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Introduction: Towards the end of Chapter 16, as the seventh of the seven bowl judgments was described, the Scripture says, "And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath." (16:19b). Babylon was still an existing city in the Apostle John's day. And of course the history of Babylon is infamous, politically, militarily, religiously and spiritually. From the rebellion and tower incident in Genesis 11 to the destruction of the first temple in Jerusalem and the captivity of Judah in the Sixth Century B.C., the infamy of Babylon led to its becoming synonymous with oppressive earthly power and idolatrous, pagan religion. The Apostle Peter even uses "Babylon" symbolically to describe Rome, the great earthly power of his day, in 1 Peter 5:13. The inclusion of the wrath of God being poured out on "Babylon" at the end of the bowl judgments points to the Lord's future, ultimate destruction of the oppressive, idolatrous, immoral and unbelieving power of this world.

Chapters 17 and 18 seem to expand upon this statement (from 16:19b) concerning the pouring out of God's wrath on Babylon, the great emergent system of power in the world under the control of Satan and Antichrist. These two chapters focus God's judgment upon last-days' Babylon, which is one specific ramification of the bowl judgments. Chapter 17 seems to focus on the religious aspect of Babylon, whilst Chapter 18 focuses on the economic and commercial aspects. All of it will be judged and destroyed, with violence, and the earth will weep and mourn. Heaven, however, will rejoice.

1. Verses 1-2 - The angel speaks with John.

- v.1 - one of the seven angels... Which one is not stated; perhaps it is the seventh, who had just poured out his bowl and announced, "It is done!" (16:17). Come... he is going to take John somewhere else. the judgment of the great harlot... disloyalty to God, forsaking Him for idols, loving the world, etc., is sometimes illustrated in Scripture as harlotry or spiritual adultery (a major theme in Hosea, for example; also see James 4:4) - this points to this woman representing the false religion of last-days' Babylon (we know from previous study that Antichrist will establish himself as an object of worship!). many waters is a reference to the many "peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues" of the world (see 17:15); thus this false religion will sweep the world.

- v.2 - kings... inhabitants... All the world, rulers and people, will be swept up in the wave of this false religion. Rulers will collaborate with her in controlling the world, and the masses will be spiritually drunk with false doctrine.

NOTE: False religions in the world today are not much different. In the Great Tribulation, the difference is there will be one world religion, a false one, controlled by Satan.

2. Verses 3-6 - John sees the woman on the scarlet beast.

- v.3a - carried me away... John is taken elsewhere to get a specific look at this aspect of the coming judgment upon this world. He has already seen world destruction - now he will get a focused look at this aspect of it.

- v.3b - The harlot is seen sitting on a scarlet beast. We have seen the beast already as the Antichrist. The harlot is Babylon. Thus, the earthly power of this world - here the religious aspect of that power - will be carried to prominence by Antichrist. The fact that both the beast and the woman are seen arrayed in scarlet points to impression of royalty, pomp, and glory that this false religion will present. full of names of blasphemy... the beast will put himself forward to be worshiped. seven heads and ten horns... This is consistent with Daniel and earlier in Revelation as a picture of Antichrist's earthly empire.

NOTE: It is true today: all false religions make great demonstrations of splendor and royalty and pomp. True Christianity recognizes Only Christ as worthy of glory and adoration.

- v.4a - The religion of Babylon will be extremely successful and wealthy, as portrayed by the harlot's clothes and jewels.

- v.4b - The cup is gold, but its contents are filthy. False religion looks wonderfully impressive outwardly, but at its core is rottenness, for it worships man and self and all manner of idols and not the Lord Jesus Christ.

- v.5 - MYSTERY - The identity of spiritual Babylon will be revealed in its time. A New Testament "mystery" is some spiritual truth that was not understood until Christ. This mystery, spoken of prophetically, is not fully known yet. MOTHER - Babel (i.e., Babylon) in Genesis 11 spawned a great spiritual fornication (the tower incident), and thus all false religion can, in a sense, be traced to there.

- v.6 - blood of the saints... blood of the martyrs of Jesus... False religion always persecutes and kills the true prophets of God. It was true in Old Testament Israel and Judah, it was true in Jerusalem in Jesus' day and in the Apostolic period, it was true in the Gentile world evangelized by the Apostle Paul, and it is true in the world today. It will continue in the Great Tribulation.