

THE BOOK OF REVELATION  
JROC - Babylon – Rev. 17 & 18  
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Babylon has deep roots in Scripture. We are introduced to Babylon in the book of Genesis and here we see this city again at the end – in Revelation! Babylon has much to do with the BIG PICTURE of the Bible.

Babylon, as used in Revelation, refers to 1) A religious system; and 2) a political and commercial system. The religious Babylon is found mainly in Revelation, Chapter 17. Commercial Babylon is found mainly in Revelation, Chapter 18.

The earthly city, Babylon, is seen in Rev. 17 and 18. In Rev. 17 Babylon is depicted as a prostitute which represents religious apostasy in Scripture. Israel played the harlot when going after idols (Num. 25:2; Jer. 3:6-9; Hosea 4:15, 5:3, 6:10, 9:1).

What a sharp contrast between Babylon and the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is the heavenly city coming to earth, pictured as the pure chaste (II Cor. 11:2) “bride (betrothed), the Lamb’s wife” (Rev. 21:9). Babylon is the mother of harlots.

We’re focusing in this lesson on the identity of Babylon. Is “Babylon” a literal city or a symbolic code? We’re also going to focus on the future destruction of Babylon. Hasn’t it already been destroyed?

There has been a great deal of speculation about the identity of Babylon. This “great harlot” has been identified with the Roman Catholic church and the Vatican, apostate Christendom, the United States, NYC, Rome, or some unknown great metropolis that will emerge in the end times. Apostate Christendom equates to the tares of which Jesus speaks in Matt. 13...people who look like Christians but are not. Apostate Christendom will be comprised of those who profess Christianity but are not genuine believers in Jesus. Apostate Christendom will be left on earth following the rapture of the true Church.

The city of ancient Babylon is in modern-day Iraq, about 50 miles south of Baghdad on the Euphrates River. Saddam Hussein had for several years been working to uncover the ancient ruins of Babylon with a view to rebuilding the city and establishing himself as the incarnation of Nebuchadnezzar, the great Babylonian king who took Judah captive from 606 to 586 B.C.

Rev. 17:18 tells us that Babylon is a literal city. *And the woman (the great harlot) whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.* But, which great city? Is it literally Babylon in Iraq?

Some believe that Babylon is symbolic...that it is a code name for Rome, NY, Jerusalem, or some other world city. Since the text does not indicate that it’s to be interpreted symbolically/figuratively, it’s best to interpret it as referring to a literal city called Babylon. We read of geographical places in Revelation which are literal: Patmos, Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Philadelphia, Sardis, Laodicea, and Armageddon. We have an established pattern of literal geographical locations. It appears that Babylon should be taken literally.

Babylon is significant. Babylon is the second most mentioned city in the Bible – second to Jerusalem. Scripture refers to Babylon 280 times. Jerusalem is mentioned 660 times in the OT and 142 times in the NT.

Throughout Scripture, Babylon is connected with evil and rebellion against God.

- Babylon is the city where man first began to worship himself in organized rebellion against God in the land of Shinar at the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-11).
- In Gen. 10 & 11, Babylon was both a literal city and the entire anti-God system that went with it. We see a literal city with a false religious system that's wrapped up in the literal city.
  - Gen. 10:8-10 - *Cush* (from Ham's line [one of Noah's sons]) *begot Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one on the earth.* <sup>9</sup> *He was a mighty hunter before* (Heb. word meaning "against") *the LORD;* <sup>10</sup> *and the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.* Shinar – "country of two rivers" (Tigris & Euphrates). Shinar is the ancient name for what later became known as Babylonia or Chaldea.
- Babylon was the capital city of the first of the Gentile world empires to rule over Jerusalem (Dan. 2:31-45). King Nebuchadnezzar was the King of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the Temple in 586 BC.

#### A Further Look at Babylon's Biblical Beginnings

- Nimrod, whose name means rebellion, revolt, the valiant (connotation – prideful), was the founder of Babel. We noted Nimrod as a mighty hunter before ("against" in Heb.) the LORD. His kingdom was Babel in the land of Shinar – the ancient name for what later became known as Babylonia or Chaldea. Nimrod's rebellion is seen in the attempt to build a city and a tower that would reach to heaven (Gen. 11:3-4)...the purpose of which was to make a name for themselves in defiance against God's plan. God had told mankind to scatter – to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. This kingdom of Babylon was the first attempt at world unity and rebellion against dependence upon God!

- Abram came from Ur of the Chaldeas (Babylonia). Abram's father, Terah, served other gods (Josh. 24:2). God called Abram to come out of Babylon/Chaldea where the people believed in many gods. God called Abram to go to the land of Canaan where Abram encounters and defeats kings one of whom is the King of Shinar/Babylon (Gen. 14)! God calls Abram to become a great nation to bless the world and along comes Babylon! In the same chapter, as Abram travels home to Hebron, we are introduced to the King of Salem, Melchizedek. Salem is the ancient name of Jerusalem. Melchizedek means "king of righteousness." In Gen. 15 God gives Abram specific boundaries in connection with the land of promise which includes the Euphrates River which includes Babylon!

- Babylon appears in II Kings 20. The King of Judah, Hezekiah, was dying. God gave Hezekiah an additional 15 years. Who appears on the scene? The King of Babylon, Merodach-Baladan! Hezekiah gave the King of Babylon a guided tour through his home.

Shortly thereafter, the prophet Isaiah told King Hezekiah, *Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and what your fathers have accumulated until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left,* ' says the LORD.<sup>18</sup> *'And they shall take away some of your sons who will descend from you, whom you will beget; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon'* (II Kings 20:17-18). Isaiah's prophecy of the Babylonian captivity was fulfilled approx. 100 years later. Hezekiah and his descendants were of the line of David from whom the Messiah would come. The King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the temple, and deported Judah's king. From the Babylonian captivity, 605 BC, until the physical Second Coming of Jesus, we do not read of a king from the line of David sitting on the throne of David in Jerusalem! Spiritual warfare! God's plan!

The Origin of Babylon's Religion; insight into the great harlot, the Mother of harlots (idolatry), the mystery of Babylon the great:

Ancient records indicate that Nimrod had a wife named Semiramis who was the founder and first high priestess of the Babylonian mystery religion. She gave birth to a son named Tammuz, whom she claimed was conceived miraculously. This son was considered savior of his people and in effect was the first false Messiah. The son was to have been killed by a wild beast, but brought back to life. The religious system of Semiramis had many secret rites in the worship of its idols. These were called mysteries (secrets) into which new members had to be initiated. When the initiates were initiated they were given a cup containing a mysterious drink made of wine, honey, water and flour. This represented the doctrines of the cult, The secret rites involved consecrated male and female prostitution.

While Medo-Persia conquered Babylon (circa 539 BC), much of the Babylonian culture, its pagan religions, and its ideology were continued in the kingdoms which followed. And so we see religious apostasy in its final form in Revelation 17 and its political power will be revived in the final form of the Roman Empire as depicted in Revelation 18.

#### Future Babylon

Babylon was on the Euphrates River; and there its ruins lay which Saddam Hussein began to uncover. In Rev. 9:14 we read of four fallen angels/demons being held at the Euphrates River (NOW) awaiting the appointed time for them to lead a host of demons to destroy one-third of mankind. In Rev. 16:12, the Euphrates will dry up to prepare the way for the kings of the east (Mesopotamia) which appears to be the first phase of the Campaign of Armageddon. These references to the Euphrates point to the fact that something important and EVIL is occurring there at that very location. It appears that the city of Babylon on the Euphrates will be rebuilt and will function as a religious and political center for the antichrist which explains Revelation's emphasis on the Euphrates River.

How do we know the literal city, Babylon will be rebuilt? The prophet Zechariah, writing, circa 520 BC, after Babylon's fall to the Medo-Persian empire saw a future time when evil would return to its original place in Babylon (Zech. 5:5-11).

In his vision, Zechariah speaks of the rise of the literal city of Babylon in the future. In his 7<sup>th</sup> vision in Zech. 5:5-11, Zechariah sees a woman who is named Wickedness carried away in a basket to the land of SHINAR where a temple will be built for her...when it is ready, in God's plan!

In his vision, Zechariah saw a basket with a lead cover representing "the iniquity of the people throughout the earth." The woman Zechariah saw was wickedness personified, as though all the evil deeds and actions done by mankind were represented by one character. The heavy lead cover was designed to keep the woman, the wickedness, from escaping. NOTE: the wickedness is not dormant; it is being restrained by the lead cover. The basket in the vision is being carried away by two spirit beings/demons to the land of Shinar of Babylon. Wickedness would be deposited in the land where man first rebelled against God, where Nimrod led mankind to build the Tower of Babel. Zechariah's vision tells us that the "house" of Shinar, of Babylon will rise again "when it is ready." When God's prophetic plan is ready, Babylon will be rebuilt. Wickedness will again reign from the Babylon. The city where man's rebellion against God began will be the site where man's rebellion will return to take up residence.

Babylon, in its glory, was conquered by the Medes and Persians in 539 BC. BUT Babylon continued as a city. Babylonia was a center of Jewish learning after 70 AD. By 224-226 AD, the Persian Jews had established their own sericulture industry in Babylonia. This was the period in which many of Babylonia's great cities including Pumbadita, Nehardea, Nisibis, Mahosa, Sura were entirely populated by Jews. Thousands of Judaic students were attending the great Judaic universities, the Babylonian Talmud was written (between 200 AD and 500 AD), and the Jewish population rose to perhaps as many as 2,000,000.

In Jer. 51:60-64 - *Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that would come upon Babylon, all these words that are written against Babylon.*<sup>61</sup> *And Jeremiah said..., "When you arrive in Babylon and see it, and read all these words,*<sup>62</sup> *then you shall say, 'O LORD, You have spoken against this place to cut it off, so that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but it shall be desolate forever.'*<sup>63</sup> *Now it shall be, when you have finished reading this book, that you shall tie a stone to it and throw it out into the Euphrates.*<sup>64</sup> *Then you shall say, 'Thus Babylon shall sink and not rise from the catastrophe that I will bring upon her. This will happen...Babylon's total destruction. And, this we shall see in Rev. 17 and 18.*

Further thoughts regarding the woman, the mother of harlots

Rev. 17:9 - <sup>9</sup> *"Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains (kingdoms) on which the woman sits. The harlot is sitting on the beast/antichrist. Many have identified the harlot as Rome.... During prophecy sermons and Bible studies in the 1970's, the connection with Rome and the Vatican was emphasized over and over because of the city of Rome sitting on seven hills. BUT, the 7 mountains are kingdoms and it is the beast/antichrist which is connected to the 7 kingdoms and 10 kings. The 7 kingdoms are 7 Gentile empires that have been empowered by Satan. The final worldwide system of false religion wrapped up in this great harlot INCLUDES but it is NOT LIMITED to Rome.*

Rev. 17:16 - <sup>16</sup> *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.* During the first half of the Tribulation, the antichrist will submit to Babylon and – the false religious system. The feigned death and resurrection of the antichrist will prompt worship of him and he will sit in the temple in Jerusalem (II Thess. 2:4). There is no room for worship of another. And so, the great harlot will be made desolate. Her flesh will be eaten and she will be burned with fire!

“Obviously, Mystery Babylon, the apostate pagan church of the last days, will not develop overnight. Such an ecumenical organization, involving many diverse religious groups, will be created by negotiation and conferences over a number of years leading up to the beginning of the seven-year Tribulation period. It is therefore quite probable that we will witness the initial steps toward this one-world church of the last days before the rapture takes the Christians home to heaven” Grant Jeffrey.

The ecumenical movements under the banner of “religion” are leading to religious Babylon (Rev. 17). World trade is leading to commercial Babylon (Rev. 18). The New World Order that we have been hearing about for decades will be the political Babylon.

Revelation 18 drops the word “mystery” and picks up the word “city” regarding Babylon. In Revelation 18 we see the destruction of commercial Babylon.

Rev. 18:1-2 - An angel coming from the presence of God is crying out that Babylon is fallen, is fallen – and that it has become a dwelling place of demons...how fitting!

Rev. 18:3 – the kings of the earth (representing world government) and the merchants of the earth (representing world trade) have become obsessed with and controlled by Babylon.

Rev. 18:9-19 - The lament over Babylon’s destruction is superficial. The kings are weeping over the loss of their power; the merchants are weeping over their business loss; the ship masters are crying out because they had become rich through Babylon. With her destruction all wealth, status, and power has been destroyed.

Rev. 18:20 – We are told to REJOICE over the demise of this city that has, through the history of the world, represented EVIL - *Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles (holy apostles and prophets), for God has avenged you on her!* God’s righteousness and justice have prevailed. God has avenged the deaths of those slain for their testimonies for Him!

### BABYLON IS FALLEN, FALLEN

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.*

Jer. 51:60-64 - *So Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that would come upon Babylon, all these words that are written against Babylon. <sup>61</sup> And Jeremiah said... ‘When you arrive in Babylon and see it, and read all these words, <sup>62</sup> then you shall say, ‘O LORD, You have spoken against this place to cut it off, so that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but it shall be desolate forever.’ <sup>63</sup> Now it shall be, when you have finished*

reading this book, that you shall tie a stone to it and throw it out into the Euphrates. <sup>64</sup> Then you shall say, 'Thus Babylon shall sink and not rise from the catastrophe that I will bring upon her.'

Rev. 18:22-24

<sup>22</sup> 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. <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth.

Event	Religious Babylon Revelation 17	Commercial Babylon Revelation 18
Sequence of the fall	Occurs in the first 3 1/2 years of the tribulation	Comes into full fruition during the last 3 1/2 years of the tribulation
Who is speaking	One of the angels that poured out one of the bowl judgments	Another angel with great power
Name used	Mystery Babylon the Great, Mother of Prostitutes, and Abominations of the Earth	Babylon the Great
Destroyed by	The ten kings make her desolate, naked, eat her flesh, and burn her with fire	God Himself
Reaction by men	They hate her	The kings bewail and lament, the merchants weep and mourn, the shippers cried, weep, and wail
Reaction by the heavenly host	God's will is fulfilled	Rejoicing The 24 elders and 4 living creatures fall down and worship God