

## **INTRODUCTION:**

Part-8 consisted of seven visions depicting the pouring out of the bowls of God's wrath. Chapter 15 provided the introduction to the bowls, and chapter 16 described the pouring out of each of the seven bowls. We learned that the bowls of wrath are the final and ultimate punishment to befall the wicked while on the earth. The bowls were poured on the earth, and it would seem, God continued to allow room for repentance even as His wrath was poured out. But we hear of none repenting and worshiping God. Rather, we are told repeatedly that those upon which God's wrath is poured deserve their fate.

Part-9 will comprise chapters 17, 18 and the first ten verses of chapter 19. Again, it will include a series of seven visions. These visions will elaborate on Babylon the great, the "Mother of Harlots and Abominations" of the earth. She is revealed as both a religious and political system. She is revealed as a persecutor of the saints, and all who witness for Christ. She is contrasted as a "Harlot" because of her idolatry, as compared to the true Church, which is the pure and undefiled "Bride" of Christ. This portion of Revelation serves to inform the believer as to what will happen to those who commit idolatry under the influence of the beast, rather than remaining faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ. We are told that the world will mourn the destruction of Babylon, the Harlot, because the world profited from her. The world profits from the glorification of worldly things, but those who remain faithful to the Lord will profit from heavenly things. Worldly things are finite, temporal and temporary, but heavenly things are infinite and eternal. All that is done to glorify oneself will soon pass away, but all that is done to glorify God will last forever.

## **CHAPTER 17:**

In this chapter, we will witness the doom of Babylon and the ultimate victory of the Lamb of God. This chapter seems to provide explanation of Revelation 14:8, where we heard the second angel proclaim Babylon the great has fallen. This second angel immediately followed the one who proclaimed the gospel to the entire world, warning all to repent and give glory to God because judgment was about to come. The message of these two angels clearly seems fulfillment of Jesus' words in Matthew 24:14, where He said: ***"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come."*** The end for the wicked!

Revelation 17:1-2, states: ***“And one of the seven angels [who] had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, “Come here, I shall show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed acts of immorality and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality.”*** It is one of the seven angels who poured God’s bowls of wrath upon the earth that now instructs John. The angel calls John to come and see the judgment of the great harlot, who will be revealed in 17:5 as Babylon the Great. She sits on “many waters,” which will be revealed in 17:15 as “peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.” We are told that the kings of the earth “committed acts of immorality” with her, which literally means they “practiced fornication” or “idolatry” with her. And finally, we are told that the peoples of the earth “were made drunk with the wine of her immorality,” which again literally means they became drunk on her “idolatry.” She is, after all, a “harlot,” therefore, to be in a relationship with her is to be unfaithful to Christ. The Church is the true “bride” of Christ, and must keep pure and faithful to the Lord.

Revelation 17:3, states: ***“And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns.”*** You will remember that immediately after the letters to the seven churches, John was told to “come here” and he was taken “in the Spirit” to heaven to be shown things which were to take place in the future (Revelation 4:1-2). This time, John is taken away to a “wilderness” and shown a woman sitting on a scarlet beast with seven heads and ten horns. This description is consistent with the description of the red dragon found in 12:3. It is also similar to that of the beast out of the sea, which is described further to have “blasphemous names” on his heads (13:1). Clearly, the harlot sits on the dragon, the beast, all of which are depictions of Satan.

Revelation 17:4-5, states: ***“And the woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality, and upon her forehead a name was written, a mystery, ‘Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and of the Abominations of the Earth.’”*** Regarding the colors “purple and scarlet,” these colors are mentioned together twenty-six times in Exodus, chapters 25-28, 35-36, and 38-39. In all these cases they are connected to items used in the Tabernacle and for

the worship of God. But in every single case, they are used with the color “blue,” which is perhaps symbolic for heaven, being the color of the sky. The Greek word translated as “scarlet” can also be translated simply as “red.” In the Old Testament, the Hebrew root word for “red” is the same as for the words “blood, earth, man, mankind and Adam.” One could say that “red” represents the earth and/or man, and “blue” represents heaven. When blue and red are combined they make purple which is the color often associated with royalty and kings. It is likely deliberate that the color “blue” is not listed here with the other colors. This would be consistent with our understanding of Babylon the great and number of the beast in that “purple and scarlet” represent royalty with the earth or man, and the omission of heaven and God.

The adornment with gold, precious stones and pearls, may be a reference to “worldly” wealth and riches. The harlot holds a gold cup filled with abominations and unclean things of her immorality, which we know to mean “idolatry.” She drinks from the cup of Satan’s influence, a drink of deceptions that causes one to elevate themselves above God and worship themselves and the things of this world. The name on her forehead is a “mystery” to those who dwell upon the earth, but not to those who are wise in the Lord. She is the “Mother of Harlots and of the Abominations of the Earth.” She gives birth to the notion that the created are greater than the Creator, causing us to worship created things and ourselves rather than God, the Creator of all things. All of the abominations are of this world, they are of the earth. Consistent with this few, some scholars believe that the harlot is associated with false religion that maligns the truth. Peter speaks to this in 2 Peter 2:1-3, saying: ***“But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.”*** Certainly, all who malign the truth in God’s Word will face judgment.

Revelation 17:6, states: ***“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.”*** The woman is drunk with the blood of the saints and the witnesses of Jesus

means that she has participated in persecuting the Church and followers of Christ. The fact that she is drunk on their blood indicates that her persecution has been overindulgent. She has drunk so much that she is drunk. As John gazes upon this sight he is filled with great wonder, perhaps to her and the beast's identity, or how God could allow such persecution. Some English Bibles translate the Greek to say "wonders with great admiration," but the literal translation would be "wonders with great wonder" or with great "amazement." I believe we are being told that John is "mystified" with what he is being shown. In other words, it is a mystery to him. Again, the testimony is that John is writing what he sees, as he has been instructed, but he doesn't understand what he sees.

Revelation 17:7, states: ***"And the angel said to me, "Why do you wonder? I shall tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns."*** The angel's question, asking John ***"Why do you wonder?"*** could imply that John should already know the answer to the mystery. Indeed, the answer has already been revealed, beginning in chapter 12. For God has revealed that Satan is behind everything, and has been revealed in the red dragon, the beast out of the sea, and in the false prophet. Now the angel will provide more details and insight to satisfy John's wonderings.

Revelation 17:8, states: ***"The beast that you saw was and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and to go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth will wonder, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come."*** First we must address the meaning of ***"was and is not, and is about to come."*** With the sounding of the seventh trumpet we were told that the reign of Christ began. We also know that between the sixth and seventh bowls of wrath there was a gathering for the great and final battle of Armageddon, when God will do battle and judgment will come. In Revelation 19:19, we will hear that the beast and the kings of the earth, and their armies, will assemble to make war against Christ and His army. Back in chapter 12:7-9 we heard of a war in heaven when the dragon (Satan) and his angels fought against Michael and his angels. Satan was defeated and thrown to the earth, along with his angels (now demons), who then waged war against God's people. Revelation 20:1-3 will reveal that when the final great battle of Armageddon occurs, Satan will be "bound up" and cast into the

“abyss” where he will remain for a thousand years. Viewed through the wider lens of Revelation, it is Satan who “was” (past tense) and “is not” (present tense), and is about to come up out of the “abyss” and to go to destruction (future tense). Revelation 20:7-10 further states that when Satan is released it will be for a short time, and then he will be thrown into the lake of fire (destruction). Therefore the beast that the harlot sits upon seems certain to be Satan. Some scholars believe that it is actually the apostate church, or the church influenced and maligned by the antichrist. In either case, whether it is Satan or those under Satan’s influence, Satan is the source of the problem.

Regarding the people who dwell on the earth “wondering” about whose name has not been written in the book of life, perhaps these are the people who dwell upon the earth during the thousand years that Satan is bound. According to Revelation 20:4-6, the faithful who suffered and died for Christ and did not worship the beast will be raised up and reign with Christ during the thousand years, but the rest of the dead will not come to life until the end of the thousand years. It would seem that those who live during the thousand years will wonder about those who have not been raised to life.

Revelation 17:9-10, states: ***“Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits, and they are seven kings; five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while.”*** This passage has been interpreted in many ways. Many have identified the seven mountains with the seven hills on which the city of Rome sits, identifying the harlot with everything from the Roman Empire to the Roman Catholic Church. But clearly the mountains are identified with a series of kings or kingdoms that begin in the past and continue until the end. Identified as “mountains” these are not just any kings or kingdoms but “great kingdoms” which should rise as mountains in history. We are told that five have fallen, presumably at the time Revelation was written, but perhaps this is in reference to when the time of the end begins. Another currently exists, which may mean existed at the time Revelation was written, or will exist when the time of the end begins. The final and seventh is to come in the future. The future and final king or kingdom will last only a short time, but the current or sixth kingdom must be one that stays in place for a long time, from the time Revelation was written all the way up to the final end time events. Previously, in our study of Revelation 13:1-2 we discussed the significance of the

seven heads. We found that Daniel, chapter 2, identified a series of kingdoms which must come, leading up to the end. We identified the first five as: (1) Babylon; (2) Medo-Persia; (3) Greece; (4) the Roman Empire in its strength; and (5) as the corrupt and deteriorating Roman Empire. Although not mentioned in Daniel, some scholars add Egypt as the first great kingdom with the Roman Empire as the fifth, not separating the Roman Empire into two kingdoms. This makes a lot of sense but we don't really know. The rulers of all of these kingdoms considered themselves gods to be worshiped. After the fall of Rome, no single power has dominated the world, but the world has continued to be influenced by the heavily Greek influenced western Roman culture. The real question seems to be what does the sixth head represent, or what is the sixth kingdom. At the time of Jesus' birth, death and resurrection, and still in place at the time Revelation was written, the Roman Empire was in place. More than any other reason this is why most of the symbolism in Revelation is so often identified with Rome. There is no "great kingdom" mentioned in Daniel beyond the Roman Empire, and it could be argued that there has been no single kingdom of equal greatness since the fall of the Roman Empire. Actually, many would say that our "western civilization" derives from the Roman Empire. Some associate this period with the ten toes of clay and iron on the statue described in Daniel's vision account, as indicating a period of many strong and weak worldly kingdoms. Some might even argue that the religion of "Islam" which began shortly after the fall of the Roman Empire could be the sixth kingdom. The fundamental beliefs of the Islamic religion call for a "theocracy" which is the belief that God is ruler rather than any government or institution. This is a similar religion as existed with the Hebrew people after the Exodus and before they had earthly kings to lead them, the first being King Saul, followed by King David. The difference is that radical Muslims believe the whole world should be Islamic, ruled as a Caliphate (many Islamic nations united under one rule), and ruled by a Caliph (a single spiritual and political leader selected by Allah). Also, as we have stated earlier in this study, the sixth kingdom or period may be a time when the spirit of the antichrist has entered the world and works against Christ. We have and continue to see this in the world manifested in many forms, including radical Islam. John warns us to test the spirits because of the presence of false prophets and the presence of the spirit of the antichrist. John writes in 1 John 4:1-3, saying,

***“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.”*** The spirit of the antichrist entices man to worship himself, and place himself above God. This period of struggle between the followers of Christ and those who oppose Him may be seen as the long period that began with Christ first coming and leads up to the final end time events, and His second coming. Many believe the final king is the personified Antichrist, an individual and world leader that will not be revealed until the very end. Others see this as something more universal but less obvious such as secularism that undermines the Church and Christian beliefs. Regarding Muslims, they believe Jesus was a prophet, but they do not believe He was the Son of God or God in the flesh. Because they do not confess Jesus as being of God, they meet John’s definition of what is tested to be “false.” We could conclude that the rise of Islam is at least in part a manifestation of the spirit of the antichrist. What or who is yet to come may be highly debated, but one thing is clear, the stage is set for its arrival and its influence is already here.

Revelation 17:11, states: ***“And the beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is one of the seven, and he goes to destruction.”*** Again looking forward to Revelation 19:20, it is revealed that the beasts and the false prophet will be cast into the lake of fire, while the dragon, Satan himself, will be bound and cast into the abyss for a thousand years (20:1-3), to be released later only to be cast into the lake of fire (destruction) (20:10). Satan, in his various forms and influences, is the only one who fits the description of the beast that “was” and “is not,” and is also to come. Satan also fits as the seventh and eighth. First, because of his evil influence both before and after the thousand years, and second, because he ultimately goes to his destruction.

Revelation 17:12-13, states: ***“And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings, who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour. These have one purpose and they give their power and authority to the beast.”*** Also as we have seen and discussed before, the ten horns represent ten kings

which are earthly but of one mind. They are all controlled by the beast and give their power and authority to the beast. This means that they do Satan's bidding, working against Christ and His followers. God authorizes the beast and these kings to exert their power for only a short and limited time. Their purpose will be that of Satan, to deceive and destroy all that God has created in His image. Regarding which ten kingdoms they will be has been the subject of wide speculation. Some believe they will be a European union of ten nations. Others have looked to an Eastern threat and Communism. It may be coincidental, but Psalm 83:5-8 lists exactly "ten" peoples that will conspire against God and His people and attempt to destroy Israel. We know from Ezekiel 38 that the power and the prince who will lead them will come from the area we now know as Russia. Because the peoples listed in Psalm 83 currently surround and are hostile towards Israel, and are armed and supported by Russia, it is easy to picture how this could be taking place while the world watches; unaware that Scripture is being fulfilled before our eyes.

Revelation 17:14, states: ***"These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful."*** We know from 17:12-13 above that "these" represents the "ten kings" who "receive authority for one hour," have "one purpose," and "give their power and authority to the beast." Essentially, they are unified in their opposition to the Lamb, Jesus Christ. Therefore they wage war against Him, which means they wage war on those who are His, but the Lord will overcome them because He is the King of kings and the Lord of Lords. Just prior to giving Himself up for our sakes, Jesus told His disciples: ***"In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world"*** (John 16:33b). We know this to be true. In this world we may suffer strife and great trials, but Christ has overcome the world, and through Him we have victory over even death. Paul advises us that when we face evil we should not counter it with evil but with good, saying, ***"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good"*** (Romans 12:21). Just as John testified that every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God, he also reminds us that through Christ within us we overcome these spirits of opposition. John says: ***"You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the***

*world*” (1 John 3:4). John goes on to remind us of the importance of our faith in Jesus as we struggle against those who oppose Him, saying: **“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith”** (1 John 5:4).

Regarding our being “called” and “chosen,” in the parable of the wedding feast Jesus teaches us that many will be “called” to come to His feast, but many will be “too busy” or “too distracted” by the things of this world to respond. Those who respond to His call will be among the “chosen.” As Jesus says to us: **“For many are called, but few are chosen”** (Matthew 22:14). But for those who are willing to be built into a spiritual house and make Jesus their foundation stone, Peter tells us will become a chosen people. Peter says: **“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy”** (1 Peter 2:9-10). Truly, those who live their life with Christ on earth will be with Him forever.

Revelation 17:15, states: **“And he said to me, “The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.”** In verse 17:1 we were told that the harlot **“sits on many waters.”** Here we are told that the many waters represent a multitude of different peoples from many nations, and speaking many languages. These are the people of the earth who are under the influence of the beast, for according to 17:2 they **“were made drunk with wine of her immorality.”** We know that her immorality is actually the “adultery” of not remaining faith to the Lord Jesus, and the “idolatry” of worshipping other gods, such as the beast, material possessions, and even themselves. Again, this is consistent with the pattern of Satan who attempted to elevate himself above God, and seeks man’s destruction by deceiving him to do the same.

Revelation 17:16, states: **“And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire.”** This verse seems a mystery but the clue to understanding it can be found in that the “ten horns” (ten kings) and the beast (Satan) will hate her and cause her to be “desolate” and “naked.” Remember that the Lord warned the prideful

church of Laodicea, saying, ***“Because you say, ‘I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,’ and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy gold refined by fire, that you may become rich, and white garments, that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed”*** (3:17-18). Satan was stripped of his beauty and cast to the earth because of his pride. Likewise, when we elevate ourselves and fill ourselves up with the pride of our accomplishments and possessions, we set ourselves up for a very great fall, not realizing that if not clothed in faith we are wretched and naked. The beast (Satan) and the ten kings (worldly influence) that serve his purpose, show their hate for us and for God who created us in His image, by causing us to be filled with pride and self-glorification. We become “consumed” by our own pride and greed, which leads to death and the fires of hell. This is Satan’s plan to destroy us by deceiving us to do what he did and thus doom ourselves for destruction. When we mark ourselves with the mark of the beast and fall prey to Satan’s deception we become the harlot rather than the bride of Christ.

Revelation 17:17, states: ***“For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God should be fulfilled.”*** God often turns something bad into something good. He can serve His purpose through the errors of others. Understanding this verse requires this understanding and a short history lesson. God delivered His people from Egypt, taught them that they could trust Him for their daily bread, and then gave them the land He had promised. He called the Jewish people His son, and commanded them to be faithful to Him or they would suffer consequences. They didn’t listen, and rather than being a witness for God to the pagan nations around them, they entered into an adulterous relationship with these people and worshiped other gods. This resulted in the exile of God’s people and the destruction of Israel. When God sent His own Son, Jesus Christ to reconcile the world to Himself, His own people rejected Him and caused His death on the cross. This rejection opened the door for salvation to the gentiles, and peoples of all nations and languages. God speaks harshly against Jerusalem, His own people, calling them a “harlot” for their adultery and idolatry. Speaking through His prophet Ezekiel, God proclaims: ***“Because your lewdness was poured out and your nakedness uncovered***

*through your harlotries with your lovers and with all your detestable idols, and because of the blood of your sons which you gave to idols, therefore, behold, I shall gather all your lovers with whom you took pleasure, even all those whom you loved and all those whom you hated. So I shall gather them against you from every direction and expose your nakedness to them that they may see all your nakedness”* (Ezekiel 16:36-37).

God’s chosen people gave their kingdom to the beast, and have suffered continuously for their error for more than two thousand years. But, we are told this will continue only **“until the words of God should be fulfilled.”** In other words, this will continue until all that has been revealed must happen before Christ returns has come to pass. Regarding things to come, Jesus declares in Luke 21:24, saying, **“and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.”** God will keep His promise to His chosen people, the Jews, preserving and delivering a remnant at the appointed time. In the meantime, the door remains open for the salvation of the gentiles until that door closes forever at the return of Christ.

Revelation 17:18, states: **“And the woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth.”** In 17:5 we were told that the harlot has the name “Babylon the Great” on her forehead, along with the title: “Mother of Harlots and of the Abominations of the Earth.” We have previously identified “Babylon the great” as the “great city.” We came to understand that relative to physical location, the “great city” was probably Jerusalem, because this is the place Christ was crucified. We also came to understand that “Babylon the great” and the “great city” also symbolized, along with the harlot, all that commits adultery against the Lamb, and idolatry against God. Ezekiel 16 speaks of Jerusalem as a harlot, but it is not the city that has committed idolatry against God but the people and nation that dwelled there. It is this adultery and idolatry that “reigns over the kings of the earth.” Those nations that Jerusalem committed adultery with and who corrupted God’s people with their idolatry are the ones who gather against Jerusalem, which also represents God’s chosen people. Only the blood of Jesus Christ, the true Messiah, can wash them clean and reconcile them to God.

The victory of the Lamb, which we hear spoken of in verses 14 through 18 above, is the final victory of the Lamb over the adultery and idolatry of both God’s original

chosen people, the Jews represented by Jerusalem, and also all peoples who have sinned against God but washed themselves clean through the blood of the Lamb. Jesus Christ is Messiah to the Jews and Savior to all who will accept Him as their Lord. Now in chapter 18 we will hear more about and the result of Babylon's fall.

### **CHAPTER 18:**

While chapter 17 focused on Babylon the great as the "harlot," chapter 18 will focus on Babylon as the "great city." They are integrally connected evidenced by 17:18, which stated: *"the woman you saw is the great city."* The "great city" was first mentioned in 11:8 as the place the bodies of the "two witnesses" lay dead for three and half days before God breathed life into them and they ascended into heaven. It was in this same verse we learned the great city was where "their Lord was crucified." But also the city was mystically identified with Sodom and Egypt, places of great sin and persecution. As has been discussed previously, the "great city" may both reference a place and a condition. The harlot also, as evidenced in Ezekiel 16, may be seen as both a place, Jerusalem, and a condition of immorality. This is reinforced by the other previous reference to the "great city" found in 16:19. Here we learned that with the pouring of the seventh and final bowl of wrath, the "great city" was split into three parts. Again as previously discussed, this could refer to the physical splitting of the city of Jerusalem, or the separation of the unholy trinity of dragon, beast and false prophet, or both. Some scholars view chapters 17 and 18 as depicting two separate aspects of Babylon the great. Chapter 17 is viewed to describe the doom of the "religious" aspect. It may depict the influence of Satan on religious and spiritual understandings, perhaps as it has manifested itself in secularism, relativism and pluralism. Chapter 18 is then seen as the "political and commercial" aspect. It depicts Satan's influence on our physical desires, perhaps as it has manifested itself in materialism and self-centeredness. Put simply, Satan has promoted pride and greed. With all of this in mind let us now reflect on chapter 18.

### **Babylon Is Fallen:**

Revelation 18:1, states: *"After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illumined with his glory."* One of the seven angels that poured out the bowls of wrath took John in the Spirit to the

wilderness to show him the judgment of the harlot. By contrast, an angel with such great authority and glory that it illuminates the earth comes down from heaven to show John the demise of the “great city.” This may be another indicator that this second depiction of the demise of Babylon is associated with the physical and visible rather than the mystical and spiritual. Note that the angel comes down from heaven, indicating we may still be in the “wilderness” of the earth and not in heaven.

Revelation 18:2, states: ***“And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, “Fallen, fallen is 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 and hateful bird.”*** We first heard the proclamation of Babylon the great’s fall in 14:8, immediately after the angel preached the gospel to the whole world. What was warned has now come to pass. Babylon the great has fallen and is now a dwelling place only for demons, unclean spirits, and a prison, also translated as “haunt,” of unclean and hated birds. Speaking of the desolation of the fall of Babylon, Jeremiah states: ***“Therefore the desert creatures will live there along with the jackals; the ostriches also will live in it, and it will never again be inhabited or dwelt in from generation to generation”*** (Jeremiah 50:39). The ancients always viewed the desert or wilderness as a place where demons, unclean spirits and wild animals roamed. Desert ostriches were particularly hated because of their loud screeches during the night which people found terrifying and devilish. If Babylon the great is here seen as symbolic for the lavish decadence of accumulated wealth and luxury derived from selfishness and greed, then the desert or wilderness provides a fitting contrast to the luxury that was but is now no more. Babylon the great has truly fallen.

Revelation 18:3, states: ***“For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality.”*** If materialism, greed and selfishness are seen as “the wine of the passion of her immorality,” then we see this immorality all around us in the world today. We are bombarded by advertising, attempting to convince us that we need more and more possessions to be happy. Merchants become wealthy feeding our unjustified want and greed for material possessions. The word “sensuality” in this verse and following verses can be a little misleading. The Greek word translated also means “luxuriousness,” which

seems more fitting. The kings or leaders of the earth have all become caught up in this wasteful and fruitless endeavor to obtain more and more wealth and luxuries. Again, this is part of Satan's deception and the fundamental nature of Babylon the great, that the "creature" should become obsessed with the "created" rather than the Creator.

Revelation 18:4-5, states: ***"And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, 'Come out of her, my people, that you may not participate in her sins and that you may not receive of her plagues: for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities..'"*** Just as Lot was called to come out of Sodom before God destroyed it for its sin (Genesis 19), and just like God called His people out of original Babylon before he overthrew it for its sin (Jeremiah 51:45), God will call His people out of a world of sin before He rains judgment upon it. In the case of Sodom, the Lord told Abraham that, ***"The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave"*** (Genesis 18:20). In the case of Babylon, the Lord states: ***"For her judgment has reached to heaven and towers up to the very skies"*** (Jeremiah 51:9b). In all cases God is aware of the great sin in the world, and calls His people to remove themselves from it so that they will not suffer in the punishment He will pour out upon it. At the time of the end, God calls His people to separate from "Babylon the great" and not to be caught up in its sin that they also suffer in its punishment. This doesn't mean we have to move off the planet or retreat to a deserted island. We can separate ourselves from the sin of the world even though we live in the world. The story of Sodom and Gomorrah provides an example of this in that Lot left the city but not the valley. The entire valley was destroyed along with the five sinful cities that were located there, but God protected Lot in the midst of the valley. I am reminded of Psalm 91 where God promises to protect His people who take refuge in Him even in the midst of the punishment of the wicked all around them.

Revelation 18:6, states: ***"Pay her back even as she has paid, and give back to her double according to her deeds; in the cup which she has mixed, mix twice as much for her."*** In Jeremiah 50:29 we find an example of what is called "the law of revenge." Speaking of the punishment about to be sent against the original Babylon, the Lord says: ***"Summon many against Babylon, all those who bend the bow; encamp against her on every side, let there be no escape. Repay her according to her work; according to all***

*that she has done, so do to her; for she has become arrogant against the Lord, against the Holy One of Israel”* (Jeremiah 50:29). In the case of “Babylon the great” the arrogance against the Lord and His people is so great that God calls for “double” punishment. The sin she has poured out will be poured out double upon her.

Revelation 18:7, states: ***“To the degree that she glorified herself and lived sensuously, to the same degree give her torment and mourning; for she says in her heart, ‘I sit as a queen and I am not a widow, and will never see mourning.’”*** In Exodus 21 God outlines a system of justice that is fair and balanced. It provides an alternative means of repayment for an injury or offense other than violence for violence. But for the repeat offender God prescribes a harsher rule that we often call “eye for eye.” Exodus 21:23-24, states: ***“But if there is any further injury, then you shall appoint as a penalty life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.”*** This harsher judgment is merited because the offender has remained unrepentant and continued to offend. The same is true in regard to “Babylon the great.” To the same degree that people have elevated themselves and glorified themselves with luxury and material possessions they will now be brought low. This is a fulfillment of the prophetic words of “Mary’s Song,” the song the Virgin Mary sung glorifying God for the child Jesus within her. She proclaims what is to come through Jesus, saying, ***“He has brought down rulers from their thrones, and has exalted those who were humble. He has filled the hungry with good things; and sent away the rich empty-handed”*** (Luke 1:52-53). When king Nebuchadnezzar stood on roof of his palace and admiring the great city of Babylon as his creation and for his glory (Daniel 4:30), he immediately lost everything and was brought low like an animal. The great harlot and great city, Babylon the great, proclaims herself queen and sees no loss or mourning in her future. God declares that He will bring her as low as the heights she has elevated herself. Only God is to be glorified, and God will not tolerate mankind’s self-glorification.

Revelation 18:8, states: ***“For this reason in one day her plagues will come, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for the Lord God who judges her is strong.”*** God spoke through the prophet Isaiah an oracle against the original Babylon, saying: ***“Now, then hear this, you sensual one, who dwells securely, who says in your heart, I am, and there is no one besides me. I shall not sit***

*as a widow, nor shall I know loss of children. But these two things shall come on you suddenly in one day: loss of children and widowhood. They shall come on you in full measure in spite of your many sorceries, in spite of the great power of your spells”*

(Isaiah 47:8-9). Like ancient Babylon, many in the world today have elevated themselves and see themselves as gods. They believe that mankind can do anything and they have no need of God. They believe that their science and technology and reason can solve any problem they may face. They believe that nothing can bring down the world they believe they have created for themselves. But they are wrong! God is the creator all of things, including the gifts, skills and intellect that has allowed mankind to excel. But God is in control and must be honored and acknowledged as the source of all that is good, as the Creator of all life. Like king Nebuchadnezzar and every leader of every kingdom, and every person that has ever lived, all will die and face judgment before God. As God has proclaimed so many times throughout Scripture, He will bring down those who exalt themselves and He will exalt the humble. Also as foretold so many times in Scripture, one day the great “day of the Lord” will come. When it does, all who exalt themselves will be brought down quickly, in one day, because the Lord is truly Lord of lords and King of kings.

### **Lament for Babylon:**

Revelation 18:9-10, states: *“And the kings of the earth, who committed acts of immorality and lived sensuously with her, will weep and lament over her when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance because of the fear of her torment, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour your judgment has come.’”* The kings or leaders of the earth “who committed acts of immorality and lived sensuously” with the “harlot” and “great city,” both identified as Babylon the great, will mourn over her loss. We are not told everyone will mourn, but only those who indulged themselves in the greed and self-indulgence she represents. It is those who lavish and spoil themselves in the luxuries of wealth and decadence that will be filled with remorse when it is taken away. The poor do not miss the loss of luxury. These powerful leaders who once indulged themselves now keep their distance so they are not caught up in her demise. They were willing to partake of her sins but want none

of her punishment. The great city, Babylon, receives judgment in “one hour.” This means that judgment comes swiftly, beginning and completed in a very short time. What if the wealth and luxuries of the world were taken away? What would it look like? How would it come about? Would it begin with a crisis within our financial institutions and world economies? Would we see nations and governments spending money they don’t have for luxuries they can’t afford? Would all this lead ultimately to a financial and economic collapse, resulting in the loss of wealth and luxuries? Many believe we are currently on the eve of such an event. Only time will tell, and only God knows what will happen next.

Revelation 18:11-13, states: ***“And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their cargoes anymore; cargoes of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet, and every kind of citron wood and every article of ivory and every article made from very costly wood and bronze and iron and marble, and cinnamon and spice and incense and perfumes and frankincense and wine and olive oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep, and cargoes of horses and chariots and slaves and human lives.”*** The kings, leaders and wealthy of the earth mourned because of the luxuries they have lost, and now the merchants of the earth weep for no longer will anyone buy their luxurious cargoes. Every luxury is listed, ranging from precious metals and jewels, to fine clothing, to expensive building materials, to exquisite spices and foods, and finally to livestock and even slaves. All the things that mankind hoarded and relished in, and collected in excess, will be stripped away. The merchants who profited through selling and transporting them mourn their loss.

Revelation 18:14, states: ***“And the fruit you long for has gone from you, and all things that were luxurious and splendid have passed away from you and men will no longer find them.”*** The “fruit” spoken of here is the fruit of wealth and of greed. The “things” that men collect in excess, unnecessary for life, but symbolic of power and prestige, have been taken away. Men will not glutton themselves while others go hungry. Men will no longer hoard in excess while others struggle to survive with nothing.

Revelation 18:15-18, states: ***“The merchants of these things, who became rich from her, will stand at a distance because of the fear of her torment, weeping and***

*mourning, saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, she who was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls; for in one hour such great wealth has been laid waste!' And every shipmaster and every passenger and sailor, and as many as make their living by the sea, stood at a distance, and were crying out as they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What city is like the great city?'*” While the merchants were made rich in her sin, like the kings of the earth, they want nothing of her punishment. They mourn the loss of wealth, and prestige and the power that comes through wealth and an abundance of material possessions. It has all been taken away in a very short time. A loss that has come suddenly and with surprising swiftness, and was not anticipated. The reference to “shipmasters” and “sailors” does not mean that the loss is confined to a single island or continent, a place that is only reached by sea travel. In John’s day and even today, most exports are transported by sea, which is the most economical means of transport. The sea transport references may be intended to communicate that the great city of Babylon is not a single land, such as the Middle East, Europe, Asia or Africa, which are all connected by land, but will involve the entire world, every continent. Some identify the United States of America with the great city of Babylon as described in this passage because it is the wealthiest nation on earth where people enjoy luxuries unheard of in other parts of the world. It is also a place where the majority of all imports arrive by sea. While the U.S. may be a center for wealth, as we have seen in previous scriptural accounts, the great city and harlot Babylon is not limited to a single place but is a condition that permeates peoples of all nations.

Revelation 18:19, states: *“And they threw dust on their heads and were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had ships at sea became rich by her wealth, for in one hour she has been laid waste!’”* The people who profited by greed, who became rich transporting the wealth and material things that are the object of greed, now mourn the loss of their livelihood. When greed, self-indulgence, and self-centeredness are taken away, then what is left for those who profited from it? They have also lost, for what once fed them now leaves them hungry.

Revelation 18:20, states: *“Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced judgment for you against her.”* While those who profited from the greedy and self-serving now mourn, the self-

sacrificing servants of God who suffered persecution at the hands of the greedy and self-serving will now rejoice. God has pronounced judgment upon wicked on behalf of the righteous. God has pronounced judgment upon those who have grown fat on behalf of those who they caused to hunger.

Revelation 18:21, states: ***“And a strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, “Thus will Babylon, the great city, be thrown down with violence, and will not be found any longer.”*** Some scholars identify the “stone” in this verse with Jesus, “the stone rejected by you, the builders, but which became the cornerstone” (Acts 4:11). They also see Daniel 2:34-35, which describes a stone that strikes the feet of the great statue, turning it all into chaff, and then the stone grows to become a mountain that fills the whole earth. While these are all clearly references to Christ, and His power to overcome the wicked and reign over all, this verse seems clearly to reference punishment. It seems clear that it is Babylon that will be thrown into the sea and destroyed. Babylon has caused the righteous to suffer and therefore has earned its fate. Jesus speaks of what happens to those who cause believers to stumble, saying in Mark 9:42: ***“And whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble, it would be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea.”*** Satan was thrown down from heaven to the earth. All the evil and violence that Satan causes on earth will also be thrown down and destroyed.

Revelation 18:22-23, states: ***“And the sound of harpists and musicians and flute-players and trumpeters will not be heard in you any longer; and no craftsman of any craft will be found in you any longer; and the sound of a mill will not be heard in you any longer; and the light of a lamp will not shine in you any longer; and the voice of a bridegroom and bride will not be heard in you any longer; for your merchants were the great men of the earth, because all the nations were deceived by your sorcery.”*** Note that everything that previously might have been associated with pleasure has been removed, and no longer heard. There is no more music, finely crafted things, fine foods, bright lights, or even weddings. All that brought joy is gone. Note also that the “merchants” were the “great men” of the earth. I am reminded of that cable television show entitled, “Mad Men” about powerful advertisers. This is the image I see of these

merchants who have sold the world a bill of goods, making us think we need things we don't need, feeding our greed, and corrupting our souls. The reference to "sorcery" is similar, in that it speaks of the deception which causes people to desire what they don't need, confusing the boundaries between need and want.

Revelation 18:24, states: ***"And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth."*** Those with power and possessions, want more, and take away from the powerless and those with little to lose. The greedy and self-centered have little regard for the righteous and self-sacrificing. They are but prey to be consumed and devoured. Satan uses greed and pride as weapons against God's chosen, having the powerful prey on the weak, and turning the wicked against the righteous. Everyone ultimately has two choices. They will make Satan their lord and they will live their lives selfishly centered on themselves, or they will make Jesus their Lord and will live their life selflessly centered on the needs of others. Following Satan will lead to darkness and death. Following Jesus will lead to light and eternal life.

### **CHAPTER 19:**

Part-9 of our study will only include the first ten verses of chapter 19. These verses are connected with chapters 17 and 18 in that they focus on the celebration by the righteous following the demise of the harlot, of Babylon the great. The harlot and the great city, respectively, from discussed in chapters 17 and 18 above, depicted the spiritual (religious) and physical-political (worldly) adultery and idolatry of people putting themselves before God, and worshiping the "creation" rather than the "Creator." This wrong relationship is represented as a "harlot." The right relationship is one that is Christ centered, and follows Christ's teachings. Those who follow Christ are comprised of the Body of Christ, which is depicted as the "Bride" of Christ. We all have two simple choices. We can chose to be a harlot or the bride of Christ.

Revelation 19:1-2, states: ***"After these things I heard, as it were, a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; because His judgments are true and righteous; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and He has avenged the blood of His bond-servants on her.""*** The beginning reference to "after these things" seems to obviously refer to the demise of the religious and material-political

Babylon the great, which is the demise of everything that corrupts and causes people to worship themselves and the luxuries of this world rather than Christ their Creator. The “great multitude” could be the heavenly hosts of angels and/or the “multitude” dressed in white robes who have washed themselves clean through the blood of Christ (7:9-14).

Their words echo the words of Psalm 19:9b, which says, ***“The judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether.”*** This has been proclaimed several times in Revelation, including by the Altar before God in 16:7, saying, ***“Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments.”*** This is important because in 6:10, with the breaking of the fifth seal, we heard the voice of those slain because of the word of God speaking from beneath the altar, saying, ***“How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”*** Voices of a multitude in heaven now proclaim it is done. God has righteously judged the harlot and avenged the blood of God’s servants. We hear the first “Hallelujah!”

Revelation 19:3, states: ***“And a second time they said, ‘Hallelujah! Her smoke rises up forever and ever.’”*** We often say, “Where there is smoke there is fire.” The smoke that rises up forever and ever, affirms that the punishment of Babylon the great is forever, and assures us that never again will God’s people suffer due to its evil influence. We know that ultimately all that is evil, both Satan and the angels and people who followed him, will burn in the lake of fire forever. This place is most commonly called hell from which there is no return. We hear repeated the second “Hallelujah!”

Revelation 19:4, states: ***“And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne saying, ‘Amen. Hallelujah!’”*** The last time the “twenty-four elders” and the “four living creatures” fell down and worshiped God was in 5:8 when the Lamb (Jesus Christ) received the scroll (book) bearing the seven seals from the hand of God. The scroll contained the judgments and punishments that only Christ was found worthy to administer. The first time they all bowed down was the beginning of the last judgment. They now bow again at the end as judgment is completed. This is the third of four great “Hallelujahs.”

Revelation 19:5, states: ***“And a voice came from the throne, saying, ‘Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great.’”*** Those closest to the throne, and perhaps even the twenty-four elders and the four living

creatures call for all who fear and serve the Lord, small and great, to give Him praise. We are all called to praise God regardless of our rank, or gifts or status. We are His.

Revelation 19:6, states: ***“And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude and as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, ‘Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty reigns.’”*** In response to the call for praise in the previous verse, the voice of the multitude responds, declaring that the Lord God Almighty reigns. In 14:2, the voice of the 144,000 who stand with Christ were said to sound like “many waters” and “loud thunder.” The voice that responds is the voice of all those who fear and serve the Lord God Almighty. It is the voice of an uncountable multitude, louder than the mightiest river or thunder. It is the voice of the faithful. This is the fourth and greatest “Hallelujah!” of all.

### **Marriage of the Lamb**

Verses 7-10 proclaim the marriage of Christ’s Church, the Bride, to the Lamb (Jesus Christ). The marriage could not happen until the Church was complete, and all who would chose Christ had had the opportunity to do so. Now it is time for the promised wedding feast, for the banquet promised by Christ for His bride.

Revelation 19:7, states: ***“Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.”*** Just as a bride groom and his bride become one in marriage, so after the judgment of the wicked and at the return of Christ, will Christ’s Church be joined with Christ in marriage. This is a time for rejoicing and gladness, and giving glory to God.

Revelation 19:8, states: ***“And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.”*** Fine linen is worn by the wealthy and by the pure. God’s faithful are rich in the Lord, and here, the fine linens, bright and clean, are similar to a bride’s white wedding dress. They are an adornment, symbolizing both purity and preparation for marriage.

Revelation 19:9, states: ***“And he said to me, ‘Write, ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’” And he said to me, “These are true words of God.”*** The Greek word here translated as “blessed” literally means “being in the state of Christ” or “blessed because filled with the joy of Christ.” All who belong to Christ are invited, including both those who believed in God’s Promise of a Deliverer,

and those who believed in God's fulfillment of the Promise—Jesus Christ, the Lamb. But Jesus provided two parables regarding the wedding feast that we should hear and take heed. First, in the “Parable of the Wedding Feast” found in Matthew 22:1-14, Jesus teaches us that even the poor and sinful will be invited. In the parable, those initially invited decline to come because they are distracted with the things of this world, so the king sends his servants to gather the poor and even sinners to partake of the feast. At the feast, the king notices that one guest lacks wedding clothing, and has him cast out into the outer darkness. The lesson seems that all are invited, even the poor and sinful, but those who chose to attend must be properly clothed—clothed in Christ who washes our garments clean. The second parable is the “Parable of the Ten Virgins” found in Matthew 25:1-13. In this parable ten virgins await the coming of the bride groom and the wedding feast, but only five have come prepared, having both their lamps and extra oil to last them through the night. Those who are not prepared because they failed to bring enough oil are not ready when the groom arrives, and are locked out of the wedding feast. The lesson seems to be that we must be prepared, and we will not be able to acquire preparedness at the last minute, but must be prepared for ourselves.

Regarding these being the “true words of God,” the Greek word translated as “words” is the exact same as used in John 1:1, which in John depicted “Christ.” We know from John 14:6 that Jesus is the “way” and the “truth” and the “life.” Perhaps we are being given assurance that this truly is the word of Christ and we can trust in it. God's purpose and promise have finally been fulfilled.

Revelation 19:10, states: ***“And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said to me, “Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”*”** In the relationship between John and the angel who speaks to him, we see both affirmation and warning concerning a right relationship with God. John naturally falls down to worship the one who shows him these glorious events in heaven, but the angel corrects him, reminds him that we are to worship God alone. Never are we to worship that which is created, but only our Creator. The angel testifies that he is a fellow servant and John's brethren, bearing witness with John concerning the one true God. We are also again reminded that all we are being told and shown is the “Revelation” of Jesus

Christ, for the “testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” The angel, John, and we also are called to bear witness to the testimony of Jesus. We are to serve with our brothers and sisters in faith the one true God, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

### **Summary**

Part-9 has contained a set of seven visions, all pertaining to the fall of Babylon the great. The first vision was the revealing of the “harlot” as Babylon the great (17:1-6a). The second vision was of the interpretation of the harlot and the beast (17:6b-18). The third vision consisted of the angelic proclamation of Babylon the great’s fall (18:1-3). The fourth vision was the exultation and mourning over the fall of Babylon the great (18:4-20). The fifth vision was of the millstone being thrown into the sea and final dirge over the great city, Babylon the great (18:21-24). The sixth vision was the hymn of praise to God by all those in heaven because of the fall of Babylon the great (19:1-5). And the seventh vision was that of the marriage of the Lamb to His bride (19:6-10).

This entire section seems to be provided so that we gain greater insight into the importance of our decision to be faithful to Christ as His bride, rather than to enter into an unfaithful, adulterous relationship with the harlot. We must remain true to Christ until the end, and resist Satan’s self-serving temptations. Our choice will be eternal.

(End of Part-9)