The Fall of Babylon the Great
and the Kingdom of the Antichrist
Revelation 18:1–24

In Revelation 17 you have the religious system of “Mystery Babylon,” a One-World Church under the pope of the Roman Catholic Church followed by a One-World Religion under the False Prophet; in chapter 18 you have a One-World Government called “Babylon the Great” under the Antichrist. Chapter 17 speaks of spiritual Babylon; chapter 18 speaks of political, economic Babylon. The Antichrist and the False Prophet coexist for a time until the Antichrist can no longer tolerate a divided loyalty; he alone wants to be worshipped; he alone sees himself as god, so he destroys the atheistic New Age religion of the False Prophet and demands that he alone be worshipped.

The One-World Government of the Antichrist, “Babylon the Great,” will exist during the second half of the Tribulation and it will be the commercial and economic center of the world; in Revelation 18:18, Babylon is called a city and it is the capital city from where the Antichrist rules; Babylon is also the final empire to rule over the world before Christ returns.

The Prediction of Babylon’s Fall (18:1–3)

*The ruination of Babylon...* John saw, “another angel coming down from heaven having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory, and he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, ‘Babylon the great is fallen...’ (18:1-2a); an angel, coming from the presence of God with the authority of God has illuminated the earth by his glory; he proclaims with a loud voice that all can hear, “Babylon the great is fallen.”

We have already seen that Babylon is a city and the final satanic kingdom of the Antichrist, but where is the city of Babylon? This is the big question that has caused much debate among students of prophecy; let me give you the three most discussed possibilities.
Babylon is New York City and the United States of America

A lady from my congregation came to my office and said she was going to quit her job and move to Costa Rica because she believed that Babylon was the United States and that the Antichrist will have his headquarters in the United Nations Building in New York City; she needed to get out of this country, because Scripture says to “flee Babylon” (Jeremiah 51:6, 37,45, 49, 50).

Dr. Franklin Logsdon wrote in the forward of a book by Edward Tracy, The United States in Prophecy: “It has been my strong conviction for years that the U.S., being the most powerful and affluent nation of all time, would have to find some impressive place in the prophetic projection of the Holy Scripture. It equally has been my conviction that the Babylon doctrine holds the key to its discovery.”

Where is the United States in prophecy? Some see it as the Babylon of Revelation 18; they see New York City in particular and United States in general as the end times Babylon; this is a recent teaching of a new breed of students of Bible prophecy; it is based on the role and influence that America has in the world in terms of our wealth, our economy, our materialistic lifestyle, our unique location positioned between two great oceans, and that we are home to the evil United Nations, headquartered in New York City; furthermore, as a country, our academia is becoming more and more atheistic and philosophically New Age; we as a nation are moving more and more away from God and becoming a dwelling place of demons; while I understand this argument, I do not believe the Babylon of Revelation 18 is New York City and in a larger sense the United States of America.

Babylon is a Rebuilt City in Iraq

Based on the ruins of Babylon to be of sudden destruction... There are those who believe that the ancient city of Babylon will be rebuilt in Iraq as the temporary home of the Antichrist and his One-World Government as well as the False Prophet and his One-World Religion; it must be rebuilt, they argue, because the OT city of Babylon was not destroyed suddenly as prophesied by Isaiah in chapter 13:17-20; because there was no sudden destruction, but rather a gradual decay of the city, it must be rebuilt so it can be destroyed as the prophet had predicted.
Let’s take a look at Isaiah 13:17–20; here the prophet Isaiah says three things concerning Babylon: 1) The Lord will stir up the Medes against them; 2) It will be overthrown as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah; 3) It will never be inhabited or lived in from generation to generation.

The passage prophesies that Babylon will be overthrown by the Medes and that it will become a desolation, like the location of Sodom and Gomorrah (see also Jeremiah 51:11); this prophecy cannot refer to an end-time Babylon but only to that Babylon conquered by the Medes in 539 BC.

Those who argue for a rebuilt Babylon say that it must be destroyed suddenly as were the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah; while Babylon was conquered by the Medes it was done in a relatively bloodless and non-devastating manner; the Medes conquered Babylon by damming up the Euphrates River, which ran through the center of the city, then while the Babylonian rulers were in the midst of a drunken feast, the armies of the Medes simply walked down the dried up river bed underneath the walls of the city and overtook the palace while King Belshazzar and his party guests were in a drunken stupor.

The Isaiah passage does not say that Babylon will be overthrown suddenly like Sodom and Gomorrah; if you read the passage carefully it says, “And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans’ pride, will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah” (Isaiah 13:19); this says nothing about Babylon being destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah, rather, “as when God overthrew” the cities; that is, once these cities are destroyed they will not be re-inhabited.

*Based on the recognition it will be in “the day of the Lord…”* Another argument for the rebuilding of Babylon is that the attack on Babylon will occur when the “day of the LORD is at hand” (Isaiah 13:6); the phrase “day of the Lord” is often used as an eschatological term to refer to the great Tribulation followed by the Millennium; if used in this sense it would certainly imply a rebuilt Babylon in the end times; however, according to theologian-historian Douglas Stuart, the phrase “day of the Lord,” when used of Gentile nations, refers to a decisive victory of the Lord over His enemies on any given occasion; only when used in connection with Israel does this phrase have an eschatological meaning; therefore, the phrase “day of the LORD” in Isaiah 13:6 cannot refer to God’s judgment on a rebuilt Babylon at the end of the Tribulation for it is used of the Gentile city of Babylon.
What is the history of Babylon’s demise? The Medo-Persians did not destroy Babylon for she remained an important city during the 200 years of the Persian Empire; after that time, Babylon went into a sharp decline; under the Greeks, Alexander the Great intended to rebuild the city and make it his capital, but died suddenly before he could do anything; his generals abandoned the city and moved the capital to the Tigris River where they built a new city called Seleucia.

With the decline of the Roman Empire, many of the beautiful bricks of Babylon were carried off and used in construction projects in Baghdad, Damascus, and cities of the decathlon around the northern part of the Sea of Galilee.

After World War I, archaeologists took the remains of Babylon apart brick by brick; the top 100 feet of the Ishtar Gate was reassembled at the Pergamon Museum in Berlin, Germany; the Germans, French, and English then pillaged the remains of Babylon under the sand and the area became a barren desert; Babylon became like Sodom and Gomorrah, a city that has been wiped off the face of the map.

*Based on the rebuilding of Babylon by Saddam Hussein...* Those who believe Babylon will be rebuilt counter by asserting that its rebuilding was begun by Saddam Hussein in the 1980s; it is true that Saddam built one of his presidential palaces there as well as some temples and gardens on the outskirts of the ancient city, but he did not build the city for habitation, but for his own glory as he considered himself a modern-day Nebuchadnezzar; in 1987, he invited Madonna, a female idol to the Iraqi people, to sing at a festival in the partially rebuilt Babylon.

No one lives in this tourist Babylon, nor is it anywhere near finished as Hussein ran out of money; the long war with Iran left him short of funds to complete the building process, so in 1990 he invaded oil-rich Kuwait; during the war, American troops did much damage to Hussein’s Babylon; while there is a continuing effort to rebuild Nebuchadnezzar’s palace complex, headed up by the World’s Monument Fund, we must remember, there are no plans to rebuild the city for habitation, but only to make it a tourist attraction; the prophet Isaiah said, once it is destroyed, "it will never be inhabited or lived in from generation to generation” (Isaiah 13:20).
Babylon is Rome

Revelation describes the Babylon of end times as a city that sits on seven mountains (Revelation 17:9; 18:18). In the days of John there was only one city that sat on seven hills and that was Rome; it was the Roman poet Ovid who wrote, “But Rome looks around on the whole globe from her seven mountains, the seat of the empire and the abode of the gods”; St. Augustine wrote, “Babylon is the former Rome, and Rome is a later Babylon.”

During the days of the early church, Babylon became a code name for Rome, because of how the Caesars of Rome were persecuting the Christians; theologian-historian William Barclay wrote: “Regularly the city of Rome was called Babylon, both by the Jews and by the Christians. That is undoubtedly the case in Revelation where Babylon is the great harlot, drunk with the blood of the saints and martyrs. The destructiveness, the godlessness, the lust and luxury of ancient Babylon were, so to speak, reincarnated in Rome.”

When Peter was in Rome, he wrote his first epistle to the churches of Asia Minor and he concluded that letter by writing, “She who is in Babylon, elect together with you, greet you; and so does Mark my son” (1 Peter 5:13); we take the position that the Babylon of Revelation 17–18 is the city of Rome as well as the seventh empire of the Antichrist to hold the Jews in captivity and who seeks their annihilation as a people.

The reasons for Babylon’s fall... “...she has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!” (18:2). Babylon has become a hangout for Satan and evil spirits; is it any wonder the Antichrist has resided there and he is none other than Satan incarnate; once the city is destroyed, she becomes “a cage for every unclean and hated bird”; the prophet Isaiah wrote that once old Babylon fell it would become a home for wild beasts; people’s vacated houses will be full of owls; ostriches will dwell there along with hyenas and jackals (Isaiah 13:21–22).

Furthermore, Babylon will fall because “all the nations have drunk from the wine of her fornication” (18:3); the issue here is idolatry; at first, she made people worship the false god of the One-World Religion; then when the Antichrist decided to burn to death the False Prophet, he demanded that he be worshipped as the one and only god.
Two things that resulted in the fall of Babylon: a strong demonic presence and a form of idolatry where the people of the world serve Babylon and not the one true God.

The Plea to God’s People (18:4–5)

A plea based on God’s desire to protect His people....

1. Protection from sinful practices... “...Come out from her, My people, lest you share in her sins... (18:4a). Get out of Babylon! Here is a truth: evil is stronger than good; if you spend your time associating with sinful people, it won’t be too long before you are involved in their sins; Paul reminds us that we are to be separate from the world; Paul told the Romans believers to have nothing to do with those who create division, who teach a false doctrine, who only serve their belly, and who use smooth, flattering words to deceive (Romans 16:17–18); to the Corinthians he reminded them that they are members of the body of Christ and not to be joined to a harlot where one commits sexual sins, rather we are to glorify God in our body (1 Corinthians 6:14–20); in his second letter to the Corinthians he writes “Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you” (2 Corinthians 6:17); obviously, for the most part, we cannot help being around people who are not believers; you may work with them, be in some organization with them, live next door to them, but the danger is to become close friends or to partner with them; the more you hang around worldly people, the greater the risk of becoming worldly; therefore say the Lord, “Come out from among her!”

2. Protection from serious plagues... “... and lest you share in her plagues” (18:4b). If you insist on spending your time with sinful, unregenerate people, and refuse to come out from among them, and end up doing their sinful practices, then expect the same consequences to fall on you as will fall on those who reject the Lord altogether; the plea from the angel is to get out of the city so you will escape the judgment to come.

A plea based on God’s plan to punish Babylon...

“Her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities” (18:5). You don’t want to be in the situation the sinner is in; every sin the sinner sins reaches God and He remembers every one of them; now listen to this and rejoice! For us as believers the prophet Micah writes: “Who is a God like You;
pardonning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in His mercy; He will again have compassion on us and will subdue our iniquities. You have cast all our sins in the depth of the sea” (Micah 7:18–19). It was the writer of Hebrews quoting the prophet Jeremiah who wrote, “Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more” (Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 10:17); what a contrast! If a person who remains in their sins and refuses the forgiveness that God alone can give through the sacrificial death of Jesus and His shed blood—to that person, God will never forget their sins; but if we come to Christ in a spirit of repentance, God will bury our sins in the depth of the sea and remember them no more! Amen!

The Payment that Babylon Will Receive (18:6–8)

The extent of her payment… “Render to her just as she rendered to you and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her. In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she has said in her heart, ‘I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow’” (18:6–7).

The angel calls for God to punish Babylon double for her crimes; he requests that God “repay her double according to her works”; God’s law of justice is called the Law of Retaliation; God’s measure for punishment has always been, what evil you do to another it shall be done to you; it’s “life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe” (Exodus 21:23–25); however, for Babylon, that was not justice; rather she deserves a double portion of God’s vengeance.

Dennis Prager in his commentary on Exodus writes of this text, “God is obsessed with justice and to Him justice is measure for measure. You pay commensurate to the crime. The way in which we treat others will in turn affect how we are treated. However, in this list of punishments only ‘a life for life’ was taken literally by orthodox Jews. The ‘eye for eye, tooth for tooth,’ and so forth were not taken literally because in doing so you may cause more harm than just removing the organ. The Jews came to understand this Law of Retaliation, that if literally carried out, could upset the moral balance constituting the whole point of the law. Plucking out an eye could bring greater harm to the body than one simply having one eye. It could bring severe infection or possible death. Therefore, throughout Jewish history, the assailant was required to pay monetary compensation for any limbs or organs he damaged.”
However, this angel is pleading with God on behalf of His people, who have been so mercilessly mistreated, to go beyond the law and repay her double according to her works; furthermore, the angel says how Babylon has “glorified herself and lived luxuriously;” the word translated “luxuriously” not only refers to her great wealth, but the root word of luxury is “to run riot” and could be translated “sensuously”; Babylon was totally immoral—occultic, idolatrous, greedy, materialistic, sensuous; she even sees herself as queen who gets whatever she wants and has never known sorrow; therefore, the angel is saying, it is time she faces a double portion of the sorrow she has caused others.

The exactness of the payment... “Therefore her plagues will come in one day—death and mourning and famine, and she will be utterly burned with fire...” (18:8a). The Babylon of the Antichrist will be destroyed suddenly; in one day she will be gone, burned to the ground.

The executioner of the payment... “for strong is the Lord God who judges her” (18:8b); Vengeance belongs to the Lord and He will make her pay (Deuteronomy 32:35).

The Profits to be Lost (18:9–20)

The lament of the kings of the earth... “The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will lament and weep for her...” (18:9–10). The fall of Babylon causes the ten kings who rule under the Antichrist to lament, or literally, “to beat their breasts”; these political world leaders are weeping because Babylon, their capital city, is about to collapse; her doom signals the end of the Antichrist's empire; that means the end of their fornicating, the end of their wealthy lifestyle, and the end of their source of power; their fear is expressed, “for they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgement has come’” (18:10b).

The lament of the merchants of the earth... “And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore...” (18:11–17). The text goes on to speak of 28 categories of goods that go up in smoke; and the list begins with gold, silver, precious stones, and pearls, fine linen and purple, etc; this speaks of the great wealth of Babylon; now the merchants all mourn, “For in one hour such great riches came to nothing” (18:17a); that is very telling isn’t it? Solomon warned us never to put our trust in riches; the problem with one’s wealth is it can disappear as fast as it came; Solomon put it like this, “Cast a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off
to the sky like an eagle” (Proverbs 23:13); he also gave this wise advice about money: “Give me neither poverty nor riches, but only give me my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown You and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ or I may become poor and steal and dishonor the name of my God” (Proverbs 30:8–9); it seems like the merchants in Babylon have too much wealth so they disown the Lord—they don’t need Him; but in the end, these merchants lament because it all goes up in smoke.

The lament of the seaman... “Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance and cried out when they saw the smoke burning, saying, ‘What is like this great city?’ They threw dust on their heads and cried out weeping and wailing, and saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate’” (18:17b–19). The wealth of commercial Babylon has all gone up in smoke—from the kings to the merchants to the seamen, there is not but weeping and wailing and throwing dust on their heads; all they lived for is gone in one hour!

The Plummeting of Babylon (18:20–24)

Victory for the saints will accompany it... “Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!” (18:20). This is the first time there is a command in Revelation for the saints in heaven to rejoice; they have rejoiced on their own, but here they are commanded to do so because Babylon has gone up in smoke and it all happened in one short hour of time.

Violence will characterize it... “Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, ‘Thus with violence the great city of Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore” (18:21). If Rome is Babylon, then the city of Rome will be so violently overthrown that it will not exist in the days of Christ’s Millennial reign; this is interesting since the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah will be rebuilt during the Millennium (Ezekiel 16:55); the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah will not be raised up, for Jude tells us they are “suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 7); however, God is going to raise up from the ashes the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and populate them with a regenerate people to worship Christ during His Millennial reign; however, there will be no city called Babylon and if Babylon is Rome, there will be no Rome.
**Voices will not be heard anymore**.... “The sound of trumpets, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore. No craftsmen of any craft shall be found in you anymore, and the sound of a millstone shall not be heard in you anymore; the lights of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of bride and bridegroom shall not be heard in you anymore. For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the men of the earth were deceived” (18:22–23). The end of Babylon is: no music, no factories for making merchandise, no weddings, no sorcery; for everyone it’s lights out!

**Vengeance for martyrs completed**... “And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth” (18:24). At last the prayers of the martyrs have been fully answered when they prayed, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on earth?” (Revelation 6:10); with the swift destruction of Babylon God has avenged their blood!

As believers in Christ, we put our total trust in God; therefore, we are certain that He is loving and merciful toward those of us who love Him and seek to do His will; at the same time, we are equally certain that He is patient and longsuffering toward those who hate Him; but in the end, God will see to it that justice will prevail; He will not compromise with evil, and those who turn against Him will ultimately pay a very heavy price for their godless behavior! Be rejoicing that you are on God’s side! Be rejoicing because your future is secure, for you will be living forever with your Savior, Jesus Christ, who alone is King of kings and Lord of lords! Amen!