**VICTORIOUS LIFE CHURCH BIBLE STUDY**

**SERIES: THE BOOK OF REVELATION**

**THE FALL OF RELIGIOUS BABYLON**

**Revelation 17**

**And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: 2 With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. 3 So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. 4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: 5 And upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon The Great, The Mother Of Harlots And Abominations Of The Earth. 6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration. 7 And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns. 8 The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. 9 And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. 10 And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. 11 And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition. 12 And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. 13 These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. 14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful. 15 And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. 16 And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. 17 For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. 18 And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.**

**The Concept of Babylon.**

**Revelation 14:8**

**8 And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.**

**Revelation 16:19**

**19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.**

These two scriptures have already declared Babylon’s fall. In [Revelation 17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+17&t=NKJV) and [18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+17.18&t=NKJV), the fall of Babylon is carefully detailed. Babylon is mentioned 287 times in the Scriptures, more than any other city except Jerusalem. Babylon was a literal city on the Euphrates River. [Genesis 11:1-10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+11.1-10&t=NKJV) shows that right after the flood, Babylon “was the seat of the civilization that expressed organized hostility to God. Babylon was later the capitol of the empire that cruelly conquered Judah. “Babylon, to them (the Jews), was the essence of all evil, the embodiment of cruelty, the foe of God’s people, and the lasting type of sin, carnality, lust and greed. To those familiar with the Old Testament, the name Babylon is associated with organized idolatry, blasphemy and the persecution of God’s people. In John’s day Rome epitomized all the antagonism and opposition to the Christian faith. The concept of Babylon is greater than [Revelation 17-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+17-18&t=NKJV) and the Antichrist’s reign. Babylon was present in John’s day (typified by Rome), in our day, and throughout history, as the world system. But under the Antichrist, Babylon (in both its religious and commercial aspects) will have influence over the earth as never before.

**The Great Harlot (religious Babylon) is described by the angel.**

**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.”**

Her judgment is assured at the outset. There is never any doubt regarding the fate – and ultimate failure – of Babylon. As a religious system, Babylon came into being long before Christianity, but in Satanic imitation it anticipated the coming true Messiah. According to religious history and legend, the Babylonian religion was founded by the wife of Nimrod (a great-grandson of Noah), named Semiramis. She was a high priestess of idol worship, and she gave birth to a son who she claimed was conceived miraculously. The son, named Tammuz, was considered a savior. Many ancient artifacts remain with the familiar motif of the mother Semiramis holding the savior-infant Tammuz, which predate Christianity. It was also said that Tammuz was killed by a wild beast and then miraculously brought back to life. Baal was the local, Canaanite name for the Babylonian Tammuz. The Bible makes specific mention of some of the features of the classic religion of Babylon:

Ezekiel protests against the ceremony of weeping for Tammuz

**Ezekiel 8:14**

**14 Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the Lord's house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz.**

Jeremiah mentions the heathen practice of making cakes for the queen of heaven

**Jeremiah 7:18**

**18 The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger.**

and offering incense to the queen of heaven

**Jeremiah 44:17-19**

**17 But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil. 18 But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine. 19 And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink offerings unto her, did we make her cakes to worship her, and pour out drink offerings unto her, without our men?**

Also in[**Jeremiah 44:17-19**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jeremiah+44.17-19&t=NKJV)**,** [**44:25**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jeremiah+44.25&t=NKJV)**)**

Here, Babylon **sits on many waters**; that is, she presides over many nations (compare with [Revelation 17:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+17.15&t=NKJV)). She has a universal, international character. This is unification of all false, idolatrous religion, with representatives from apostate Catholicism, Protestantism, as well as a smorgasbord of other religions of the world. The woman pictures false religion that will dominate the world in the tribulation period. Many people like to identify this great harlot with the Roman Catholic Church, but false religion is not limited to any one church. The inhabitants of the earth were made drunk: Religious Babylon intoxicates kings and peoples. Karl Marx was partly right when he said, “Religion is the opiate of the masses.” He was partly right because empty religion is the opium of the masses. Made drunk with the wine of her fornication: The idea of fornication often has strong associations throughout the Bible with idolatry. Since this is a well-accepted religious system, it is likely to appear as attractive and spiritual, though not necessarily moral.

**What John saw.**

**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.**

John is carried away into the wilderness; the desolate nature of the wilderness is an appropriate setting for a vision of judgment. The harlot rides the same beast (seven heads and ten horns) that was previously seen in [Revelation 13:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+13.1&t=NKJV) – the Antichrist and his dictatorship. Her position, that of riding the beast, indicates on the one hand that she is supported by the political power of the beast, and on the other that she is in a dominant role and at least outwardly controls and directs the beast. Her association with blasphemy and the dragon’s beast are clearly seen from God’s perspective. But to the people of the earth she will look quite religious, and have the “faith” everybody wants. The woman is clothed with emblems of luxury (purple… gold and precious stones) and government (scarlet). Yet she offers idolatry (abominations) and impurity (filthiness of her fornication) in this sumptuous setting.

“We find in the course of church history that one of the deadliest marks of ecclesiastical corruption is the lust for temporal power.” (Barnhouse)

Purple and scarlet were the colors of rulers, whether economic or political. On her forehead a name was written: The name on her forehead identifies her in more ways than one. Roman prostitutes frequently wore a headband with their name engraved upon it.

**MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT**: This title is not for literal Babylon; but its spiritual (**mystery**) representation, which is the source (**mother**) of all idolatry (**abominations**) and spiritual adultery (**harlots**). This harlot must be larger than any one branch of a religious institution. She is the embodiment of Satan’s own ecumenical movement – the religion of the world system. Our world, strong with the philosophy that it doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you believe, is prepared for the harlot’s seduction. We see the casual disregard for the truth crippling the church today. She is Drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: The woman not only persecutes, she also revels in her persecution of the godly as a drunk revels in wine. John was amazed because this wasn’t pagan persecution (such as he knew in his day), but religious error and persecution. This is a psuedo-church, thirsty for the blood of the saints.

**“False religion is always the worst enemy of true religion.” (Walvoord)**

We should never forget that some of the most vicious persecution conducted against true Christians has been done in the name of the church. In the days when the Roman Catholic Queen Mary ruled England (known as Bloody Mary), some 288 Christians were burnt at the stake for their stand for Christian truth between 1555 and 1558. The first of these martyrs was a man named John Rogers, who, as he stood chained to a stake, and the fire rose around him, up to his legs and shoulders, he rubbed his hands in the flames as if he were washing his hands in cold water. Then he lifted his hands to the heavens and held them high until he was completely consumed by fire. Rogers went to the stake with such calm and dignity that the French Ambassador wrote that he went to his death “as if he was walking to his wedding.” His courage was so evident that the huge crowd burst into applause when they saw him walking to the stake.

**The Great harlot is interpreted.**

**The angel tells John that the harlot will be explained to him.**

**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 focus of the explanation is on the beast. It appeared that the harlot ruled (rode) the Antichrist’s system, but he is the dynamic factor, using her as tyrants have always used religion – as a mere tool to accomplish their purposes.

**The beast carrying the woman is plainly connected with the beast of** [**Revelation 13**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+13&t=NKJV)**.**

**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.**

**Seven mountains associated with the beast.**

**“Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits.**

Many quickly associate the seven mountains with Rome and the Papacy, because Rome is well known as the city on seven hills. Yet literally, the Greek word means mountains, not hills. Many commentators – especially those who see all of Revelation fulfilled in history – regard the seven mountains as an irrefutable connection with Rome. But in the Bible mountains are sometimes a figure of governments (such as in [Daniel 2:35](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+2.35&t=NKJV)) and the city of Rome is built on hills, not mountains. It is probably better to see the seven mountains as representing the seven kings and kingdoms described in.

**Revelation 17:10**

**10 And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.**

**Seven kings and kingdoms.**

This is one of the more difficult passages in the Book of Revelation. Some explain these seven kings, five past, one present, and one to come in the succession of Roman Emperors in John’s era, but there are many historical difficulties with this approach. More likely, it is a reference to:

· Five have fallen refers to the five world empires before John’s day: Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Medo-Persia, and Greece

· One is refers to the world empire of John’s day: Rome

· The other has not yet come refers to the one world empire to come: a revival of the Roman Empire

When he comes, he must continue a short time: This seventh will quickly be taken over by an eighth – and will become the state of the Antichrist ([Revelation 17:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+17.11&t=NKJV)).

**The beast (the Antichrist) is clearly identified as the eighth king.**

**And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition.**

He is of the seven in the sense that he shares characteristics with all previous world empires, but his fate is clear. Perdition means “destruction,” and the beast will be destroyed.

**Ten kings to come, allies of the Antichrist.**

**“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. 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.” Then he said to me, “The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues.**

Ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet: This probably alludes to a ten-nation confederation (as in the toes of the [Daniel 2:24-45](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+2.24-45&t=NKJV) image), but some take ten as a symbolic number.

These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast:

Whatever their exact identity, their actions are clear. They join with the Antichrist in the war against Christ, in the battle alluded to in the sixth and seventh bowls ([Revelation 16:12-21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+16.12-21&t=NKJV)).

The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits: The harlot presides over peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. This tells us that the harlot’s influence is worldwide, through her connection to the beast. This will be a truly one-world religion. The interpretation of the harlot focuses on her relation to the beast: she is utterly connected to the beast and his government. If this sounds unthinkable, remember that throughout history, religion – not true Christianity – has often been the willing servant and supporter of tyrants.

**The great harlot is judged.**

**Antichrist’s allies turn on the great harlot.**

**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.**

This violence probably takes place at the mid-point of the tribulation period. Here, apostate religion discovers the true nature of the beast. Ultimately, the Antichrist will not tolerate any worship except of himself: The son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God

**2 Thessalonians 2:3-4**

**3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; 4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.**

Burn her with fire: Once his power has been consolidated, the Antichrist no longer needs the help of religious Babylon. He will then work to dismantle and destroy her and her one-world religion. This has always been the goal of tyrants – and most politicians – to use religion for their purposes, then discard it.

**God’s hand ultimately directs all this.**

**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.**

God directed the judgment against religious Babylon. God will sometimes use a wicked group (here, the ten kings) to be an instrument of His judgment against another wicked group (here, religious Babylon). God will ordain the political support of these ten kings for the Antichrist. God will give the world just what it wants: godless religion and godless rulers.

**The great harlot is identified with Rome.**

**And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.”**

In John’s day, there was no doubt which city reigns over the kings of the earth. Rome was the political, economic, and religious center of the world of that time. But Babylon – in the sense of the world system – has always been that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth. The question for Christians is, “Does it reign over me? Or am I the citizen of a better city, the Jerusalem above?”

**Galatians 4:26**

**26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.**