

What Is Babylon the Great? Is It the Empire of False Religion?

In his vision on the island of Patmos, the Apostle John was shown a mysterious woman known as Babylon the Great. The angel declared, “Come here; I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters” (Revelation 17:1). These waters symbolize the vast reach of her influence over peoples, nations, and tongues.

The identity of this woman is revealed by the inscription on her forehead: “Babylon the great, mother of harlots and of the detestable things of the earth” (Revelation 17:5). She represents a perverse religious system that corrupts true worship, leading multitudes into spiritual adultery against Yahweh.

John then beheld her bloodthirsty violence: “I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus; and when I saw her, I wondered greatly” (Revelation 17:6). This harlot power persecutes the faithful, aligning false religion with political might to suppress Christ’s testimony.

The angel explained the symbols: “The waters ... are peoples and crowds and nations and tongues” (Revelation 17:15), and although the beast and ten horns aid her, they ultimately turn against her in judgment (Revelation 17:16–17). Babylon the Great is identified as the singular city holding dominion over earthly kings (Revelation 17:18).

Her doom is pronounced in a later vision: “She has fallen, she has fallen, Babylon the great, and she has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit ...” (Revelation 18:2). All who have profited from her wealth and immorality lament her demise, while a voice from heaven cries, “Come out of her, My people, so that you will not share in her sins and so that you will not receive of her plagues” (Revelation 18:4).

Babylon the Great symbolizes the global empire of false religion that opposes God and seduces the nations with idolatry. She inherits the legacy of ancient Babel—human pride and rebellion against the Creator—manifested in perverted worship and deceitful doctrine.

Today’s Christians are called to recognize and resist the allure of Babylon’s counterfeit spirituality. We must remain faithful to Yahweh alone, rejecting every form of idol worship or syncretism, and proclaim the unadulterated gospel of Jesus Christ.

Let us give all glory to God, who in His mercy has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of His beloved Son.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3). Amen.

Reference

Revelation 17:1 - “Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, ‘Come here; I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters.’”

Revelation 17:5 - "And on her forehead was written a name, a mystery: 'Babylon the great, mother of harlots and of the detestable things of the earth.'"

Revelation 17:6 - "And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus; and when I saw her, I wondered greatly."

Revelation 17:15 - "Then he said to me, 'The waters that you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples and crowds and nations and tongues.'"

Revelation 17:16 - "And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast, will hate the harlot; they will make her desolate and naked, and they will eat her flesh and burn her up with fire."

Revelation 17:17 - "For God has put it into their hearts to carry out His purpose by acting in unison, by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God will be fulfilled."

Revelation 17:18 - "And the woman whom you saw is the great city that has royal power over the kings of the earth."

Revelation 18:2 - "And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, 'She has fallen, she has fallen, Babylon the great, and she has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean bird and every unclean and detestable beast.'"

Revelation 18:4 - "And I heard another voice from heaven saying, 'Come out of her, My people, so that you will not share in her sins and so that you will not receive of her plagues.'"

1 Peter 1:3 - "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."