

Session 11 The Fall of Babylon (Rev. 17-18)

For answers to fill-in-the-blanks spaces and for *additional study material pertaining to this session, see mikebickle.org

I. JOHN'S PROPHECY ABOUT THE FALL OF BABYLON (REV. 17-18)

- A. Revelation 17-18 is an angelic explanation (parenthetical section) that follows after the crisis described in the seven bowl judgments in Revelation 16.
- B. The five chronological sections in the book of Revelation tell us the main story line of God's judgment events against harlot Babylon and Antichrist's empire. After each of the chronological sections, an angel explained to John why these judgment events are absolutely necessary. These explanations function as a parenthesis that puts the story line on "pause" as they answer questions as to "why is God's wrath so severe?" and "what will happen to the saints during the judgments?"
- C. The seventh bowl will involve the most severe earthquake in history, followed by 100 pound hailstones that will destroy many cities of the earth (Rev. 16:17-21). The Antichrist's worshipers will not repent, but will stubbornly blaspheme God (Rev. 16:9, 11, 21).
- ¹⁸...there was a **great earthquake**, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth...¹⁹And **great Babylon** was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath...²¹And **great hail** from heaven fell upon men, each hailstone about the weight of a talent [100 pounds]. Men blasphemed God... (Rev. 16:18-21)*
- D. In this angelic explanation, an angel showed John why it was necessary to destroy many cities of the earth and why Jesus will dash to pieces the societal infrastructure of the nations. It is because the seduction of Babylon's religion of evil will permeate so many of these structures of society. The seventh trumpet will focus on replacing evil leaders, and the seventh bowl will focus on replacing the social infrastructures (social, financial, and legal institutions that empowered evil activities).
- ⁸I will give You [Jesus] the nations for Your inheritance...⁹You shall **break them** with a rod of iron; You shall **dash them** to pieces like a potter's vessel. (Ps. 2:8-9)*
- E. Revelation 17-18 is one of the most significant end-time prophecies because it gives us insight into Satan's strategy to deceive the nations while causing many Christians to fall away from the faith. This prophecy deserves careful study and dialogue because those who are deceived by the harlot will end up in the lake of fire and many of the saints who resist the harlot will be killed (Rev. 17:6).
- F. The main message of Revelation 17 is easy to understand. The main themes are the seductive power and cruel persecution, along with the inevitable destruction of the harlot systems. Revelation 17 is the most symbolic passage in the book of Revelation with many intricate details making it the most difficult chapter in Revelation to understand. Since the angel gave John the meaning of the symbols, we have a solid foundation for understanding this passage.

- G. In my opinion, the literal city of Babylon in Iraq (50 miles south of Baghdad) will be restored and used as one of the headquarters for the Antichrist and as a center of demonic religious and economic networks. As Jerusalem suddenly came out of the ashes and was rebuilt, I believe so also the city of Babylon in Iraq will suddenly be rebuilt. The judgments prophesied in Jeremiah 50-51 about the city of Babylon being suddenly and forever destroyed have not yet been fulfilled.

II. THE END-TIME FALLING AWAY FROM THE FAITH

- A. The two signs that Paul gave to indicate the time of Jesus' coming are a falling away from the faith combined with the revealing of the Antichrist on the world stage (2 Thes. 2:3). Love of the truth is more than an intellectual adherence to truth; it takes a firm stand for truth regardless of the cost.

³Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day [Jesus' second coming] will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin [Antichrist] is revealed...⁹The coming of the lawless one [Antichrist] is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, ¹⁰and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. (2 Thes. 2:3, 9-10)

- B. There will be an end-time falling away (Mt. 24:9-13; 2 Thes. 2:3; 1 Tim. 4:1-2; 2 Tim. 3:1-7; 4:3-5; 2 Pet. 2:1-3). A doctrine of demons is a teaching inspired by demons that if believed and acted on will hinder someone from receiving salvation or will cause someone to fall away from salvation.

¹Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, ²speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, ³forbidding to marry... (1 Tim. 4:1-3)

III. TWO STAGES IN SATAN'S END-TIME PLAN

- A. There are two stages in Satan's end-time plan to be worshipped by all nations. Satan knows that it is a step too large for a compromising Christian, Muslim, Hindu, etc. suddenly to become a devoted Satan worshipper. Thus he will first call all to join a one-world religion of tolerance that will declare that all paths lead to God and salvation. As multitudes from various religious backgrounds are seduced into joining the harlot Babylon religion, it will weaken and defile their conscience concerning their religious heritage. Then Satan will demand that they worship him.

⁴They worshiped the Dragon [Satan]...⁸All who dwell on the earth will worship him [Antichrist], whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. (Rev. 13:8)

- B. People will break away from their religious heritage by renouncing their former beliefs. Once they leave their religious ideals, whether Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, or Buddhism, there will be no absolutes to keep them from worshipping Satan who appears as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14).

- C. The *voluntary* harlot Babylon religion will be replaced by a *mandatory* Antichrist religion.

1. First, people voluntarily join the harlot Babylon one-world religion of tolerance (Rev. 17).

2. Second, they will be forced to be Satan worshippers in the Antichrist religion (Rev. 13:4, 15).

D. I agree with a popular view that sees Revelation 17-18 describing the fall of Babylon in two stages.

1. The first phase of the fall of Babylon (Rev. 17) relates to worldwide religious system of toleration and syncretism. The fall occurs at the beginning of the Great Tribulation at the hands of the ten kings (Rev. 17:16) who will burn it and replace it with Antichrist worship.
2. The second phase of her fall will be at the end of the Great Tribulation. It will focus on the collapse of the Antichrist's global economic system at God's hands (Rev. 18:8).

IV. **THE GREAT HARLOT: HER SEDUCTIONS AND PERSECUTIONS (REV. 17:1-6)**

A. Before the angel showed John the wealth and counterfeit beauty of the harlot religion, he showed him her inevitable judgment and sure defeat (Rev. 17:1). It will fail and be totally destroyed.

¹Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, ²with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication...³I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet Beast [Antichrist]...⁴The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold...having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. ⁵On her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, the mother of Harlots and of the abominations of the earth. ⁶I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints...¹⁵He said, "The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues." (Rev. 17:1-6, 15)

B. **Sits on many waters:** The harlot will sit on many nations (17:1, 15) or will have authority over the nations by seducing and controlling the world's most powerful leaders—the kings and merchants.

C. **The kings:** The primary political leaders in the earth will understand some of the lies that empower the harlot system. However, they will support her agenda to gain her wealth, knowingly prostituting themselves or committing fornication with her in supporting her lies for money.

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... (Rev. 17:2)

D. **Made drunk:** The harlot's system will cause the nations to be drunk or intoxicated with her seductions that promise great benefits including humanitarian aid and a prosperous world economy. The nations will be overjoyed with her promises of prosperity and theology of tolerance. She will be a religion of affirmation and toleration without absolutes, with a counterfeit justice movement.

E. **Sitting on the Beast:** The harlot will *sit on* or depend on the Antichrist who will *carry* her or will provide significant resource, validation, and protection for her.

³I saw a woman sitting on a Beast [Antichrist] which was full of names of blasphemy...⁷I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the Beast that carries her... (Rev. 17:3, 7)

F. **Arrayed in purple:** To be arrayed in purple speaks of her royal status or prominence. The harlot religion will have great prominence and will be embraced by the elite financial leaders of the earth.

⁴The woman was arrayed in purple [royalty] and scarlet, and adorned with gold...having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. (Rev. 17:4)

G. ***Adorned with gold:*** it will be the wealthiest religious network in all of history.

H. ***A golden cup:*** The harlot will have a golden cup from which she “serves” the nations. She will provide unprecedented humanitarian service, and her service will appear golden—valuable and good. It will facilitate unity in many nations. War will disappear for first time in modern history, resulting in a temporary world peace. Paul prophesied that just before sudden destruction (Great Tribulation) comes, “they” or the nations shall proclaim peace and safety. (1 Thes. 5:3).

³...when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them... (1 Thes. 5:3)

I. ***Full of abomination and filth:*** She will offer a cup, or service, that is full of abomination and filth. Abomination refers to being associated with demonic activity since abominations in the Old Testament often referred to idolatrous or demonic activity. Filthiness points to its moral perversions.

J. The harlot will deceive the nations by sorcery, which is a combination of drugs and demonic power (witchcraft). Her dark, supernatural power will fascinate people, while appearing to be good. In my opinion, her worship music will be powerful, having a supernatural, demonic element to it.

***²³For by your [Babylon’s] sorcery all the nations were deceived.* (Rev. 18:23)**

K. The harlot Babylon system is the context in which the nations will reach fullness in sin (Dan. 8:23). Then a king—the Antichrist—will appear on the world stage.

²³In the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their fullness, a king [Antichrist] shall arise...who understands sinister schemes. (Dan. 8:23)

L. The church across all the nations will expose the harlot for who she is. Then they will be hated by all nations for this. They will declare the seductive nature of her perversion and her judgment.

⁹They will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake. ¹⁰Then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.

***¹¹Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.* (Mt. 24:9-11)**

M. Surprisingly, the harlot religion will be hated and destroyed by the jealousy of the ten kings who serve closest to the Antichrist (Dan. 7:7, 20, 24; Rev. 17:16). They will burn the harlot at beginning of Great Tribulation. Satan’s kingdom is filled with hatred, not unity. Even when the harlot is at the height of her prominence, the Church will prophesy that she will be burned by Antichrist’s ten kings.

¹²The ten horns which you saw are ten kings...¹⁶The ten horns...on the Beast [Antichrist] will hate the harlot, make her desolate...and burn her with fire. (Rev. 17:12, 16)

- N. In the middle of the final seven years of this age, I believe that the harlot religion of tolerance will be replaced with Antichrist worship. The Antichrist religion will be strict and without toleration. All who refuse to worship the Antichrist will be killed (Rev. 13:4-18). Satan’s purpose for the harlot religion is to be the “forerunner” to prepare the nations for Antichrist worship.

V. THE HARLOT’S ORIGIN: THE TOWER OF BABEL

- A. The harlot’s name was a mystery to John. An angel gave him new information that had not yet been clearly revealed in Scripture—namely that the harlot is named Babylon the Great.
- ⁵And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH ⁶I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. (Rev. 17:5-6)*
- B. **The mother:** The harlot will be the mother of harlots or the source of false religion through history as well as the mother or source of abominations in the end times. Her offspring of false religion through history will crescendo and set the stage for the Antichrist in the end times.
- C. **Drunk with blood:** The harlot will have a murderous heart despite her humanitarian appearance. The influence of the harlot will cause multitudes to be drunk or intoxicated with the blood of the saints who expose her. The more she kills, the bolder she will become in killing the saints.
- D. **Babylon the great:** The angel revealed the harlot’s name as Babylon. In other words, her origin was in Babylon—at the tower of Babel. By understanding what happened at the tower of Babel we gain insight into how she will operate. Babel was the first city to organize a rebellion against God.

VI. THE TOWER OF BABEL

- A. The residents of Babel sought to build a tower whose “top is in the heavens.” This refers to reaching into the spirit realm. It is not a reference to the height of a building that was made of mud bricks. The Lord had told the people to multiply and *fill the earth* (Gen. 1:28). The people of Babel wanted to *stay in Babel* to accomplish more together instead of going forth to fill the earth (Gen. 11:4).
- ⁴They said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.” (Gen. 11:4)*
- B. Nothing they set their heart to do together would be withheld from them in terms of reaching their full potential in sin. The NAS/NIV translates this as nothing that they plan to do “*will be impossible for them.*” This refers to their *unity in sin* to reach into the demonic realm (top in the heavens). The Lord was not referring to their architectural abilities having no limit, but to their progression in evil.
- ⁶The LORD said, “Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them.” (Gen. 11:6)*
- C. The Lord scattered their language to slow down their escalation of sin until the end times.

⁹Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth. (Gen. 11:9)

- D. In Jacob's dream he saw a ladder that gave him access to the heavenly realm in the will of God. Jesus referred to this reality as an "open heaven" where angels interact much with the earthly realm.

¹²He [Jacob] dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. (Gen. 28:12)

⁵¹And He [Jesus] said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." (Jn. 1:51)

- E. The harlot will have a "ladder of access" to the demonic realm enabling them to go to new heights of sin being assisted by demons. Those in Babel were seeking to reach a "demonic open heaven." In the Babylonian language, Babel means the "gate of heaven," yet in Hebrew it means "confusion."

- F. Billions of demons will be dislodged from their place in the heavens and cast to earth. I believe that in the end times there will be an unprecedented interaction between the demonic and human realm.

⁷And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon...⁸but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. ⁹So the great dragon [Satan] was cast out...he was cast to the earth, and his angels [demons] were cast out with him. (Rev 12:7-9)

- G. The time before Jesus' second coming is compared to the days of Noah in Genesis 6.

³⁷But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. (Mt. 24:37)

- H. The people in Genesis 6 seemed to have walked in a sort of "counterfeit" open heaven as demons interacted with humans in an intense way (Gen. 6:4; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). There seems to have been a deep connection between the natural and demonic realm, resulting in violence (Gen. 6:7; 7:1-24).

⁵The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually... ¹¹The earth was filled with violence. ¹²So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. ¹³God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth." (Gen. 6:5-13)

VII. THE END-TIME CONFLICT OVER THE TRUTH OF WHO JESUS IS

- A. In the end time there will be a battle for the truth about Jesus. Some believers will give heed to doctrines that lie about Jesus. The conflict will center on defining who Jesus is and how we love Him. We must love God on His terms—expressed with allegiance to the Jesus of the Bible.
- B. Tolerance that undermines God's Word is one of the primary characteristics in the social and religious movements that will prepare the way for the harlot Babylon.

- C. The body of Christ is to greatly value people with different beliefs and values. All humans possess great dignity and value in God's eyes. The body of Christ must not be willing to let them perish in hell by refusing to tell them the truth about Jesus and His salvation and love. The Church must lovingly and tenderly share the truth even as they serve and honor those who are resisting it.
- D. Three truths that offend those with a humanistic mindset:
 - 1. The deity of Jesus and His right to establish absolute standards and the definitions of love and morality for which the nations are accountable to Him.
 - 2. The only way of salvation is through Jesus.
 - 3. Jesus possesses the wisdom and love to judge sin both in time and eternity.
- E. Many today are resisting primary truths in the Scripture about Jesus and His salvation. We must not be intimidated by them regardless if they are famous people who work in the White House, host popular talk shows, fill stadiums with concerts for the poor, or lead mega-churches.
- F. The end-time Church will steward the greatest hope and justice movement in history. It will have a far superior hope than humanistic movements. Faithful witnesses of the truth about Jesus are the greatest hope-bringers in history. They will magnify Jesus' love, wisdom, and tenderness.

VIII. QUESTIONS FOR SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION (E.G., FCF FRIENDSHIP GROUPS)

- 1. Identify one point that inspired or challenged you. Why? What will you do differently to apply it?
- 2. Identify one point that you want to impart to a younger believer. Why? How will you approach this?
- 3. Identify one point that you would like to gain more understanding of. How will you seek to gain it?