

Revelation 17

...I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet colored beast...

Chapter Outline:

- I. The Seven angels talk with John, vv. 1-2
- II. John is carried away and sees a woman, vv. 3-6
- III. The angel explains the woman, the beast, the seven heads, the ten horns, and the waters, vv. 7-18

Simplified Outline:

- I. The vision, vv. 1-6
- II. The interpretation, vv. 7-18

This and the next chapter will deal directly with Babylon. This topic was brought up in the last chapter (16:19) where it said there that “great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.” In these next two chapters God will not only speak about Babylon’s religious sway over the world, which it has held through the the annals of time right down to our present day, but also it’s final demise. Chiefly Babylon’s main contribution to human history has been influencing God’s people to go a whoring after strange gods and walk in a false religious system which in turn resulted in a drunken state of apostasy and drove them to commit heinous crimes before their God.

Babylon is mentioned almost 300 times in the Bible. A city that is only out numbered in occurrence by Jerusalem (mentioned a little over 800 x’s). The city of Babylon and the empire of Babylon, which rose to its zenith under Nebuchadnezzar’s reign, are pretty much only a matter of history in our day other than Saddam Husein’s go at rebuilding the actual city itself. But the actual city and empire are not the focus in this chapter; rather Babylon’s essence and influence of religious order seen even today in our very own day.

Babylon existed before it’s imperial rule over the whole world, it existed in John’s day as he was penning the book of Revelation and it exists today too. Babylon came to being under the leadership of Nimrod whom we find in Genesis 10. Genesis 10:8-10 says “And Cush begat *Nimrod*: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD: wherefore it is said, Even as *Nimrod* the mighty hunter before the LORD. And the beginning of his kingdom was *Babel*, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.”

Babel means confusion and that is exactly what Nimrod brought into the world. God’s commanded to man to repopulate the world after the flood was simple and plain. He said that man should “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the [whole] earth” (Gen 9:1). Yet under Nimrod’s leadership he swayed the people to disobey the word of God and thus forsake the one true and living God. This paved the way for a false religious system to be put in place of God and His word.

“According to religious history and legend, the Babylonian religion was founded by the wife of Nimrod, 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 mentions this original babylonian religious system in a few places:

Ezekiel 8:14

“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 7:18; 44:17-19, 25

7:18 “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.”

44:17-19 “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. 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. 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?”

44:25 “Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying; Ye and your wives have both spoken with your mouths, and fulfilled with your hand, saying, We will surely perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her: ye will surely accomplish your vows, and surely perform your vows.”

The people of Nimrod's day exchanged God for a religious system which thrives off of man's pride and lust to be someone or as they said, “let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.” Their way to heaven had just been confused. Their way of true religion, true worship and living and walking in a wonderful relationship with the true and living God had just been confounded. Suddenly man was his own god, or at least his own god maker. It is from here that all religious systems which thrive off man seeking to achieve a state of righteousness through human effort flow. The deception is that this system will “pay off” with prosperity in this life and eternal bliss in the next.

We see what God thought of this inaugural Babylonish religious system in his response to it. It tells us in Genesis 11:6-7 that the Lord scattered the people and confounded their plans. However the combination of man's persistence and Satan's malevolent influence has propagated this Babylonish system through the ages in every culture and nation that has ever lived on the face of the earth. Sadly it crept into Israel and eventually even into the church of Jesus Christ. “The concept of Babylon is greater than Revelation 17-18 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 hold sway over the earth as never before.”¹ It is to this world system and whore that we are now introduced in chapter 17.

¹ David Guzik, Commentary on Revelation, [blueletterbible](http://blueletterbible.com)