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.’ 8 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.

The World Mourns Babylon’s Fall

9 “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, 10 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.’

11 “And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise any more: 12 merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble; 13 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. 14 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. 15 The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, 16 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! 17 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 18 and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, ‘What is like this great city?’ 19 “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.’

20 “Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!”

Finality of Babylon’s Fall

21 Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, “Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore. 22 The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore. No craftsman of any craft shall be found in you anymore, and the sound of a millstone shall not be heard in you anymore. 23 The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore. For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived. 24 And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth.”

An important thing to understand about Babylon is that it very often consists of two elements or two facets. It has two faces: religious Babylon and political/financial Babylon. The two go together and feed off each other. In every case, religious Babylon is, in effect, the state religion and a party to what the state does. The state does not exist apart from religious Babylon, and religious Babylon does not exist apart from the state. Historically, because of this convenient arrangement, those associated with the ruling class were often part of religious Babylon as priests, or even sub-deity themselves, or at least derived their powers from the religion Mystery Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar demanded worship of his gods by the Hebrew captives. The Pharaohs of Egypt were viewed as deities and the rulership of Egypt was intricately intertwined with their system of worship. And so were the Caesars of Rome. The state and the state religion were in bed together, and so it will be during the Tribulation.

The economic structure of these cultures was pretty much divided between the haves and the have-nots. The haves were part of the ruling oligarchy and the privileged merchants associated with them, often by blood relationships. The have-nots were everyone else eking out a living for their families. The middle class, as we know it, was generally non-existent. Privilege brought power, and wealth came as a result of being associated with the ruling class, which was in bed with the harlot.

In effect then, the successful and wealthy merchants were either members of the political structure or related in some way to the political structure. Everyone was in bed with the harlot. Some did not believe the religious doctrines of Mystery Babylon, but they played the game because of the wealth and power that came with being a player. They committed fornication with the harlot.

This system persisted throughout history. In case after case, there is some form of Mystery Babylon as a religious apostate system, intricately involved with government and frequently in commerce also. Take Spain for example Romanism played a part in the New World conquest. No one sailed in these exploratory voyages without church approval through the king and queen, or without a complement of clergy onboard. And throughout history, governments were generally oppressive and often even tyrannical.

Mystery Babylon was a major mover during the dark ages and later during the inquisitions, oppressing the people and even the truth. On one hand, you had the wealthy associated in some way with either the government or the religious system (Babylon), and on the other, you had everyone else just getting by, sometimes better than other times but always oppressed to some degree.

And then along comes 1776 and a whole new state of affairs. A new concept was proposed that man had certain rights that were granted to him NOT by governments but by God, and the government's responsibility was merely to remain in the background and recognize the existence of those rights and protect them. Furthermore, the government should not be involved with religion at all! The founding fathers fully understood the idea behind Mystery Babylon and the danger the whore represented to freedom. That was a radical concept. Do you realize what a threat to Satan's plan the United States represents? He has to destroy this noble experiment, and so far has been pretty successful.

BIG government is not the friend of freedom and prosperity. It is generally the friend of Satan and Mystery Babylon. And don't think for one moment that there isn't a religion associated with big government today. It goes by different names such as socialism, climate change, and postmodernism. All of these sound sectarian but they are in reality faith systems. Their followers believe something with religious fervor, and in every case, poor

downtrodden man is portrayed as the potential beneficiary of whatever the faith system believes in. Socialism will redistribute wealth equitably, but in reality, it only exacerbates the situation by destroying the middle class, and you end up with a wealthy and privileged ruling class and a downtrodden suffering lower class, like what happened behind the Iron Curtain.

Global warming, now called “climate change,” is no less a religion itself. It proposes to correct ecological wrongs and produce a green utopia where everyone is green and happy. That won’t happen. It will result in an economy much like the socialistic one with a wealthy, ruling, green oligarchy and the oppressed poor that was formerly the middle class.

Post Modernism or liberalism is merely a form of socialism with religious dogma. It believes all men go to heaven or at least have an equal chance regardless of religion. Like socialism, it has an altruistic motive of serving the poor and downtrodden. And like socialism, it intends to stamp out traditional forms of “dangerous religion,” in other words, Jews and Christians.

Ever heard of the emerging/emergent church movement? The emerging/emergent church movement is about the experience over reason, subjectivity over objectivity, “spirituality” over doctrine, images over words, and feelings over truth. These are reactions to modernism and are thought to be necessary to actively engage contemporary culture. Experience is valued more highly than reason, truth becomes relative. Relativism destroys the standard that the Bible contains absolute truth, negating the belief that biblical truth even can be absolute. Unity among people coming from different religious backgrounds and diversity in the expression of corporate worship are strong focuses of the emergent church movement. Being ecumenical means that compromise is taking place, and this results in a watering down of Scripture in favor of not offending an apostate. (gotquestions.org)

Emergent churches tend to be mega-churches because their message is designed to appeal to the masses. This is especially true of those that teach the prosperity gospel that God’s sole purpose in life is to make you prosperous, and if you are not, then that only proves you don’t have enough faith. The pastors of these churches must, therefore, live a lavish

prosperous lifestyle to prove they know what they are talking about and that they have plenty of faith.

While seeking new ways to witness to changing culture is admirable, utilizing ways that compromise the Truth of the Gospel in any way is nothing more than promoting false doctrine and leading others away from Christ instead of to Him. Is the current emergent church the infant version of Mystery Babylon in the first half of the Tribulation?

Rev 18:1 After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory.

“After these things” refers to the events of chapter 17, or put this way, “After what happened in chapter 17, we have these events....” The statement, “Another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory” seems to be a picture of Christ. Some, including myself, see this as Christ because of the reference to great illuminated glory. But it is argued the word translated “another” means like the one before and refers back to the angel in 17:1 who showed John the judgment on the whore and the events that followed. If so, then we must assume the glory is reflected glory.

Rev 18:2 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!

We have previously established that this “falling” of Babylon is not the same seen in chapter 17. That one involved the ecumenical religious version of Mystery Babylon in the first half of the Tribulation. This “falling” in chapter 18 concerns Babylon related to the worship of Antichrist as god during the second half of the Tribulation. Note that the reference to Babylon in verse 2 and the following verses seem to refer to a geographic location with terms like: “dwelling place,” “city,” and smoke rising from her “burning”. There are multiple opinions on this, but as we have demonstrated, this does refer to an actual city, Jerusalem, and the religious system worshiping Antichrist that is associated with it.

Isaiah uses similar language describing the destruction of the dwelling place of Antichrist.

Isa 34:11 But the pelican and the porcupine shall possess it, Also the owl and the raven shall dwell in it.

Birds are used to symbolize the characteristics of demons. They fly above and swoop down on their prey. The destroyed wickedness is abandoned to its inhabitants.

Rev 18:3 “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.”

Historically, religious and economic Babylon both became rich and drunk with power. This pattern will be repeated during the Tribulation.

Rev 18:4 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.

God calls for those who are His to come out of this wickedness lest they become trapped in the judgment that will fall on Babylon. The same holds true today. Believers should separate from error and evil.

Rev 18:5 For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.

This may be an interesting play on words. Babylon originally intended to reach God through the tower they built, but they never intended to reach God because of their sins. God does show mercy and delay judgment, but judgment delayed is not judgment deferred. Mankind is given time to see error and repent, but eventually, the righteousness of God must be satisfied.

Rev 18:6 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.

So great are Babylon's sins that she is given a double portion. It could also be a picture of the two-sided coin of religion and economic/political system working together deserving a double portion.

Rev 18:7 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.'

Babylon, both sides of the coin, professed to be for the common man but was in reality only for self. Those involved and participating in her fornication lived lavishly, while others suffered from oppression and the lack of freedom. The arrogance of those involved was so great they thought they could not be brought low. They thought they could game the system forever and always remain in power. These judgments can easily be interpreted to be directed to the system and those who are a part of it, but I believe, the city itself is just as easily pictured as the recipient of these judgments and is so intended.

Rev 18:8 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.

All this judgment will come upon the "city" in just one day — utter destruction. The word translated as "utterly burned" means to be consumed by fire and with it: death, mourning, and famine.

The World Mourns Babylon's Fall

Rev 18:9 "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, 10 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.'

References to "the city" I believe ought to be seen as the system itself and the seat of power of this Satanic system which we have previously identified as Jerusalem during the Great Tribulation. A geographical location is implied but the system is much larger than one location, and its destruction will be lamented by a much wider audience. When "kings" who

were involved with the city see its destruction they will be grieved and will cry, “Woe! Woe, O great city, O Babylon, city of power!” (v10)

Rev 18:11 “And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise any more: 12 merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble; 13 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. 14 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 list of items in verses 12-13 indicates the great luxury and wealth of the city. This refers to an economic and political situation rather than a religious one. Merchants will bemoan the city’s downfall since they will no longer be able to carry on commerce with the city.

It is interesting to note the meanings behind this list of items the merchants lament over.

- *Gold and silver, precious stones and pearls* — Daniel 11:38 says the Antichrist will worship “A god whom his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts.” These items are needed for the worship of Antichrist and his “image”.
- *Fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble.* — Some of these items were part of the priestly vestments. Others like the fine woods and ivory speak of wealth and lavish homes and furniture.
- *Cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil, and frankincense* — These exact items were used to make anointing oil to consecrate the Temple and other Temple services. It was considered so holy that God warned those who would use it for any personal needs would be “cut off”.
- *Wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep* — These are specific items used in the daily sacrifices described in Exodus 29. Daniel 11 and 12 state this particular sacrifice will be started in the end times.
- *Horses and chariots* – Is this a reference to Solomon’s disregarding of the command not to widely accrue horses and chariots in Deut 17:16?

- *Souls of men* — those who refuse to worship the beast end up dead or sold into slavery.

These items constitute a rich trade with Jerusalem and the throne of Antichrist. The “fruit that their souls longed for” (worldly possessions) and all the things rich and splendid (great wealth) are gone forever.

Rev 18:15 The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, 16 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! 17 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 18 and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, ‘What is like this great city?’

The lament of the merchants is similar to that of the kings. They weep and wail. “Alas” (v16) would be better translated by a much stronger word, “woe” and is so in some translations. “Woe! Woe, O great city . . . !” (v. 16)

Rev 18:19 “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.’

Sea captains . . . sailors and others in navigational occupations lament the destruction of Babylon in a similar fashion seen in verse 19. All three groups, kings, merchants, and sailors, speak of her destruction as sudden, “in one hour” (v 10, 17, 19). This probably should not be taken literally but rather figuratively, and “one hour” refers to a very short period of time, perhaps days, weeks, or maybe even months when one considers that the War of Armageddon will be raging in and around Jerusalem at this time.

Rev 18:20 “Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against her!”

Heaven is called to rejoice because Babylon has been judged for the way Babylon has treated you. Note the specific reference to “saints, apostles, and prophets”. This can only point to Jerusalem as the final version of Mystery Babylon.

The destruction of the harlot riding the beast takes place about the middle of the tribulation. The destruction of Babylon the Satan-worshipping system with its capital in Jerusalem happen near the end of the Tribulation. The final events come “quickly” at the Second Advent.

The final act of judgment and destruction upon Babylon has been a while in the coming. The world has been at war and most cities have suffered some form of damage from that warfare if the war in any way resembles what we know about modern warfare and modern weapons systems. During that war period, there was much commerce, but the judgments getting progressively worse dried up most of the commercial activity. When it becomes obvious all is lost, we see this form of lamentation we have here. As the world mourns the destruction of Babylon, the believers are told to rejoice, because God has judged her for the way she treated them (v. 20)

Finality of Babylon’s Fall

Rev 18:21 Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, “Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore. 22 The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore. No craftsman of any craft shall be found in you anymore, and the sound of a millstone shall not be heard in you anymore. 23 The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore. For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived. 24 And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth.”

The final and violent destruction of the city is compared to throwing a large millstone . . . into the sea (v. 21). It sinks and disappears. The lament follows that those who once characterized the city, harpists and musicians, flute players and trumpeters, and workmen of any trade will not be seen in the city again. Nor will there be light and the joy of weddings. The reason for her judgment is that by her magic spell (pharmakeia) all the nations were led astray from God (18:23), and she was guilty of murdering prophets and saints (18:24).

A common view is that this refers to the city of Rome, because of the prominence of Rome as the seat of the Roman Catholic Church and the capital of the ancient Roman Empire. Some find confirmation of this in the fact that the kings and sea merchants will be able to see the smoke of the burning of the city (18:9, 18). Others claim this is Babylon located on the Euphrates River, which in the end time will be converted into a ship-bearing river. Walvoord takes the position that when all the evidence is studied, the conclusion seems to point to Babylon being rebuilt as the capital of the world empire in the end time rather than to Rome in Italy. Other Bible expositors, however, continue to be divided on this question. I believe the evidence points directly at Jerusalem, as the Babylon of the Great Tribulation, and is the place where Antichrist sets up his capital.

The events of chapter 17 will be fulfilled by the midpoint of the seven years, whereas the events of chapter 18 will occur during the second half and are mainly clustered close to the end of the seven years immediately before the second coming of Christ. The destruction of the city of Babylon is the final blow to the times of the Gentiles, which began when the Babylonian army attacked Jerusalem in 605 BC (Luke 21:24). The stage is now set for the climax of the Book of Revelation—the second coming of Christ (chap. 19). But before we do that we need to have an interlude to deal with a few matters that need fleshing out.