

Christ's church is built upon the solid foundation of His Word, guided by His Spirit. In contrast, the Babylonian system of religion is rooted in manmade teachings and traditions. Any religious leader who substitutes human opinions or traditions in the place of Scripture fosters Babylonian confusion.

A Human Leader or a Divine Head

In the days of ancient Babylon, church and state united. When King Nebuchadnezzar sat on his royal throne, he supposedly spoke for the gods. He passed a universal decree commanding all his subjects to bow to his authority. In the last days of earth's history, a church-state system or spiritual Babylon will be led by a spiritual leader claiming to speak as God. Throughout the centuries, the Roman pontiffs have declared that they stand in the place of God on earth. In his Encyclical Letter of June 20, 1894, Pope Leo XIII stated, "We hold upon this earth the place of Almighty God." The Apostle Paul exposes this power, saying that "who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

Babylon Was the Center of Idolatry

Babylon was also the center of image worship. Idolatry was at the heart of Babylonian worship. The Babylonians believed that these images were representations of their deities. Spiritual Babylon places emphasis on worshipping images of Christ, Mary, the apostles, and various so-called saints. Images limit the ability of the Holy Spirit to impress upon our minds the things of eternity and are given homage that belongs to God alone. Jesus, our Savior and Redeemer, invites us to worship Him directly.

7. **What stands out to you about what the Bible reveals pertaining to true worship?** (*Exodus 20:4-5; Psalms 115:4-8*)
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Babylon used images prolifically in its worship. Many of those images found their way from paganism to Rome and into the Christian church. These images were worshiped as Babylonian gods. Tragically, millions of Christians revere images as objects of worship. This deception of Satan clouds the truth of God's word. In 1 Timothy 2:5, the apostle Paul states that there is "one Mediator between God and men, the Man Jesus Christ." He is the "image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15). We come to God through Jesus Christ, our mighty Savior, intercessor, priest, and coming king. Praise His Holy Name!

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STUDY GUIDE
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THREE COSMIC MESSAGES

EARTH'S FINAL
CONFLICT
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Lesson 9: A CITY CALLED CONFUSION

THE BOOK OF REVELATION DESCRIBES TWO SYSTEMS OF RELIGION. IT CONTAINS A STRONG APPEAL to men and women living in the last days of earth's history. This appeal is summarized in the symbolism of two women, one dressed in white in Revelation 12 and the other dressed in scarlet in Revelation 17.

The woman dressed in white is faithful to Jesus. She is pure and undefiled by false doctrines. The prophet Jeremiah writes, "I have likened the daughter of Zion To a lovely and delicate woman" (Jeremiah 6:2).

The "daughter of Zion" is a term used to refer to God's people. In Ephesians 5, the apostle Paul likens Christ's church to His bride.

1. How is Christ's church or bride described? (*Revelation 12:17*)

God has always had a people who are faithful to Him. Motivated by love, empowered by the Spirit, they live lives of godly obedience.

Apostasy Arises

Revelation 14 describes two religious streams flowing from entirely different fountains—the fountain of truth and the fountain of error. Revelation's everlasting gospel presents the powerful truths of God's Word to a world desperately seeking for meaning. The devil's counterfeit system, termed "Babylon," is a distortion of truth and originates with the father of lies (see John 8:44).

2. What solemn announcement is made? (*Revelation 14:8*)

John wrote Revelation at the end of the first century. The literal city of Babylon had been destroyed more than 500 years earlier. In the prophecies of Revelation, Babylon symbolically represents a false religious system. In Revelation 17, a woman dressed in purple and scarlet rides across the landscape of time on a scarlet-colored beast. She is depicted as an apostate system of religion.

3. How does John describe this fallen church system? (*Revelation 17:1–2*)

This apostate religious system has compromised the truths of Scripture. The Bible says she "sits on many waters" (Revelation 17:1). Verse 17 explains this symbolism: "The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues." The fallen church system has an international reach, influencing people around the world with her deceptions.

A Union of Church and State

Revelation 17:2 continues its description of Babylon, declaring that she has "committed fornication" with the kings of the earth. Fornication is an illicit union. In the fallen church system, the church unites with the state. In the true church system, the church is united with Jesus Christ. The fallen church looks to the political leaders of the earth for power and authority. It seeks the state to enforce its decrees. Revelation 17:2 continues, "and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication." The fallen church gets her power from the state, but she also influences the state to support her falsehoods. In the Bible, a beast represents a king or a kingdom. When a nation turns its back on the principles of God's kingdom, it becomes beastlike. When the church looks to the state for power, it compromises biblical principles and becomes the harlot.

4. What color are the garments of the spiritual leaders of this religious system, and what does the harlot have in her hand? (*Revelation 17:4*)

This fallen religious system has a wine cup in her hand. All the world drinks of the cup and is deceived, except the faithful people of God.

Mystery Babylon the Great

5. What is the name on her forehead? (*Revelation 17:5*)

What does the Bible mean when it says, "Mystery, Babylon the Great"? Revelation 17 is talking about spiritual Babylon, an apostate religious system that departs from the pure teaching of God's Word and reintroduces into Christianity many of the teachings of Old Testament Babylon.

Babylon's Falsehoods

In the Old Testament, shortly after the flood, humanity rebelled against God by disregarding His Word. God promised that there would never again be a worldwide flood. Disbelieving, the people built a tower to protect themselves in case of another global catastrophe. The Tower of Babel, the site of ancient Babylon, was built in direct defiance to the Word of God. They built that monument for their own glory, and God confused their languages. Spiritual Babylon represents a religion based on human teachings, ideas, and traditions. It stands in opposition to the power of the gospel and to the church that Jesus built.

Jesus and His Church

6. What promise did Jesus give His disciples regarding His church? (*Matthew 16:18*)
