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The Mystery of Babylon



“And another angel followed, saying, ‘Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication’” (Revelation 14:8).



An Amazing Fact: *The Jeddah Tower in Saudi Arabia was planned to be the world’s tallest building at 3,281 feet. Construction began on the project in 2013, but with only about one-third completed, it was halted in January 2018 due to disputes between the owners, contractors, and workers. With no firm timeline given for completion, the silhouette of a massive unfinished tower has dominated the skyline of this Arabian capital ever since.*

The origins of Babylon are found in the post-flood world when a group of people settled in a region called Shinar. They soon began to build a city with a tower (Genesis 11:2–4). Motivated by pride, they wanted to build a tower so tall that

it would rise into heaven itself (v. 4). But in doing so, they had placed themselves in competition with God, the heavenly King.

God, however, obstructed their plan by confusing their communication (v. 7). Thus, the various languages of the world were born. Unable to speak with one another, the people stopped their work on the tower and abandoned the city (v. 8). The place was famously known as Babel, which means “confusion,” “because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth” (v. 9).

Thousands of years later, Babel was reborn into the kingdom of Babylon (Daniel 1:1, 2). Interestingly, in lesson 12, we saw that Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon also became a rival for the worship that

belongs only to the Creator God. While history records the literal demise of this great empire (5:26–31), the Bible also foretells that spiritual Babylon will play a major role in final events.

What is this end-time Babylon, and what does it have to do with your eternal destiny?





When you see a blank, look up the passage in your Bible and write in the missing word.

1. What is the second angel's message in Revelation 14?

Revelation 14:8. *And another angel followed, saying, “ _____ is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.”*

ANSWER: The second point of the three angels' messages, the final warning to the world before Jesus' return, is about the fall of Babylon. It is a proclamation of judgment. Babylon's crime is spiritual adultery. In the Bible, the relationship between God and His people—the church—is compared to a marriage

(Isaiah 54:5; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:23–29). Just as a wife can be unfaithful, so can God's people when they worship idols and false gods (Jeremiah 3:6–9). God judges Babylon because it will lead the whole world to cheat on Him spiritually (Isaiah 21:9).

But as we know, the physical kingdom of Babylon already fell and no longer exists today. So what is this Babylon of the end times? Let's uncover this mystery ...

2. What do the two women in Revelation represent?

Revelation 12:1. *Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the _____, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars.*

Revelation 17:3, 5. *And I saw a woman. ... And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, _____ THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.*

ANSWER: The two women symbolize opposite conditions of the church. The woman in Revelation 12 represents a faithful wife who is wrapped in God's light and glory (Psalm 45:13). In contrast, Revelation 17 portrays



the unfaithful “harlot ... with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication” (vv. 1, 2). This is the very sin Babylon commits in the second angel’s message!

Notice that the “great harlot” also symbolizes a “great city” (v. 18) and that on her forehead is the name “Babylon the Great.” In the Bible, a name represents one’s character (Genesis 27:35, 36; Exodus 34:5–7; 1 Samuel 25:25). The same characteristics that defined the original city of Babel—pride, rivalry with God, and confusion—are also seen in this harlot. This unfaithful woman is the spiritual descendant of literal Babylon.

3. What other characteristics identify who this harlot is?

Revelation 17:3. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of _____, having seven heads and ten horns.

Revelation 17:6. I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the _____ and with the blood of the _____ of Jesus.

Revelation 17:18. The woman whom you saw is that great city which _____ over the kings of the earth.

ANSWER: The harlot has the same characteristics as the beast we studied in Revelation 13. Like the beast, the harlot also persecutes God’s people, “the saints” (v. 6). Like the beast, the harlot holds the entire world under her command (vv. 3, 8, 12). And the description of the beast in Revelation 13:1, with “seven heads and ten horns” and “a blasphemous name,” matches the beast the harlot rides. It’s too clear to miss! The same entity is being described: papal Rome.

Revelation 17 presents a more detailed portrait than chapter 13. The harlot and beast represent the two components of the papacy: The harlot, as the unfaithful woman, symbolizes the church; the beast, as the kingdom, symbolizes the state. Vatican City is unique in that it is a religiopolitical power, a country (the world’s smallest) ruled by the pope. The harlot’s beast, like the one in chapter 13, has 10 horns, which represent the divisions of the Roman Empire where she reigned. Notice also that the church controls the governments: The harlot sits on the beast.

Now look at these additional characteristics. The harlot is called “the Mother of Harlots” (17:5), just as the Roman Catholic Church is known as the “Holy Mother Church.” The harlot wears “purple and scarlet” (v. 4), colors worn by Catholic bishops and cardinals. And lastly, the beast’s seven heads on which the woman rides are revealed to be “seven mountains” (v. 9), just as Rome, built on seven literal hills, is known as the “City of the Seven Hills.”



4. How has the harlot been unfaithful to God?

Revelation 17:4. *The woman ... [has] in her hand a golden cup full of _____ and the filthiness of her fornication.*

Revelation 17:2. *The inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the _____ of her fornication.*

ANSWER: The abominations represent lies (Proverbs 12:22) and the alcoholic wine false doctrine (Isaiah 28:7). Thus, when people are said to drink from the harlot's cup, it means they believe falsehoods taught by the papacy and become spiritually intoxicated—confused in their faith.

Here is a partial list of the Catholic Church's doctrines at odds with scripture:



- A. *The Ten Commandments can be modified or repealed.* Compare the Catholic Church's version of the Ten Commandments with the Bible's. They are different! (See Lesson 14.)
- B. *Sunday is the Lord's holy day.* (See Lessons 5 and 14.)
- C. *The soul is inherently immortal.* (See Lesson 9.)
- D. *The lost will be punished in hell for eternity.* (See Lesson 10.)
- E. *Some people go to purgatory after they die.* (See Lesson 10.)
- F. *People are not baptized by immersion; infants are baptized.* (See Lesson 8.)
- G. *A priest may grant forgiveness when a person confesses to him.* (See Lesson 12.)
- H. *Idolatry, including praying to statues, is permitted.* (See Lesson 4.)
- I. *A human other than Christ never sinned—His mother, Mary. This is known as the Immaculate Conception.* (See Lessons 2, 4, and 6.)

All these beliefs, while commonly accepted among many Christians, are unbiblical. These doctrines do not accurately represent the God of the Bible; they are manmade ideas. Those who believe in these doctrines are going toward a counterfeit god. They are being unfaithful to God.

5. What do the harlot's daughters represent?

Revelation 17:5. *And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF _____ AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.*

ANSWER: The Bible says that the harlot has children.

In Catholicism, religious authorities dictate what the Bible means: “All its members recognize the [Catholic] Church as the authorized living interpreter of Scripture.”¹ In contrast, the Protestant Reformers believed in *sola scriptura*, which means that the Bible is the only infallible source for Christian doctrine. This idea led to the Reformation, a movement in which

believers separated from the Catholic Church and formed the Protestant denominations. The Lutherans were established from Martin Luther, the Presbyterians from John Calvin, the Methodists from John Wesley, etc.

But how many Catholic doctrines do these denominations still practice today? In these Protestant churches remain many of the false teachings of the “Mother Church,” out of which they came. As one Catholic cleric said, “May we not invite our fellow countrymen of other faiths to return to the holy Catholic Apostolic Church, the historic center of unity, and the mother from whom they have strayed?”²

The harlot's daughters are the other Christian denominations which, by following their mother's false beliefs, are likewise unfaithful to the Word of God. The spiritual harlotry of these daughter churches has been accurately called “apostate Protestantism.”



¹ John A. O'Brien, *The Faith of Millions: The Credentials of the Catholic Religion* (Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 1974), 139.

² O'Brien, 139.

6. What happened to the faithful woman of Revelation 12?

Revelation 12:13, 16. He [the dragon] persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. ... But the _____ helped the woman, and the _____ opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth.

ANSWER: The woman is persecuted during a period of 1,260 prophetic days, which we have learned represents 1,260 years (Revelation 12:6, 13, 14). This is a description of God's body of believers during the Dark Ages, when the reigning Catholic Church persecuted Protestants. This woman fled "into the wilderness" (v. 6), representing the Protestants' escape into the hills and across the ocean to the sparsely inhabited New World. This new land "helped" the Protestant refugees by providing relief from the dragon's "flood" of persecution.



7. What does the second beast of Revelation 13 represent?

Revelation 13:11. Then I saw another beast coming up out of the _____, and he had two horns like a _____ and spoke like a dragon.



ANSWER: Read Revelation 13 and you will find not only the beast representing the papacy—but a *second* beast as well. The Bible notes several defining characteristics of this other beast:

A. It was established about the time that the pope "[went] into captivity" (Revelation 13:10). In the verses just prior, it is evident that this second beast power was established as the first beast was receiving its deadly wound in 1798.

B. It was established “out of the earth” (v. 11). Since waters in Bible prophecy represent a densely populated area (17:15), the earth represents the opposite—a relatively unpopulated area.

C. Its horns looked like a lamb’s (13:11). In Bible prophecy, horns symbolize kings (Daniel 7:24; 8:21). But notice that this second beast, unlike the first (Revelation 13:1), has no crowns. A crown indicates a monarchy, a kingdom governed by royalty. We can conclude, then, that this beast does not represent a monarchy. In addition, a lamb in Bible symbolism refers to Jesus Christ (Revelation 5:6; 7:9; 14:1). That this second beast has lamb’s horns means that its power of rule is affiliated with Christianity.



There is only one nation that fits all these characteristics: the United States of America.

The United States declared itself an independent nation in 1776; instituted its governing principles, the Constitution, in 1787; and by 1798, when the papacy received its deadly wound, the world recognized the United States as an independent country. The nation emerged on a continent with a population a tenth the size of Europe’s, and it was founded on Christian principles.

As we’ve just learned, it was the persecuted Protestants

who settled in America. The Founding Fathers based America’s rule of law on two Protestant principles: civil and religious liberty—a state without a king and a church without a pope, separate from each other’s interference. These two principles are represented by the lamb’s two crownless horns. As of 2023, “the United States is home to the largest Protestant population in the world with 160 million Protestants.”³

³ “Protestant Countries 2023,” World Population Review, accessed on September 6, 2023, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/protestant-countries>.



8. What happens to the United States in the end times?

Revelation 13:11, 12. He had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a _____. And he exercises all the _____ of the first beast in his presence, and _____ the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

ANSWER: Sadly, when the first beast's deadly wound is completely healed, the United States will follow in the footsteps of Rome. Remember, papal Rome was given "authority" to rule by "the dragon" (Revelation 13:2). The Bible foretells

that just as papal Rome ruled by coercion and deception, so will the United States (vv. 12, 14). It will reverse its founding Protestant principles, the separation of church and state, and form "an image to the beast," a government mirroring the religiopolitical structure of the Vatican. America will abandon its Protestantism!

9. What three powers will unite in the end times?

Revelation 16:13. I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the _____, out of the mouth of the _____, and out of the mouth of the _____.

ANSWER: The dragon, the first beast, and an entity called the false prophet will unite. From studying the first two, we know that this three-fold confederacy is a satanic power that opposes God.





10. What does the false prophet represent?

Revelation 19:20. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked _____ in his presence, by which he _____ those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.

Revelation 13:13, 14. He performs great _____, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he _____ those who dwell on the earth by those _____ which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.

ANSWER: The same description is given in these two passages. Thus, the second beast and the false prophet represent the same entity: apostate Protestantism. As the second beast in Revelation 13, apostate Protestantism, through the dragon's power, "performs great signs" (v. 13) to deceive the world into following the first beast. And as the false prophet in Revelation 16 and 19 did, apostate Protestantism unites with the dragon and the beast to form a threefold power, also "performing signs" (16:14) to convince the world to war against God.

11. What do these three powers united represent?

Revelation 16:19. Now the great city was divided into _____ parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great _____ was remembered before God.

ANSWER: Scripture indicates that this unholy trinity unites to make up end-time Babylon the Great. Just as the inhabitants of Babel desired to construct a tower to rival God, end-time Babylon will organize a global army against God and His people leading up to the Second Coming (Revelation 16:14, 16; 19:19).

The Bible further tells us that “Babylon the great ... has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird” (18:2). As described on the harlot’s forehead, Babylon the Great is “the Mother ... of the Abominations of the Earth” (17:5). End-time Babylon represents a confederacy of all false religion—paganism, spiritism, apostate Christianity—all ultimately aimed at luring people away from the truths of salvation in Christ (18:23). There will be nothing righteous in it.

12. What does God urge people who are inside Babylon to do?

Revelation 18:4. Come _____ of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.



ANSWER: All who desire to follow God are urged to get out of end-time Babylon *now*—to renounce all counterfeit ideas. God will judge Babylon the Great and destroy her (Revelation 18:8–10, 19–24). The proclamation “Babylon is fallen” is the Lord’s solemn warning to the world.

But God never identifies the problem without providing the solution. Fleeing Babylon means joining His faithful remnant, who will *not* share Babylon’s fate but will, instead, be delivered to salvation (Daniel 12:1).

We’ll learn what that looks like in action in our next and last lesson.

13. Will you choose now to come out of apostate Babylon and into God’s faithful remnant church?

Answer: _____

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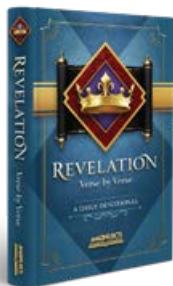
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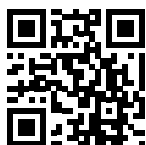
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Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.”

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

Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.” Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

Revelation 14:6–12

