**THOUGHT FOR TODAY: When grace becomes an excuse to live in sin, you are no longer under grace but under deception.**

**THE FALL OF RELIGIOUS BABYLON**

[**Revelation 16:19**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/16/19/s_1183019)and[**14:8**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/14/8/s_1181008)have already declared Babylon’s fall.

* 1. In[**Revelation 17**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/17/1-18/s_1184001)and[**18**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/18/1-24/s_1185001)**,** the fall of Babylon is carefully detailed.
	2. Babylon is mentioned 287 times in the Scriptures, more than any other city *except Jerusalem*.
	3. Babylon was a literal city on the Euphrates River.
	4. [**Genesis 11:1-10**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/gen/11/1-10/s_11001) shows that right after the flood, Babylon was the seat of the civilization that expressed organized hostility to God.
		1. One of the most controversial episodes recorded in the Bible is the confusion of tongues at Babel **Genesis 11:1-9**. Like other events recorded in the first eleven chapters of Genesis, it has been classified as myth by *unbelievers*. Yet there is no hint in Scripture that this event should be taken as anything but literally occurring. In fact, this episode explains how and why the different languages developed.
	5. Babylon was later the *capitol* of the empire that conquered Judah.
		1. (Tenney) “Babylon, to 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.”
	6. To those familiar with the Old Testament, the name *Babylon* is associated with organized idolatry, blasphemy and the persecution of God’s people.
	7. (Mounce) “In John’s Day Rome epitomized all the antagonism and opposition to the Christian faith.” In some ways, the city of Rome was the clearest fulfillment of the Babylon attitude.
		1. If we had to pick one city today that most exemplifies the world system, perhaps we could say that *Los* *Angeles* is the Babylon of today.
	8. Babylon was present in John’s Day (typified by Rome), and throughout history, as the *world system*.
		1. 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.**

[**Revelation 17:1-2**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/17/1-2/s_1184001) **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.”**

1. **I will show you the judgment of the great harlot**: Her **judgment** is assured at the outset. There is never any doubt regarding the fate — and ultimate failure — of Babylon.
2. 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**.
	1. She was a high priestess of idol worship, and she gave birth to a son who she claimed was conceived miraculously.
	2. The son, named **Tammuz**, was considered a savior.
	3. Many ancient artifacts remain with the familiar subject of the mother **Semiramis** holding the savior-infant **Tammuz**, which predate Christianity.
	4. It was also said that **Tammuz** was killed by a wild beast and then miraculously brought back to life.
	5. ***Baal*** was the local, Canaanite name for the Babylonian **Tammuz**.
3. Ezekiel protests against the ceremony of weeping for Tammuz ([**Ezekiel 8:14**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/eze/8/14/s_810014) **So He brought me to the door of the north gate of the LORD’s house; and to my dismay, women were sitting there weeping for Tammuz.**)
4. Jeremiah mentions the heathen practice of making cakes for the queen of heaven ([**Jeremiah 7:18**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/jer/7/18/s_752018)) and offering incense to the queen of heaven ([**Jeremiah 44:17-19**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/jer/44/17-19/s_789017) **But we will certainly do whatever has gone out of our own mouth, to burn incense to the queen of heaven and pour out drink offerings to 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 we had plenty of food, were well-off, and saw no trouble. But since we stopped burning incense to the queen of heaven and pouring out drink offerings to her, we have lacked everything and have been consumed by the sword and by famine.” The women also said, “And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven and poured out drink offerings to her, did we make cakes for her, to worship her, and pour out drink offerings to her without our husbands’ permission?”**
5. **Who sits on many waters**: Here, Babylon **sits on many waters**; that is, she presides over many nations (compare with [**Revelation 17:15**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/17/15/s_1184015)).
	1. 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.
	2. (Hocking) “The woman pictures false religion that will dominate the world in the tribulation period.”
6. **The inhabitants of the earth were made drunk**: Religious Babylon intoxicates kings and peoples. *Karl* *Marx* was right when he said, “**Religion** is the opiate of the masses.”
7. **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.**

[**Revelation 17:3-6**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/17/3-6/s_1184003) **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 writ*ten: 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.**

1. **He carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness**: John is carried away into the **wilderness**; the desolate nature of the wilderness is an appropriate setting for a vision of judgment.
2. **Sitting on a scarlet beast**: The harlot rides the same beast (**seven heads and ten horns**) that was previously seen in [**Revelation 13:1**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/13/1/s_1180001) — the Antichrist and his dictatorship.
	1. (Walvoord) “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.”
	2. Her association with blasphemy and the dragon’s beast is clearly seen from God’s perspective. But to the people of the earth, she will look quite religious, and have the “faith” *everybody wants*.
3. **The woman was arrayed**: 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.
	* 1. **Purple** and **scarlet** were colors of splendor and magnificence; the dyes to make fabric these colors were rare and costly.
		2. (Barnhouse) “We find in the course of church history that one of the deadliest marks of ecclesiastical corruption is the lust for temporal power.” Purple and scarlet were the colors of *rulers*, whether economic or political.
4. **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.
	* 1. (Johnson) “In spite of all her glamour she is nothing but a ***prostitute***.”
		2. There is a stark contrast between the woman of [**Revelation 12**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/12/1-18/s_1179001) (representing **Israel**, God’s people), and *this woman* (representing **idolatrous, false religion**).
		3. As the Antichrist corresponds to Christ as a rival and enemy of Christ, so Great Babylon corresponds to the Woman that bears the Man-child, as *her* rival and enemy.”
5. **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**).
	1. This harlot must be larger than any one branch of a religious institution. She is the embodiment of Satan’s own ecumenical (promoting unity among the world’s Christian Churches) movement — the religion of the world system.
	2. 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.
6. **Drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus**: The woman not only persecutes; she also *celebrates* in her persecution of the godly *as a drunk celebrates in wine*.
7. **I marveled with great amazement**: John was amazed because this wasn’t pagan persecution (such as he knew in his day), but *religious* persecution. This is a *false-church*, thirsty for the blood of the saints.
	1. (Walvoord) “False religion is always the worst enemy of **true** religion.”
	2. We should never forget that some of the most vicious persecution conducted against true Christians has been done in the name of the church.
	3. 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.
	4. *John Rogers*, was the 1st of these Protestant martyrs, as he stood chained to a stake on February 4th, 1555, 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 angel tells John that the harlot will be explained to him.**

[**Revelation 17:7**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/17/7/s_1184007) **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.**

1. **I will tell you the *mystery* of the woman and of the beast that carries her**: 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.
2. **The beast carrying the woman is plainly connected with the beast of** [**Revelation 13**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/13/1-18/s_1180001)**.**
3. [**Revelation 17:8**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/17/8/s_1184008) **(NKJV) 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.**

**Seven mountains associated with the beast.**

[**Revelation 17:9**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/17/9/s_1184009) **“This calls for a mind with understanding: The seven heads of the beast represent the seven hills where the woman rules. They also represent seven kings.**

1. **The seven heads are seven mountains**: 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*.
2. Many commentators — especially those who see all of Revelation fulfilled in history — regard the **seven mountains** as an irrefutable connection with Rome.
	1. Clarke is a good example of this when he writes, “This verse has been almost universally considered to allude to the seven hills upon which Rome originally stood.”
	2. But in the Bible mountains are sometimes a figure of governments (such as in [**Daniel 2:35**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/dan/2/35/s_852035)) and the city of Rome is built on **hills**, *not mountains*.
	3. **The seven heads are seven mountains**: It is probably better to see the **seven mountains** as representing the seven kings and kingdoms described in [**Revelation 17:10**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/17/10/s_1184010).
		1. Many people find the connection between religious Babylon and Roman Catholicism irresistible, yet it is flawed in the sense that there is no doubt that religious Babylon will incorporate a strong Roman Catholic element, but it will be *much bigger* than Roman Catholicism.
		2. Tendencies for Roman Catholicism’s ultimate partnership with a one-world religion were evident in **Pope John Paul II’s** bizarre involvement with and approval of other anti-Christian religions. In addressing a “prayer gathering” of Christians, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists and others, Pope John Paul II told participants that their efforts were *“unleashing profound spiritual energies in the world and bringing about a new climate of peace.”* The Pope pledged that “the Catholic Church intends to ‘share in and promote’ such ecumenical and inter-religious cooperation.”
		3. The *Catholic Review* commented on this and said, “The unity of religion promoted by the Holy Father Pope John Paul II and approved by His Holiness the Dalai Lama is not a goal to be achieved immediately, but a day may come when the love and compassion which both Buddha and Christ preached so eloquently will unite the world in a common effort to save humanity from senseless destruction, and lead toward the light in which we all believe.”

**Seven kings and kingdoms.**

[**Revelation 17:10**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/17/10/s_1184010) **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.**

1. **Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come**: 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:
	1. **Five have fallen** refers to the five world empires before John’s day: Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Medo-Persia, and Greece
	2. **One is** refers to the world empire of John’s day: Rome
	3. **The other has not yet come** refers to the one world empire to come: a revival of the Roman Empire
2. **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/kjv/rev/17/11/s_1184011)).
3. There are problems with this viewpoint as well (so some have taken the seven as symbolic). This plainly is a difficult passage!

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

[**Revelation 17:11**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/17/11/s_1184011) **And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition.**

1. **Is himself also the eighth**: 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.**

[**Revelation 17:12-15**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/17/12-15/s_1184012) **“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.**

1. **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/kjv/dan/2/24-45/s_852024) image), but some take **ten** as a symbolic number.
	1. (Alford, 1866) “They are ten kingdoms which shall arise out of the fourth great kingdom there: ten European powers, which in the last time, in concert with and subjugation to the antichristian power, shall make war against Christ. In the precise number and form here indicated, they have not yet arisen… What changes in Europe may bring them into the required tale and form, it is not for us to say.”
2. **These are of one mind**: Many have seen the European Union (formerly the European Economic Community) as the potential fulfillment of this. Perhaps, but now there are more than ten nations in this revived European power, and more on the way.
3. There is little doubt the EU itself claims to be a successor to the ancient Roman Empire. The EEC started in 1957, when six European nations met to talk about combining their nuclear, coal, and economic resources. They met together in Rome and signed the treaty of Rome — the beginnings of the present EU. In many places in Europe, the EU flag is just as prominent as any national flag.
4. **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/kjv/rev/16/12-21/s_1183012)).
5. **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.
	1. 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.**

[**Revelation 17:16**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/17/16/s_1184016) **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.**

1. **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.
	1. 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](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/2th/2/3-4/s_1118003) Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.).
2. **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.
	1. 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.**

[**Revelation 17:17**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/17/17/s_1184017) **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.**

1. **God has put it into their hearts**: 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).
2. **To be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast**: 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.**

[**Revelation 17:18**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/rev/17/18/s_1184018) **And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.”**

1. **That great city**: 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.
	1. But *Babylon* — in the sense of the world system — has always been **that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth**.
	2. 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**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/gal/4/26/s_1095026))
2. Again, the association of this harlot — of religious Babylon — with Rome doesn’t mean that the Roman Catholic Church is identical to religious Babylon, though apostate (someone who has left their religious beliefs) Roman Catholics will definitely be a part of this great harlot. (I’m not a practicing Catholic)
3. (Seiss) “It is most direct in Paganism; but it is in Mohammedanism, in Papalism, in the degenerate Catholicism of the Eastern churches, and in all the heretical isms, infidelities, and mere goodishness which afflict our Protestant Christianity as well.”
4. Rather, Rome was the ready personification of Babylon — the world in rebellion against God — in John’s Day.
	1. Today, idolatry is just as strong, but more dispersed.
	2. Today, which city in the world is most readily identified with the world system? *Hollywood*? *Wall Street*? *Washington*? The *Vatican City*?