

44. Babylon the Great

- End-time Babylon the Great is described in various ways in the Bible. She is a global kingdom that will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it. She is a great harlot (prostitute) that represents a false religious system. She is a great city that will rule over the kings and nations of the earth. She is described as a dreadful, terrifying and extremely strong beast that will become almost one with the antichrist and Satan during the second half of the Great Tribulation. Babylon the Great will be responsible for the persecution and death of many believers, to the extent that she will be "drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus" (Revelation 17:6). She will fall twice; close to the midpoint of the Great Tribulation and then at the very end of the Tribulation period when Jesus Christ returns.

- The Bible contains much information about Babylon as the source of false religion, the record beginning with the building of the tower of Babel (Genesis 10-11). The name "Babel" suggests "confusion" (Genesis 11:9). Later the name was applied to the city of Babylon which itself has a long history dating back to as early as 3,000 years before Christ. Babylon then, is the symbol of apostasy and blasphemous substitution of idol-worship for the worship of God in Christ. Ancient Babylon was in many ways similar to end-time Babylon the Great. Both empires are characterized as being powerful, arrogant and wicked, and are used by God to bring judgment on the Jewish people. Jeremiah describes Babylon as a gold cup, beautiful on the outside but filled with idolatry and wickedness. "Babylon has been a golden cup in the hand of the LORD, intoxicating all the earth. The nations have drunk of her wine; therefore the nations are going mad" (Jeremiah 51:7). Five times in the Bible the phrase "Babylon the Great" is used; once to describe ancient Babylon (Daniel 4:30) and four times to describe the end-time empire (Revelation 14:8, 16:19, 17:5, 18:2). The end-time city of Babylon the Great is sometimes referred to as just Babylon or the great city (Revelation 17:18, 18:10, 16, 18-19, 21).

- End-time Babylon the Great will be a global false religious system that is described as a "great harlot" (prostitute) that "sits on many waters", representing "peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues", and is also described as a "woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns" (Revelation 17:1, 3, 15). The fact that she sits on many waters and the scarlet beast shows the extent of her power, influence and control. The kings of the earth will commit acts of immorality with her and those who dwell on the earth will be drunk with the wine of her immorality (Revelation 17:2). The harlot will be drunk with the blood of the saints, will be wealthy, materialistic and extremely evil and will deceive the nations with her sorcery (Revelation 17 and 18). "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 on her forehead a name was written, a mystery, 'BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH'" (Revelation 17:4-5). The mystery of Babylon the Great is revealed to John by an angel (Revelation 17:8-18), yet wisdom is still required to understand (Revelation 17:7, 9).

- The woman (harlot) of Revelation 17 is also described as a great and strong city called Babylon (also Babylon the Great), which reigns over the kings of the earth (Revelation 17:18, 18:2, 10, 21). This implies that this great city will be the world capital of Babylon the Great and will probably be located in a powerful, wealthy and influential nation. The city will have a bustling seaport (Revelation 18:17-19) and will be characterized by the "sound of harpists and musicians" and craftsmen of many trades (Revelation 18:22). She will be "a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit" (Revelation 18:2). All the nations will drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth will commit acts of immorality with her (Revelation 18:3). The merchants of the earth will become rich from her great wealth (Revelation 18:3, 11-19), and all the nations will be deceived by her sorcery (Revelation 18:23). In her will be found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth (Revelation 18:24). In Revelation 17 and 18, spiritual Babylon is united with political and commercial Babylon in a dominating and controlling manner. Notice that "all the nations" (Revelation 18:3) will be influenced by Babylon the Great.

- Babylon the Great is depicted as a great beast with 10 horns in Daniel 7 and a beast having 10 horns and seven heads in Revelation 13 and 17. Satan (a great red dragon) is also described as having seven heads and 10 horns (Revelation 12:3). Daniel describes this beast as "dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong" (Daniel 7: 7) and as "a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it" (Daniel 7:23). The beast's 10 horns represent 10 kings (Daniel 7:24) who will rule over a global empire of extraordinary military might, composed of 10 kingdoms or regions (refer to Revelation 17:12, 17; Daniel 7:27, 2:41-42). A little horn (the antichrist) will come up among them and will arise after them; and three of the first horns will be "pulled out by the roots before it" (Daniel 7:8, 20). The little horn will be different from the previous ones and will become more powerful than the other horns because it will be "larger in appearance than its associates", it will wage war with the saints and overpower them (Daniel 7:19-21), it will subdue three kings (Daniel 7:24) and it will become king of Babylon the Great. The three horns that are "pulled out by the roots" (Daniel 7:8), represent three kings and their kingdoms that will fall as the antichrist is rising to power (Daniel 7:20). These kings fall "before" the little horn, but not necessarily because of it. Horns that are "pulled out by the roots" probably signify the sudden and violent downfall of these three kings and their kingdoms. During the Ezekiel 38 battle, which will probably occur after the rapture but before the Great Tribulation, the enemies of Israel will be severely judged by God, especially Gog (probably Russia) and the other nations that attack Israel. Perhaps Israel's enemies represent the three horns (kings and their kingdoms) that will be "pulled out by the roots". This is probably the reason that the dragon (Revelation 12:3) and the beast of Revelation 13 and 17 are described with seven heads (representing seven mountains and seven kings, Revelation 17:9-10) rather than 10. The seven mountains are probably a reference to the seven kingdoms (regions) that the seven kings rule. Babylon the Great will be established with 10 kingdoms (regions) and 10 kings before the Great Tribulation begins but will apparently only have seven functional kingdoms and seven kings at the start of the seven-year Great Tribulation. Only these seven kings will be under the influence and control of the harlot, since she rides on a beast with seven heads and 10 horns (Revelation

17:3, 7). During the second half of the Tribulation period, the final (last) 10 kings of Babylon the Great are represented by the 10 horns (Revelation 17:12-13).

- More kings will fall during the first half of the Tribulation. Of the remaining seven kings, the antichrist will replace one of them because he is "one of the seven" (Revelation 17:11). Of these seven, five more will fall, leaving the antichrist and one other king to rule the empire (Revelation 17:10). Close to the Tribulation midpoint, the antichrist receives a fatal wound and then is healed (Revelation 13:3, 12, 14), suggesting that Satan resurrects and possesses him (the beast comes out of the abyss; Revelation 17:8, 11:7). He will then kill the two witnesses of God (Revelation 11:7), desecrate the Jerusalem temple and end the peace treaty (covenant) with Israel (Daniel 9:27) at the Tribulation midpoint. Satan gives the antichrist authority to rule over the earth as the king and supreme ruler of Babylon the Great for the last portion of the Tribulation (Revelation 13:2-14, 17:9-13; Daniel 7:24, 11:36). Ten new kings will be chosen and they will give their power and authority and their kingdom to the beast (Revelation 17:12-13, 17). They will "hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire" (Revelation 17:16) and then require everyone to worship the beast and to receive the mark of the beast (Revelation 13:11-18).

- There are several reasons to conclude that Babylon the Great will be a global kingdom consisting of 10 smaller kingdoms or regions. First, Babylon the Great will be ruled by 10 kings (Daniel 7:15-28). It appears that the kingdom will be established first and then out of this kingdom 10 kings will arise, as if they are appointed (Daniel 7:24). This implies that they will rule over regions, not just a single nation. Second, 10 new kings will be chosen to rule under the antichrist for the second half of the Tribulation (Revelation 17:12-18). These rulers will receive a kingdom and receive authority as kings with the beast (Revelation 17:12). They will have one purpose, and they will give their power and authority and their kingdom to the beast (Revelation 17:13, 17). This passage also implies that these rulers will be chosen to rule over a regional kingdom. Third, the fourth kingdom of Daniel 2, which probably represents Babylon the Great, will also be separated into 10 parts, represented by 10 toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron (Daniel 2:40-43). This kingdom will crush and shatter all things and will be a "divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron... some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle" (Daniel 2:41-42). Fourth, kings are often associated with the kingdoms they rule. The fourth beast of Daniel 7 is first described as a king (Daniel 7:17) and then as a "fourth kingdom on the earth" (Daniel 7:23). Horns are sometimes used in Scripture to represent kings and kingdoms (Daniel 7:24, 8:20-22; Revelation 17:12). Fifth, when Jesus Christ returns, the sovereignty of all the kingdoms (not just one) under the whole of heaven will be given to believers (Daniel 7:27).

- All nations will probably be part of Babylon the Great because first, all the nations will drink the wine of the passion of her immorality (Revelation 14:8, 18:3) and all the nations will be deceived by her sorcery (Revelation 18:23). Second, Satan will give the antichrist authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation (Revelation 13:7). Third, all people will be required to receive the mark of the beast (Revelation 13:16) and the whole world (except believers) will worship the beast (Revelation 13:8). Fourth, the beast and his 10 kings will "wage

war against the Lamb" (Revelation 17:14), and at the end of the Great Tribulation, the kings of the whole world and their armies will be gathered together in Israel for the war of Armageddon (Revelation 16:13-16). According to Zechariah, all the nations of the earth will be gathered against Jerusalem (Zechariah 12:3, 14:2).

- End-time Babylon the Great will fall twice during the Great Tribulation. The first time will probably be near the midpoint of the Tribulation and the second time will be during the war of Armageddon. The final defeat of Babylon the Great and the antichrist will be the climax of God's judgment on the Gentile powers at the close of the Great Tribulation when Jesus Christ returns with His army (Daniel 7:26; Revelation 16:19, 19:19-21). This final defeat is described in the verses which follow. "And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh" (Revelation 19:19-21). "The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found" (Revelation 16:19-20). This will all occur during the seventh bowl judgment (Revelation 16:17-21). There will be a global earthquake, the most devastating in history, that will cause the cities of the nations to fall; every island will disappear and the mountains will be leveled. Huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds (45 kilograms) each will come down from heaven upon men.

- The phrase "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great" occurs twice in the Bible and both times the proclamation is uttered by an angel (Revelation 14:8, 18:2). Isaiah uses a similar phrase ("Fallen, fallen is Babylon") to describe the fall of ancient Babylon (Isaiah 21:9). In Revelation 14:6-12, three angels deliver a message to every nation and tribe and tongue and people. Since one angel follows the next, it appears that their announcements occur in quick succession. The first one has an eternal gospel to preach and says with a loud voice, "Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come" (Revelation 14:7). The second angel follows, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality" (Revelation 14:8). The third angel follows them with a warning not to worship the beast or receive his mark (Revelation 14:9-11). Some writers say that Babylon the Great only falls at the end of the Great Tribulation. If this is the case, then it would not make sense to announce on the last day of the Great Tribulation that Babylon the Great has fallen and then to warn people not to worship the beast or receive the mark of the beast. The third angel's warning would be too late at that point to make any difference. Even the second angel's message would be unnecessary at that point. So, we can conclude that Babylon the Great falls twice during the Great Tribulation. In order to determine the time frame for the initial fall of Babylon the Great, let's look closer at the third angel's warning to not worship the beast or receive his mark. The most logical time to proclaim this warning would be at the midpoint of the Tribulation when people will begin worshipping the beast and receiving the

mark. Then the second angel's message that Babylon has fallen would also be proclaimed near the Tribulation midpoint.

- Revelation 17 and 18 describe the fall of the great harlot and the great city; both referred to as Babylon the Great. An angel, having great authority, will come down from heaven and cry out, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird. 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" (Revelation 18:1-3). God's people are warned by a voice from heaven, saying, "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues; for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities" (Revelation 18:4-5). In a similar fashion, Lot and his family were warned to leave Sodom before it was destroyed by God for its wickedness (Genesis 19:1-29). 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" (Revelation 18:8). Close to the Tribulation midpoint, 10 kings will be chosen to rule over the 10 kingdoms (regions) of the world and to serve under the beast (Revelation 17:12-13, 17). The beast and his new rulers will "wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them" (Revelation 17:14). They will also "hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire" (Revelation 17:16). This verse describes the demise of the global false religious system, also known as Babylon the Great (Revelation 17:5). Since the 10 new kings do not receive authority as kings until close to the Tribulation midpoint, Babylon the Great cannot fall until close to the midpoint. Also, the harlot must be destroyed so that the beast can proclaim himself as god and demand that the world worship him alone. God's judgment on the great city is described as plagues, pestilence (literally death), famine and fire (Revelation 18:4, 8). There is no mention of a great earthquake, the war of Armageddon, huge hailstones or the second coming of Jesus Christ as one would expect if this event occurred at the end of the Great Tribulation.

- When we look at the kings of the earth, we can also see that Babylon the Great must fall twice. During the initial fall, the kings of the earth will weep and mourn and lament over Babylon when they see the smoke of her burning (Revelation 18:9-20). They will stand at a distance because of the fear of her torment (Revelation 18:10). When Babylon the Great falls the second time, the kings of the earth will no longer be spectators. They will be gathered together in Israel (Armageddon, Revelation 16:14-16) to make war against God (Revelation 19:19). They will experience God's fierce wrath (Revelation 16:19) because the kings of the earth and their armies and the beast and false prophet are all part of Babylon the Great (Revelation 19:19-21). By examining these passages of Scripture (Revelation, chapters 14, 16-19), we can conclude that the original Babylon the Great will probably fall close to the Tribulation midpoint.

- The destruction of the great harlot and the great city does not mean the end of Babylon the Great. Babylon the Great, the global empire, will continue on, more powerful than ever for the second half of the Great Tribulation, but with a more sinister and satanic nature. New Babylon

the Great will have new leadership, a new false religion, a new world capital and a new purpose. The beast (antichrist), empowered by Satan, will be the supreme ruler of the world and king (Daniel 11:36) of new Babylon the Great. The beast, Satan and new Babylon the Great will become almost one in their purpose and nature. The antichrist will claim to be God, will demand worship, will wage war against Jews and believers, will require the mark of the beast, will control and dominate virtually the entire world, and will ultimately try to defeat God Almighty.

- After the great city of Babylon is destroyed, another world capital will be needed for the second half of the Tribulation. It is possible that the antichrist will choose Jerusalem (see also Revelation 16:19 commentary). There are several reasons to propose this. First, the outer court of the Tribulation temple will be given to the nations, "and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months" (Revelation 11:2), which represents the second half of the Tribulation. Second, Babylon the Great (Babylon) and Jerusalem are both referred to as "the great city" (Revelation 11:8, 16:19, 17:18, 18:10, 21). Third, numerous Bible prophecies mention that the antichrist will be in the land of Israel and Jerusalem during the end times; at the start of the Great Tribulation, at the midpoint and toward the end, in the days leading up to the second coming of Christ (Daniel 9:27, 11:41, 45; Revelation 19:19-21). Fourth, Israeli Jews will flee to the wilderness to escape the beast's persecution during the second half of the Tribulation (Revelation 12:13-17, 13:5-8). This will allow the antichrist and his evil forces to occupy Israel and Jerusalem. Fifth, Jerusalem (especially the Temple Mount) is the most important place on earth and is the center of the world (Psalm 87:1-3; Ezekiel 5:5, 38:12). Since the antichrist wants to be like God, it would make sense that he would also want to rule God's land (Israel) and rule from God's holy city (Jerusalem) and from the Tribulation temple. At the midpoint of the Great Tribulation, he will take "his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God" (2 Thessalonians 2:4), and will require all to worship him and his image (Revelation 13:12-15).

- There are several "70 year" Old Testament prophecies that connect ancient Babylon to end-time Babylon the Great and ancient Jerusalem to end-time Jerusalem (refer to 2 Chronicles 36:20-21; Jeremiah 25:11-12, 29:10; Daniel 9:2). These prophecies will be fulfilled in two phases, totaling 70 years. According to Jeremiah 25:11-12, the nations will serve the king of Babylon 70 years and when the 70 years are completed, God will punish the king of Babylon and his people. This final judgment on Babylon the Great and her king (antichrist) will occur at the second coming of Jesus (Revelation 16:19, 19:19-21). At this time, Jesus will rescue His people and bring them back to Jerusalem (Jeremiah 29:10). Also at this time, the 70-year sabbath rest for the land will be fulfilled (2 Chronicles 36:20-21) and the desolations of Jerusalem will be complete (Daniel 9:2).

- As mentioned above, at the close of the Tribulation period, during the war of Armageddon, the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies will gather in Israel to make war against Jesus Christ and His army. Babylon the Great will experience the fierce wrath of God when Jesus Christ returns on the last day of the Great Tribulation to save His people, to judge the wicked and to set up His kingdom (Daniel 7:26; Revelation 16:19, 19:19-21). The beast and the false

prophet will be thrown alive into the lake of fire and their armies will be defeated. Satan will be bound for a thousand years and thrown into the abyss (Revelation 20:1-3). For additional information about Babylon the Great, refer to Jeremiah 50-51, Daniel 11:36-45 and Zechariah 5:5-11.