

Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the word of God

2021

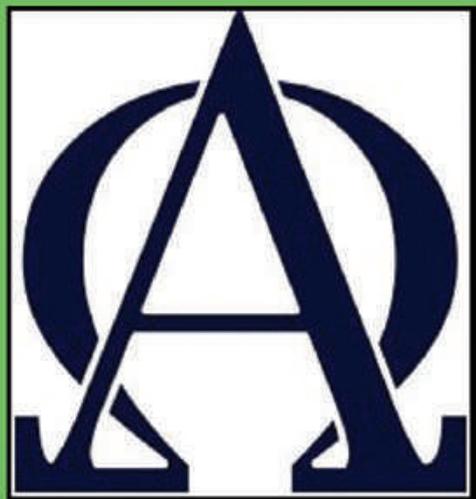
JUNE

Revelation – Victory Book Chapters 12–22

Introducing
3 significant rebuilding projects
in the days ahead

From Study Groups
The great harlot; emergence
of the Beast; persecution
of ‘the harlot’ (Rev. 17)

Feature
Image and Likeness



Revelation 22:13

3 SIGNIFICANT REBUILDING PROJECTS IN THE DAYS AHEAD

Babylon: The city of Babylon in modern day Iraq, that has occupied such a prominent place of disrepute in Scripture, will be brought to the fore once again, and also its shame. In the past, it was part of the kingdom of a powerful ruler, Nimrod; that kingdom was extensive (Gen. 10:8-14). The construction of a tower undertaken long ago in the land of Shinar (ancient name of Babylon) revealed the vanity and arrogance of sinful and stricken humanity, desirous of producing a skyscraper that would reach far into space, even into heaven itself. The outcome was disastrous, resulting in widespread dispersion and confusion (Gen. 11:1-9). Nevertheless, eventually the Babylonian empire became the premier world power, under its king Nebuchadnezzar, in 605 B.C., meeting its demise 66 years later, at the hands of the coalition of Medes and Persians. The city's ignominious reputation as the great harlot, symbolic of all that is vile, is highlighted in chapters 14, 16-19 of Revelation. The fact that the Euphrates River is mentioned twice in this book is also confirmatory of a future Babylon being literal (9:14; 16:12). Zechariah also prophesies of her future existence (Zech. 5:11).

Temple: In our Revelation studies, we have already come across the temple of God that will be re-established in a city very different in name and fame to Babylon - the holy city of Jerusalem (e.g., Rev. 11:1-2). It will be under siege for the second three and a half years of the tribulation period of seven years (Daniel's 70th week—Dan. 9:26-27) and near the end of that period all of earth's nations, one way or another representatively, will come against it, of their own will yet 'gathered' there in divine sovereignty, where they will meet their end (Zech. 12:2-9; 14:2-3, 9). Believers, of course, who are members of the church which is Christ's body, will have been called home before all this, to be with the Lord (1

Cor.15:51-58; 1 Thes.4:13-18). This period of time is known as the 'great tribulation', 'the time of Jacob's trouble' (Rev.11:2; Mat.24:21, 29; Jer.30:7). Here, seated in this future temple, the world will see the very apogee of blasphemy when the Beast of Revelation, the 'little horn' of Daniel 7:8 (cp. Rev. 13:3,12,14), the Antichrist, who is also called the man of sin and son of perdition, will proclaim himself as God (Mat. 24:15; 2 Thes.2:4).

The Roman Empire: This is perhaps more difficult to substantiate, in view of what is before us in Revelation 17 and differences of opinion on the interpretation of prophetic statements with the background of historical settings. Of course, we have to return to the great image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream revealed to Daniel the prophet, that ends with the description of a fourth kingdom, Rome, that is part iron and part clay (Dan. 2:31-43). It is seen in two parts / phases - the first succeeding the Grecian Empire, and lasting almost six centuries. The second part is still to take place, before the coming of Christ to reign on earth. Then in Daniel's unsettling dream and visions of the night, in the first year of Belshazzar's reign, there arises four great beasts, the fourth one having ten horns. Then a little horn emerges and forces itself among the ten (cp. Rev. 13:1-3). It is the depiction of a world ruler far fiercer than anyone before him, whose base could well be in Babylon, and he has command of a future confederacy of western and other nations. It was the countries of Europe that formed the nucleus of the Roman Empire of old, but countries like Syria, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Jordan and Turkey also came under the domination of this vast empire. His end will be swiftly brought about by the Ancient of Days (Dan. 7:7-8,15, 17, 19-21, 22-25).

R.B.F.

From Study Groups . . .

THE GREAT HARLOT; EMERGENCE OF THE BEAST; PERSECUTION OF 'THE HARLOT' (Revelation 17)

From Aberdeen: The 'many waters' on which the great harlot sits are descriptive of the 'peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues' who come under the influence of an idolatrous entity called Babylon (Rev. 17:15 RV). On the forehead of this harlot a name is written: 'MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH' (17:5). Turning to Ezekiel's prophecy, Samaria and Jerusalem are portrayed figuratively as two daughters who played the harlot in a national sense, by forgetting the LORD and going after the Assyrians and the Chaldeans and thus defiling themselves with those foreign nations' idols. It is interesting to consider how the two harlots in Ezekiel are mentioned relative to 'one mother' and also note how Babylon the Great in Revelation is likewise described as the 'mother of harlots' (Ezek. 3:2; Rev.17:5). There appears to be an historic aspect to this idolatrous 'mother of harlots' which will emerge in its final form as Babylon the Great. John Miller may have been prescient in setting forth the following:

'There can be no doubt that the Church of Rome is a phase of Babylon ... But the Babylon of these chapters is something greater than Rome, and it may well be that Rome and other forms of apostate Christianity, with pagan religions which number their followers by the million, will at last converge upon this iniquitous centre, Babylon, which as yet is not in view.' (*Notes on the New Testament Scriptures* by John Miller, p. 690).

The apostasy - the falling away from God by the rejecting of His standards, is already under way, and will gather pace, eventually preparing the way for Babylon the Great to emerge, and thus carnal religion will make its pact with the Antichrist and his political system of government. *James Johnson*

From Aberkenfig: John must have been totally astonished to witness as the seven angels pour out their bowls (ch.16) and his attention is diverted from the horror by one of the seven inviting him to come and be shown the judgment of the great harlot/prostitute. Chapter 16 closes with Babylon the Great being divided into three parts by an earthquake (16:19) illustrating the centre of world 'government', 'trade', and 'religion'. John is given an invitation to a 'guided tour' by the angel (v.1) acting as 'an apocalyptic tour guide': the itinerary starting at a wilderness, John being taken there by the Spirit (v.3), and ending with the fall of Babylon becoming a desolation (18:17,19).

The word 'great' does not mean 'desirable', but rather 'extensive in being' and hence a derogatory use of the word. A similar thought is seen in verse 2 regarding the whore's actions. There are over forty different Aramaic and Greek words (according to *Young's* concordance) listed as translations into the English word 'great'. Verse 18 makes clear that the woman is identified with the city, the great city, that existed in John's day ('reigns' or 'reigneth' is present tense). But perhaps most telling is verse 5 where the name is written on her forehead 'MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH'. Four times (vv. 1,5,15-16) in this chapter is she labelled with the title 'harlot' and her sin is called 'fornication' (vv. 2,4), her evil influence reaching even to the 'kings of the earth'. God even called Jerusalem a harlot! (Is.1:21) and Isaiah penned in 23:16-17 that Tyre was a harlot. In Nahum 3:4 we find the same description used of Nineveh. Our thoughts must centre upon verses 3-4 for there is given a fuller description of the woman. What a contrast! Further evidence of pejorative terminology is seen in Jeremiah, chapters 50 and 51 [Comment 1].

Genesis 2 speaks of a pure bride in a beautiful garden. Only a few chapters later, in Genesis 11 (several years after the flood) we find the great grandson of Noah—Nimrod (meaning 'rebel'—rebellion being a significant characteristic of spiritual Babylon) with his associates building Babel in defiance of the Lord's command—'go forth, be fruitful, and multiply and replenish the earth'(Gen 9:1). Let us examine this 'woman' more closely: in his 'tour', John then sees this woman gorgeously arrayed in purple and scarlet, colours which speak of royalty and earth's glory, but there is no blue. She was dressed in the typical fashion of an ancient prostitute holding a cup symbolising her immorality, a golden cup (v.4). She is decked with gold, precious stones and pearls, an outward show, even to be riding upon a scarlet-covered beast, and 'sits upon many waters', covering all the corruptions within. Her golden cup contains abominations to the brim—the unclean things of her fornication. Taking a moment to ponder why no blue is in her attire, we note that in the veil of the Tabernacle, blue represented Christ coming from heaven. She is also inebriated with the 'blood of the saints and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus' (v.6 NASB), similar to Revelation 18:24.

The mystery of the woman and of the beast that carried her, (having seven heads and ten horns) and the waters are explained from verse 7 by the angel. In verse 18 we have a similar word used to describe the city; the word 'great'. It may have been desirable to the deceived sinful followers of the Beast, but surely the meaning of this term would be more on the lines of 'significantly evil or abhorrent'. In chapter 13 it was pointed out that the beast as a system came out of the sea, but here the Beast comes out of the abyss as a man. Finally, we see the woman is stripped naked and eaten, burned with fire, 'for God did put in their hearts to do His mind'(Rev:17:17). We shall see in chapter 18 the result of this condemnation. *Bill Paterson*

From Buckhaven: Many empires and kingdoms have arisen in the world and are now no more. Revelation 17 points us to the end times scene when the great city of Babylon will be built near the river Euphrates. Jeremiah refers to it as a city dwelling ‘upon many waters’ (Jer. 51:13). It will be the capital of a world system independent of God (the city of man), a great city presiding over the kings of the earth. It is the Devil’s counterfeit of the new Jerusalem and will be the gathering centre for many peoples, its commerce, politics and religion being either chiefly Muslim or an ecumenical fusion of Islam with other world religions. It will have a tremendous attraction for men because of its material wealth.

Many Bible students in the 1980’s thought Saudi Arabia with its palaces decked in gold and Sheiks controlling the world’s oil supply, foreshadowed the rise of Babylon. It seems likely that the Arab nations will unite under this system.

In verses 1–3 John is told to approach the angel speaking to him and is carried in spirit to the desert where there is revealed to him the judgement of God on the great prostitute Babylon the Great. John sees a woman seated on a scarlet beast (v.3). She rides upon the beast and also sits upon many waters—indicating a reciprocal relationship between the woman and the beast. The woman is adorned with purple and scarlet, similar to the colour of the dragon (12:3). These colours reveal her many outward splendours and beauties and her attraction to the nations of the world, who are intoxicated by her ways and drink ‘the wine of her fornication’ (v.2). This great modern city is implacably opposed to God—indeed it is a place of demons and uncleanness (Rev.18:2). Babylon the Great is guilty of the death of many saints, and revels in such wickedness (v.6). She is ‘THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH’ (v. 5).

In contrast to the names found on the foreheads of God’s servants, identifying them as those made righteous through faith in Christ, the angel reveals to John the mystery of the names of Babylon—speaking of its intrinsically corrupt nature and the evil system—all taking their character from the Devil.

In verse 10 seven world leaders are identified, five of whom ‘are fallen’, one who ‘is’ and one who ‘is to come’. We suggest this is ‘the king of fierce countenance’ (Dan. 8:23) who was slain by the death stroke and is resurrected to become the Devil’s man. He is allied with the ten horns, signifying strength (v.16) [Comment 2]. They come against Babylon to destroy her, thus fulfilling God’s sovereign purposes. When the Beast and the armies of men make war with the Lamb, He destroys them, for He alone is King of Kings and Lord of Lords (v. 14). These events usher in the close of the times of the Gentiles.

Martin Notman

From Cromer: *The immoral mistress* ‘Babylon the Great’ is personified as “the mother of prostitutes and of earth’s abominations” (Rev. 17:5 ESV). Why is such

language used? What is Babylon? It is the personification of the worldly system that takes no account of God [See Comment 2 & Buckhaven paper, 1st paragraph – *R.B.F.*]. Notice that there is a distinction between ‘adultery’ and ‘fornication’. The former refers to sexual relations between people who are married, but not to each other, whilst the latter refers to improper sexual relations in general. This distinction is not always clear in modern versions of Scripture. Thus public and political opinion—‘the kings of the earth’—will wholeheartedly subscribe to the spirit of the age, which values the meretricious glories of the arrays of publicity and fame. One is reminded of the words that Milton wrote:

For what is glory but the blaze of fame,
The people’s praise, if always praise unmixed?
And what the people but a herd confused,
A miscellaneous rabble, who extoll
Things vulgar, and, well weighed, scarce worth the praise?

‘Adultery’ refers to God’s own people, regarded as married to Him. Those whose names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life will be sorely tested, but persevere, supported by the power of God.

Division among the forces of evil The ‘seven mountains’ of verse 9 are generally understood to refer to Rome, but the persons of verses 10-11 are difficult to interpret. The Beast of verse 8 is the principal henchman of Satan, who disappeared for a time, but ‘was, and is not, and is to come’. Some have taken the ‘kings’ of verses 10-11 as emperors of contemporary Rome, but the problem with this is that there are too many, depending upon where one starts, and whom one includes. Alternatively, one may assume that ‘kings’ refers not to individual rulers, but to empires; the seventh, yet future, may stand for all anti-Christian governments between the fall of Rome and the final kingdom of Antichrist [Comment 3]. Whoever they are, there is no doubt about their end. Earthly kings who have short-lived power band together to delegate their power and authority to the Beast to make war on the Lamb, in a futile attempt to conquer Him. Verses 15-18 illustrate how the political and commercial powers will hate the military powers, so that every human power will be powerless against the Lamb. What a reversal! The lamb is the very symbol of innocence and helplessness; but the Lamb of God overcomes!

Peter Hickling

From Greenock: Babylon has always featured high on the list of hostile nations around Israel. This is the nation which marched Daniel and his friends into captivity. These men were of the royal lineage and the ruling class in Jerusalem (Dan.1:3). The ‘ruler of the eunuchs’ was responsible for them, which would require they were castrated [Comment 4]. This was to prevent impropriety in the palace and to humiliate them and deny any thought of descendants. Not being able to have

offspring took away any prospect of plotting against Babylon. This had the additional effect in the Aaronic priesthood of old, the prohibiting drawing near to their God (Lev.21:20) and similar restrictions are also found in the pagan rituals of neighbouring lands. They were 'de-humanised', in today's language.

When they saw the diet prescribed, they would not eat (Lev. 20:25). All that was provided was either unclean or spoiled by being offered to false gods.

Temple prostitution was the norm all around the Middle East. Eli's son's behaviour suggests the practice had even contaminated the sanctuary (1 Sam. 2:22). The city of Corinth still had such practices in Paul's time as evidenced by passages such as 1 Corinthians 6:15 and 8:1-13).

Babylon was where the golden vessels from the Temple were taken. The king and his lords, together with wives and concubines, praised their false gods and incurred the wrath of the one true God. In the drunken promiscuity of pagan revelry, Belshazzar had the temple vessels brought out to mock Jehovah and defile those sanctified objects.

With these facts to illuminate our interpretations, John's descriptions of Babylon seem almost restrained. Ezekiel 16 also uses the image of prostitution to show how far Jerusalem has sunk in sin. Far removed from being a faithful wife (v.8), verse 15 onwards catalogues the descent into debauchery.

Foreigners and eunuchs, previously excluded, are gathered into Israel by God (Is. 56:1-8). The testimony of Nebuchadnezzar would result in Gentiles wanting to join Israel (Dan. 3:29; 4:1-3). During the exile the temple worship sacrifices could not be offered, but the individual families could observe the Sabbath. Those previously excluded from communion with God (Lev. 21:20) returning from the captivity could join themselves to the Israelites—a picture of the gospel of grace [Comment 5]. The last we hear of Daniel is the vision on the banks of the River Euphrates, so it seems he did not return, but died in the captivity (Dan.12:13).

We have been brought into the family of God (John 1:12) and a far grander inheritance is reserved for us and the assurance of possession (2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Pet. 1:4). Hold on until He comes!
Steve Henderson

From Halifax: *Babylon fallen* 'I will shew thee', said the angel to John. No particular angel is identified here, excepting that he was one of the seven who had the seven vials or bowls (Rev. 17:1). A.T. Robertson rightly comments, 'It is fitting that one of the seven angels that had the seven bowls should explain the judgment on Babylon already pronounced' (*Word Pictures*). This is so, for in chapter 14:8 we have the angelic proclamation: 'Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, which hath made all the nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication' (RV).

So, in the Spirit, John was carried into a wilderness where he saw a harlot seated upon 'many waters', a symbol of peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues (17:15); 'the waters of the River' (Is. 8:7), 'the rushing of mighty waters' (17:12), and 'an overflowing stream' (Jer. 47:2). In this moral wasteland the harlot sat on a scarlet beast filled with names of offensive profanities, and she was arrayed in purple and scarlet (Rev. 17:4). These colours speak of royalty and earth's glory; but, as John Miller notes, 'there is no blue, the colour we see when we look toward heaven on a clear day' (*Notes on the New Testament Scriptures*, p. 690). On her forehead were the words, 'MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH', and she was intoxicated with blood—the blood of the saints and the martyrs of Jesus (vv. 5-6). Verse 6 says that when John saw her, he 'wondered with great admiration' (KJV). John did not admire her in the modern English sense; but he wondered greatly, i.e., he was astonished (see NIV). However, hated by the ten kings who had allied themselves with the Beast, the harlot was stripped of her magnificent apparel, thus revealing the nakedness of her corruption. *Robert J. Butler*

From Mount Forest: This chapter provides further insight and background regarding the complete destruction of Babylon that was predicted in Revelation 14:8, and is the focus of the seventh bowl of chapter 16; the descriptions continue into chapter 18 and the victory of Revelation 19. Although many versions start chapter 17 with 'Then' it can equally mean 'And', possibly implying an explanatory interjection, not necessarily a sequence (until Rev.18:1). In addition to what John saw we must align, for instance, Ezekiel chapters 38-39; Daniel 2,7,11 and Zechariah 12,14. In summary, during Daniel's seventieth week, it seems initially the rule by the 'great harlot' occurs first and then is overtaken by the rule of the Beast, though both may rule from 'Babylon'.

By far the majority of Old Testament references to Babylon have to do with its historical setting. Babylon stands in contrast to Jerusalem, each as the centre of a government: Jerusalem being the earthly locus of divine authority, and Babylon an archetypal place of opposing authority. When God's people ceased to be godly, God used ungodly Babylon as a tool to bring judgment on them, though Babylon remained culpable for its own brutality and would itself be removed from power in the outworking of divine justice. Jeremiah refers to Babylon more than any other prophet, but mainly in regard to the inevitability of Judah being taken into captivity there. However, in the last two chapters of Jeremiah, and to some extent in Ezekiel, we find blended historical and future descriptions that also tie in with what John saw. Ezekiel 23:17 describes the destruction under Nebuchadnezzar, but relates the sinfulness of opposition to God in attacking His people using the same imagery as in John's descriptions.

Revelation is the only New Testament book to comment explicitly on Babylon as a future reality. Again, it dominates at a time when national Israel has gone astray, remaining in denial of their Messiah and perhaps even joining with many in covenant with the Beast (Dan. 9:27). God will then bring Babylon to nought, first in respect to its false expression of religious pre-eminence, then finally as a military force controlled by the Beast.

Babylon in its satanic opposition to God and His people is depicted as a woman here in Revelation: the harlot. We had been given a positive account of a woman in Revelation 12, and in 19:8 and 21:9-27, the image is again positive, noting the righteous acts of the Bride of the Lamb. In contrast in chapters 17 and 18 we have Satan's woman, full of transgression and sinfulness. A prostitute evidences complete lack of faithfulness to a husband, and misuse of God's gifts. Spiritually, these features mark the close association between idolatry and immorality (see 1 Cor.10:6-8 and Num. 25), presumptuous or wilful sins, practised with the full intent of the perpetrator (Ps.19:13).

Daniel 2:40ff. explicitly mentions a divided kingdom, 'partly strong and partly brittle'. The mixing of the iron does not necessarily mean a revival of *Roman* rule, but that certain characteristics of brutal strength true of the Roman Empire will be seen also in the rule of the Beast of Revelation 13 and 17. *Geoff Hydon*

From Ravulapalem: *Details of Kings* Kings of the South and the North, other than Darius the first, were three kings in Persia called Combices, Sudo Smerdis and Histapis. The fourth is Xerxes whose attack on Greece had failed. After that, Alexander the Great came, but his kingdom was broken into four pieces [divided on his death in 323 B.C. among his four generals – *R.B.F.*]. The king of the south is ruler over Egypt, the north king is of Syria [Comment 6]. There are many battles with these kings and their allies. After some time Ptolemy Soter of Macedonia became the first southern king and Selucas became the first king of the northern part. In between these two countries is the land of Israel. Then Antiochus occupied Jerusalem and stopped the offerings in the Temple. He was a tyrant and exceedingly cruel. He transformed the temple into an altar for the Greek god Zeus. He also conquered Jerusalem, twice slaughtering thousands. He outlawed Judaism and proclaimed himself as God incarnate.

The New Testament suggests that brutal pattern of Antiochus will culminate some day in the Antichrist, an arrogant leader who will dominate the world and persecute God's people as never before. Many scholars believe that the last part of Daniel's final vision refers to this character [Comment 7].

Revelation 17:9 presents the angel here conveying wisdom from above that can give understanding of the symbols in the revelation (James 3:17). The seven heads of that ferocious beast stand for seven hills or seven kings. Both terms are used

scripturally to refer to governmental powers (Jer. 51:24-25; Dan. 2:34-35). In the Bible six world powers are mentioned as having an impact on the affairs of God's people: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. Of these, five had already come and gone by the time John received the Revelation; Rome was still very much a world power. This is the meaning of 'five have fallen, one is'. The Roman Empire expanded for hundreds of years, and later Constantine moved its capital from Rome to Constantinople. After some time, it was split into Eastern and Western parts. By the eighth century, what had previously been under Ancient Rome in North Africa, Spain and Syria, came under the new 'empire' of Islam. By the 15th century Portugal, Spain, France and Holland all became far-flung domains. But the most successful was Britain, which came to preside over a huge empire on which 'the sun never set'. This empire spread at different times over much of North America, Africa, India and South Asia. A kind of dual power existed made up of the United States of America and Great Britain, the seat of the world's largest empire. Here then is the 'seventh head' or world power. But the seventh remains only 'a short while' until God's kingdom destroys all national entities. [Comment 8]

An eighth king (v.11), the symbolic scarlet-coloured wild beast, springs from the seven heads, that is, it is born from, or owes its existence to those heads of the original wild beast out of the sea, of which the scarlet-coloured wild beast is an image.

Ten kings reign for one hour (vv.12-13). The ten horns symbolise ten kings who receive authority from the Beast for a short time [see Comment 2]. They give their power and authority to the Beast for a small period of time before the Lord brings an end to all worldly political authority at Armageddon. Though the world power and the scarlet-coloured wild beast have one thought in mind, they cannot defeat the great Lord of lords and King of kings, nor can they defeat 'those called and chosen and faithful with Him' which includes His anointed followers still on earth.

S.J.M. Edward

From Surulere: As mankind hurtles on its divinely ordained path to the culmination of world events, the unravelling of the enormity and intensity of Satan's evil enterprise is mind-boggling and mystifying. Our Lord Jesus had declared that 'The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy' (John 10:10 NKJV) and the apostle Peter had warned: 'Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour' (1 Pet. 5:8). Shockingly, this ancient thief and murderer (John 8:44) will resort to stealing from himself and ravaging his own kingdom.

The Lord Jesus posed the question to the religious leaders of His time: 'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against

himself. How then will his kingdom stand?’ (Mat.12:25-26). In the normal scheme of things, Satan and his cohorts will agree in pursuit of his eternal desire of upstaging the Almighty God and mimicking the work of the Son and the Holy Spirit (2 Cor.11:14-15; Rev.13). However, at this time irresistible divine forces will be at work and the One who will accomplish all His counsel and pleasure will compel and propel the devil and his minions to do His bidding: ‘Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *things* that are not *yet* done, saying, “My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure”’ (Is. 46:10).

One would have thought the devil will exult in that abominable monstrosity that will be a distinct expression of his depravity—the woman, harlot, Babylon. The epitome of evil and unbridled immorality and corruption, will straddle the key three sectors of human enterprise—politics, trade, and religion. Why will Satan not gloat at his sickening masterpiece, Babylon, that is both full of abominations and filthiness of her corruption and that is drunk with the blood of the saints and the martyrs of Jesus? (Rev.17:4-6). Nevertheless, the seeming cohesion in Satan’s treacherous ranks is nothing but an illusion. For with the unrivalled dominance of mystery Babylon and the inevitable rise of the Beast, the Antichrist, the man of sin, God shall put it in the hearts of the ten kings, whose loyalty is to the Beast, to destroy the woman (Rev.17:15-16).

It is interesting to imagine the horror and terror that will pervade Satan’s domain, as instead of a strengthening and expansion of his rebellious and God-defiant kingdom by a combination of his evil affiliates, a God-induced chaos prepares the Devil for his inevitable catastrophic end.

Frederick F. Ntido

From Victoria B.C.: Chapter 17 of Revelation reveals characteristics of individuals and systems that will be prominent in the days of tribulation on the earth. Verses 1 through to 7 and carrying on at verse 15, describe a ‘woman’ who is splendidly arrayed, behaving in a most ungodly manner to the point of being drunk with the blood of the saints. This ‘woman’ sits upon multitudes of nations, peoples and tongues. She is encouraging much abomination and has a golden cup full of fornication. In the Old Testament, Israel is described as behaving in such a manner with nations all around her, prostituting herself with them. The things mentioned in the Bible about this woman can be described as an ungodly alternative to the one true God of Israel, offering terrible wickedness instead of holiness. Many through the centuries have identified the Roman Catholic Church as a final version of the ancient Babylon religion guiding the spiritual direction of the world in opposition to God’s vision of what God has in store for us. Henry Grattan Guinness, who some would identify as a ‘Billy Graham’ of his day in the nineteenth century, wrote many expository studies linking the wicked system of Babylon to the Roman Catholic system. It is interesting to note that in our time the current Pope Francis met the Grand Ayatollah of Iraq this month, March 2021, in the rebuilt city in Babylon in

Iraq to inaugurate the start of 'Chrislam' which is Christianity, Judaism and Islam united into one united world church. So, this new 'church' has its roots in the ancient 'Ur of the Chaldees'. In the past, seeing that our Bibles describe a coming one-world religion, we should not be surprised that it is finally starting to raise its ugly head. Anything contrary to it will eventually be eliminated [Comment 9].

Verses 7 to 14 seem to describe a system of governments coming and going over a period of time which are also touched upon in Daniel 11. All these systems will eventually be given over to a leader, the Beast, whom people, whose names are not in the Lamb's Book of Life, will wonder after. Verse 13 indicates that world leaders will be united in the decision to hand over control to the Beast, who carries the woman arrayed in scarlet. It appears that the Beast works in concert with this world religion to gain control over people everywhere. Daniel 11: 36-40 describes this man as proud and doing things his way, not God's way. It says he 'magnifies himself above every god'. Revelation 17 winds up with the government leaders and the Beast deciding to rid themselves of this religious manifestation of all that is contrary to God, as God Himself puts it on their hearts to hate her and give all leadership, including religion and the place of a god, to the Beast. God, with His Son the Lord Jesus in control, clarifies that it is His plan for all this to come to pass.

R. Lefevre, P. Williamson

COMMENTS

1. (Aberkenfig). The wide variety of applications for the Greek word *megas* meaning 'great' in the New Testament requires that the context has to determine the particular meaning whenever it is used. The meaning given by friends of 'extensive in being' seems to me to be appropriate but it is a neutral meaning, neither admiring nor derogatory. I agree though that the language subsequently used of Babylon in the scripture is obviously derogatory as highlighted by friends and is sufficient for the valid points being made. *P.D.*

2.(Buckhaven): He is also prophesied by Daniel as the 'little horn' of chapter 7:8, 'the prince to come' of 9:26-27, and the personification of blasphemy (11:36), who will rule over the final formation of the revived Roman Empire, with many nations under his authority, making a 7-year (Daniel's 70th week) treaty of peace with Israel in the first half of the week when the nation is at peace in their land (Ezek. 38:8, 11, 14; Dan. 9:27a). He will solve, for a time, the Middle East problem of 'Israel & the Arabs', bringing security and protection to Israel before putting a stop to Jewish sacrifices and setting up the abomination of desolation in the future temple in the second half of Daniel's 70th week, a period of 3.5 years (Dan. 12:11; Mat. 24:15; 2 Thes. 2:4; Rev. 11:2).

3. (Cromer): As you state, we have no clear means of identifying the five fallen kings or kingdoms, though we can say 'the one that is' (v. 10) was in rule of government at the time of John's writing, and the other 'yet to come' is surely the Beast / Antichrist of a future day in our calendar of time. *R.B.F.*

4. (Greenock): This is not unreasonable conjecture in the light of 2 Kings 20:18, but it is still conjecture.

5. (Greenock): Exclusion from sanctuary service (Leviticus 21:23) was not exclusion from sanctuary communion (v22), but in any case the sanctuary was for the seed of Aaron only (and not all of them). Nothing changed on those matters after the return(s) from captivity, and so Gentiles, not being sons of Aaron, would still be excluded. There is also in Isaiah 56: 1-8 identification of strangers as strangers, i.e., distinctively as such, not as fellow-heirs, fellow-members, and fellow-partakers, so it is inadequate as a picture of the gospel of grace, and better read as a literal statement of millennial blessing. *P.D.*

6. (Ravalupalem): We cannot be certain as to who these leaders / rulers of the southern and northern kingdoms are. Certainly Ptolemies ruled over Egypt and the Seleucids over Syria during the period 175 - 165 B.C. On the prophetic front, Daniel 11 also has a future application to end times, similar to the way ancient prophetic scriptures with their historical messages also contained a later fulfilment, e.g. Joel 2:28-32 & Acts 2:16-21. Most students of prophecy in recent times favour your suggestion of Egypt being at the forefront of a Muslim combination of nations (king of the south), while the northern kingdom is led by Russia, and consists of a coalition of Islamic southern republics of former Soviet Union, who today total around 60 odd million Muslims (see Ezek. 38:1-6).

7. (Ravulapalem): For the benefit of our readers, the scriptural background of your first paragraph is Daniel's prophecy in chapter 11, during the time of captivity (609 – 539 B.C.). The first king mentioned being Darius 1 (aka 'Darius the Great') and the last one is Xerxes (vv. 1-2). Antiochus Epiphanes (second name meaning 'Illustrious one') was a Seleucid king who reigned in tyranny from 175 - 165 B.C. and well depicts the Beast who takes up so much of Revelation 13 - 17. *R.B.F.*

8. (Ravulapalem): This chapter is one of the most difficult to understand, even though the angel in verses 8-13 explains the symbolic meaning of the woman and the beast's seven heads and ten horns.

John is told that the woman symbolises the city of Babylon (v18). The seven heads of the beast on which she sits are synonymous with seven mountains and seven kings. This indicates that each of these kings are the leaders of seven nations

or kingdoms. The beast is himself one of the seven. This individual wields power twice: once during his first 'term of office' as one of the seven and again, as the eighth king in succession from the seven, when he comes to power for the second time, at the end of the seventh king's term of office.

In *Bible Studies* 1974 (February editorial p.17), George Prasher Jnr, states: *'It emerges then as a principle of prophetic interpretation that in many instances situations are viewed from the perspective of the times to which the prophecies apply'*—I would interpret the events foretold in 17:10 according to that principle.

Rather than take up space covering ground previously addressed by contributors to this magazine, I refer friends to the study of this chapter in *Bible Studies*, June 1974 (available online at: churchesofgod.info/media/publications/bible-studies-archive). In that issue, comments 10 and 10a (quoted below), by previous editors on the paper from friends in Melbourne, Australia, are particularly relevant:

'Most would favour the view at the time of the end that the 10 horns symbolise the rulers who emerge from "European" nations and that the seven heads are successive rulers of the great final world empire, Antichrist being the eighth (17. 11). A.B.R.'

'If the "composite beast" of Rev. 13. 1-3 and 17. 3 represents the great end-time revived Roman power (and most contributors think it does), the seven heads, which are stated to be seven kings, would seem to be related to it, rather than to other past Empires such as Assyrian or Grecian. I would therefore commend the interpretation that they represent seven successive rulers of the end-time power. G.P. Jr.'

Following the above line of reasoning, I don't think the USA or Great Britain are represented by the 'seventh head'. Rather, I suggest that the 'seventh head' will emerge during the time of the end, after the Church the body is taken up to heaven at 'the rapture'. J.J.

9. (Victoria B.C.): Pope Francis' visit to Iraq from 5-8th of March this year was at the invitation of the Government of Iraq and did indeed mark a momentous step in the planning of a strong segment of the Roman Catholic Church to help create a one world inter-religious system, basically a one world religion, termed 'Chrislam'. He visited six cities in the country including Ur and Baghdad. The caption entitled 'Visiting the Rebuilt City of Babylon' was one of aspiration and intended to be eye-catching. He described Iraq as a cradle of civilisations and called the Grand Ayatollah Ali-al-Sistani a sage and man of God, someone who heads a so-called religion that openly denies the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ and repudiates His saviourhood, which is the spirit of antichrist (1 John 2:18,22; 4:3). Some students of prophecy are convinced that it is the Roman Catholic Church that will be the launchpad from which a worldwide religion will spring. R.B.F.

Feature

IMAGE AND LIKENESS

The statement has been made that in the Old Testament the Hebrew words for image (*tselem*) and likeness (*demuth*) are synonymous in meaning, although the first mentioned is a masculine noun as opposed to the latter being a feminine noun. 'Tselem' does not mean an exact replica of the original, rather a rounded representation of such without comprising its essential features. 'Demuth' more conveys the thought of similarities in certain aspects to the original, for example, in structure and sound. Both words occur in the creation of humanity in Genesis 1:26 'And God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.'" It is postulated that there **is** a difference in meaning, to the extent that 'image' presents something closer to the prototype than 'likeness'. Both Adam and Eve were created perfectly in God's image (Gen. 1:27), but, of course, did not possess deity and unlike God, could not be omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient, essential features of the Godhead. Sin altered that status of being in God's image, so we find only the words 'likeness of God' referred to in Genesis 5:1 with regard to man's creation. Added to that, is the statement that Seth, a son of Adam, was begotten in Adam's own likeness, after his (that is Adam's) image (5:3). A different word for likeness (Heb. *timunah*) appears in Psalm 17:15, indicating something that has an appearance or manifestation of something, viz bearing similarities.

In the New Testament there is a stronger differentiation between image and likeness. The Greek word principally used for image is *eikon*, meaning not only a representation and resemblance of an archetype or model, but also that which is deeply associated with it in essence and existence. The Lord Jesus is spoken of as 'the image of God' and 'the image of the invisible God' (2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15), emphasising His oneness with God the Father, in a relationship that is eternal. All that God is, He is, in essence and being. He said, 'I and the Father are one'; 'The Father is in Me and I in the Father', and He further attests 'He that has seen me has seen the Father' (John 10:30, 38; 14:9).

'Likeness' is the Greek word *homoioima*, whose meaning simply means resemblance, without the thought of inclusion or involvement in that which it represents. So, the word of God never speaks of the Lord Jesus being made in the image of men; contrary-wise, 'God sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh' (Rom. 8:3); 'being made in the likeness of men' (Phil. 2:7).

As for ourselves, created human beings born into the world and related through natural birth to the first man Adam, we bear the image of the earthy. Coming to know, belonging to and being 'in Christ', the second man and the last Adam, through the new spiritual birth, means that at the Lord's coming to the air we shall bear the image of the heavenly, being fully conformed to the image of God's Son (1 Cor. 15:45-49; 1 John 3:2b; Rom. 8:29).

R.B. Fullarton, Bathgate

He who testifies to these things says,
"Surely I am coming soon."
Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

Revelation 22:20 ESV