4.1 - Babylon and Mystery Babylon

Watch the Harlot

In Revelation, we are introduced to a character known as “Mystery Babylon”. There’s a lot of speculation about this entity. When listening to mainstream teachers and theologians, they might postulate that Mystery Babylon is the United States due to its massive, worldwide economic presence. Others will say it’s the Vatican because it sits on seven hills and adorns itself with gold. Most theories suggest that Mystery Bablyon is a city or a single place, like a country or specific location.

What we’re going to do in this study is examine truly what Mystery Babylon is by understanding the Biblical history associated with that character, and tackle some of the more difficult questions people have regarding it.

Read Revelation 17:1-5

Before we start our deep dive, I want to point out a clear distinction in this passage. The harlot, or the great prostitute, of Revelation 17 has a name written on her forehead:

BABYLON THE GREAT,
THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES
AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

If you haven’t already made the connection, the “Harlot” and “Mystery Babylon” are the same entity. As we work through our studies, you may see these names used interchangeably.

Knowing that they are the same, does that change your understanding at all? Does it challenge any preconceptions or assumptions you’ve had from other teachings you’ve received?

Write out everything you know about Mystery Babylon as well as any major questions you have on things you may be confused or curious about.

Why “Babylon” and why a “harlot”?

As we already know, the imagery that God uses in Revelation is ✨*perfect*✨ and layered. So there obviously must be a reason why He is using these words to describe this entity in His book.

Simply and historically speaking, what was Babylon in the ancient world?

Simply and historically speaking, what or who is a harlot or prostitute in the ancient world?

Think back to your study from *1.5 - The Bride and the Wedding Supper of the Lamb*. Is there a connection between Babylon and the Harlot to something we learned there?

What Hebrew word is used to describe the creation of Eve? What "gender" is Eve? How is Eve's creation linked to the New Jerusalem? What was the pattern we discovered there?

Using that logic, what gender is the harlot? How does the pattern we received from Eve, the Bride, and the New Jerusalem connect with the harlot and Babylon?

Are harlots considered righteous or unrighteous in the Bible? What does that tell us about Mystery Babylon?

Like the New Jerusalem and the Bride of Christ, the Harlot traces her origins back to the book of Genesis. She is also compared with a 'city', Babylon, and, as we shall see, she is also something that is built. To understand the typology of the Harlot-city, we'll need to go back to the first mention of Babylon in the Old Testament.

Read Genesis 10:8-11, Genesis 11:1-9

What was the **first** kingdom mentioned in the Bible? Who was its king? What do you know about him and his kingdom?

What is the original Hebrew name for "Babylon"? What biblical story is connected to this city? In the Brown-Driver-Briggs analysis, what are the meanings of the name Babylon?

Why was what was happening at the Tower of Babel bad? What was at the source of the people's motivation? What did God do to stop it?

Let's take a closer look at Nimrod, the founder and king of this kingdom. Was Nimrod considered a friend or an enemy of God?

In the Brown-Driver-Briggs analysis, what does Nimrod's name etymologically mean? What does that suggest about his relationship with God?

Read Genesis 6:4

In various translations, describe what is happening here. Who are the "sons of God"? What are the "nephilim"? And what are these nephilim called? Who else is described as a "mighty man"? What implications does that have about the origins of Babylon?

Read Genesis 1:28

What was God's command to man in this passage? Did He want people to stay in one place or spread out across the Earth?

When Nimrod made his kingdom, did he gather people in one place or spread them across the Earth? Was this what God wanted? Was this kingdom authorized or unauthorized in God's eyes?

What happens when a lot of people gather and put their minds together? Why was this dangerous, knowing that humanity had just survived the Flood?

Read 1 John 3:4, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

What does “lawlessness” mean? Is intentional sin a rebellion against God? Was Nimrod a man of lawlessness? What is Nimrod a type of?

What is the significance of Babel meaning “Gate of God”? What was Nimrod trying to convey here? How did people feel about this city and their king? Was Babylon simply a secular city, or was it spiritual in nature, both in its creation and its intentions?

As a prophetic type and shadow, who does Nimrod represent? Who is that person mimicking? As a prophetic type and shadow, what does the Harlot represent? Who are they mimicking?

The harlot essentially functions as the “bride of the beast”, in a perverted mimicry of the Bride of Christ. However, we know that the beast hates the harlot and destroys her. In the next study, we’re going to dive a lot deeper into the Harlot’s imagery. There’s a lot of information here, but too much to cover in just one section. For now, let’s continue with examining the connection to the Babylonian system.

The Babylonian System

Before the flood, did kingdoms exist? How did people live? What was their relationship with one another? Was there law and order? How did the world fare?

Pre-flood, how were “cities” or “towns” formed? Who lived in those units? Who was the head of those areas? Did those heads act as kings or did these units function differently from kingdoms? What do you think?

Describe how a kingdom works.

Read Daniel 3, Daniel 2:37-38

Describe the organizational structure in this story. Who is above who and what type of power and authority do they hold?

What did King Nebuchadnezzar do in this story? What did he want his kingdom to partake in?

What was the golden statue of? What major sin was he committing?

Read Isaiah 14:12-15

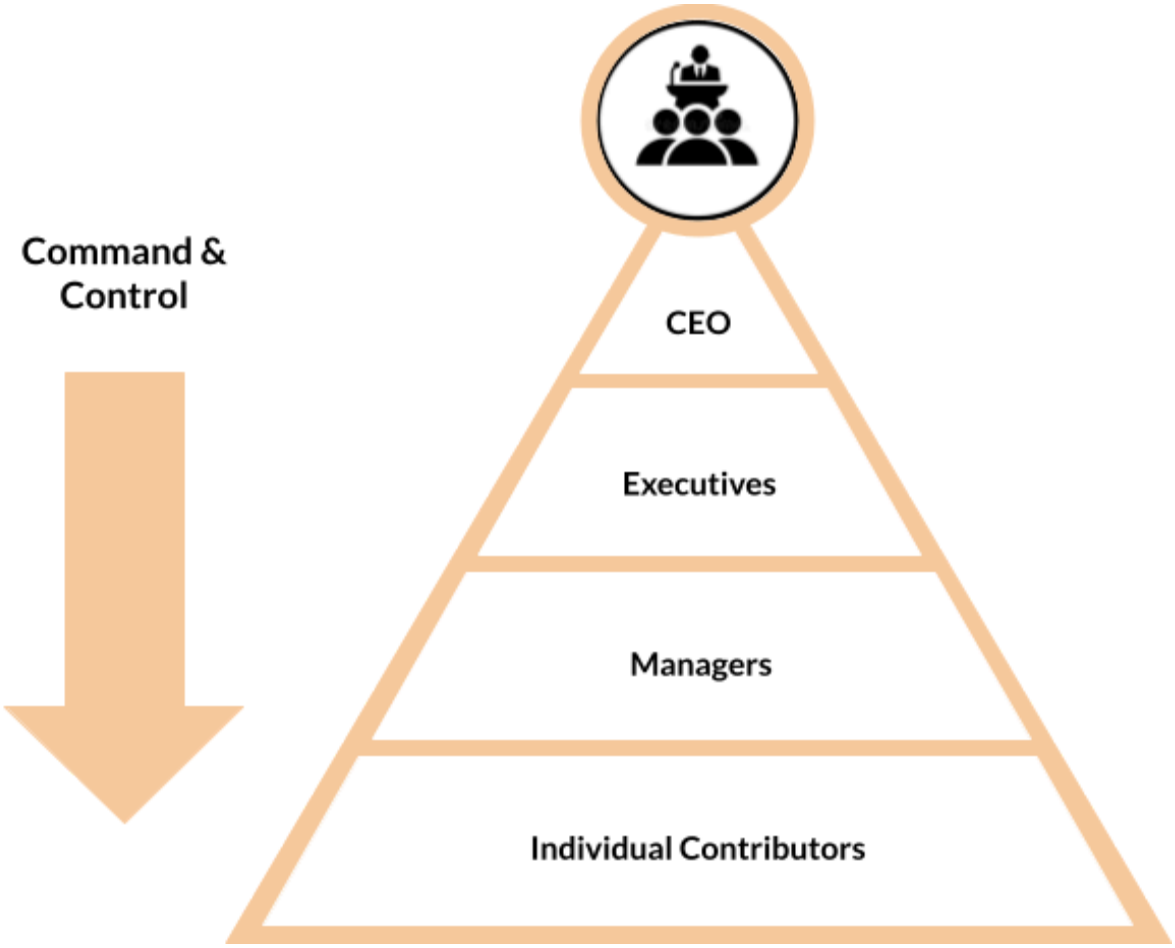
What did Satan do in this passage? What sin did he commit? How does this relate to Nebuchadnezzar? How about Nimrod? What about the son of perdition?

What would happen to people who disobeyed King Nebuchadnezzar? Did those people have any say in the matter? Where were they located in the structure of power?

What did the "middle men" do? Why did they act that way? What was their motivation? Were they above or below the regular people?

Who had all the power and authority in this story? Did he use that power wisely or did he use it to control the population?

This Babylonian structure is something we're all familiar with. It's in every system everywhere, from schools, to work, to governments… It's a top-down structure, where people at the top are few and control the many below them. People at the top control the information, and thus maintain their power and authority. It is easier to control people below you on the food chain when you have information they don't. Here's a common example we can all relate to, for anyone who has ever worked for a company before:



What do you think is wrong with this system? How do you think God thinks about it?

Do we have a better biblical example of how civilization is supposed to function? What is God's structure? Give some examples if you can.

Read Matthew 28:18-21, John 1:1

Who is the ultimate authority of everything? Who is at the "top of the pyramid" when it comes to power, authority, knowledge, and wisdom?

Does God keep that knowledge and wisdom to Himself? Does He hide it from us to keep us under control? What did God give us so that we might understand things?

How is this different from the Babylonian system?

Read John 13:6-17

What did Jesus do in this passage? Why did He do that? What was the purpose of this?

How is this different from the Babylonian system?

Read Revelation 2:26-28, Revelation 3:20-21, Romans 8:16-17

What is Jesus elevating us for? What is He sharing with us?

How is this different from the Babylonian system?

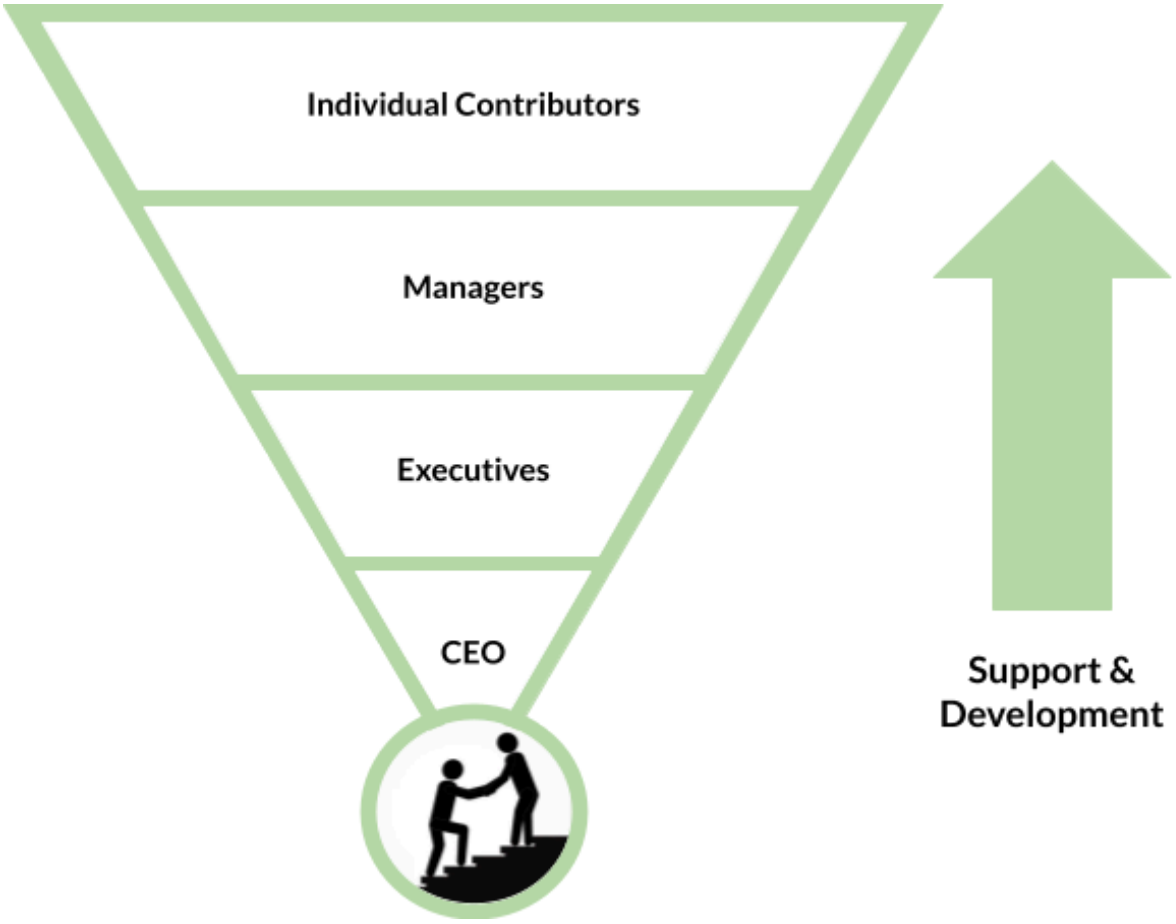
Read Revelation 21:22-25, Revelation 22:3-5

How does the Lord God Almighty interact with His people on the New Earth?

How is this different from the Babylonian system?

There are probably many more examples of this that you can find in the Bible, but the point of this is to illustrate the **servant leadership** that God gives an example of personally. Although God has the authority and power and right to do whatever He wants, He came down in the personhood of Jesus to serve us and save us. He showed us how to love and how to serve and how to lift each

other up. Jesus personally went to the sinners at the bottom of the rung to give them life. He has been working to pull us up from the depths of death to be His family and stand beside Him. If we were to apply God's servant leadership mindset to the corporate structure, it would look like the people with power constantly lifting up those who need help:



It's important to know that Satan can only copy God. There's a hierarchy in the Millennial Reign's governmental structure. There's a hierarchy in heaven. There is even a hierarchy in the New Heavens and New Earth. For every "real" thing that God establishes, there is also a substitute that Satan foists on the world. Did Satan use Nimrod and his followers to establish this counterfeit?

With all that in mind, do you think that this world has been functioning under God's structure or the Babylonian structure? For how long? Do you have any thoughts on how this has impacted your life personally? Or humanity in general? Can you give some examples?

Read Genesis 11:8-9

When God decided that the Tower of Babel was no good, what did He do with it? How did He handle the situation? Did He pour out His wrath on them? Did He judge them?

Where did people go after they couldn't communicate with each other?

When people scattered, did the Babylonian system end? Or did it spread with the people who left the kingdom? When you learn something (for example, something from school or college), and you leave the location where you learned that thing, do you stop knowing and applying the thing that you learned? Or do you take it with you wherever you go and share it with other people?

Have different languages and cultures generally been a barrier to global collaboration? What about now? Are we living during a time when different languages no longer create a roadblock to diplomacy and communication?

Read Revelation 17:15-18

Knowing that God scattered the people of Babel "over the face of all the earth," what do you think it means that the harlot sits on many waters and "are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues"? Where is Mystery Babylon located? Do you think it's a city or something else?

In the pyramid structure of the unrighteous Babylonian system, who in Revelation sits at the highest level before the reign of the beast? Who follows below that? And who is on the bottom rung of that pyramid?

The Pride of Civilizations

Read Genesis 11:4

Why did Nimrod and others want to partake in this system? What was their motivation?

Does the Babylonian system glorify God or man? How do you know?

Does God's system glorify God or man? How do you know?

When people operate under the Babylonian system, who do they rely on to grow and move up? What's a popular American saying when people need to get their act together to get through hard times and succeed?

When operating under the Babylonian system, does mankind "need" God to maintain order and civilization? Or does the Babylonian system provide that? Is it a perfect or imperfect version of order or civilization? How do you know?

How does pride blind us from seeing reality? How does it hurt us?

Read Genesis 12:1-3

Compare this passage to the people of Babel. How do the people of Babel get a name for themselves? How does Abram get a name for himself? What is the major difference here?

What does God want us to do to grow and prosper?

Read Revelation 18:4, 1 John 2:15-17

Why does God instruct His people to come out of Babylon?

What does John compare the world to? How does that relate to the structure of Babylon? What must we, as Christians, do to not love the world?

Read Revelation 9:20-21

If the Harlot is not one to give God glory, what does she glorify? What does she idolize? What does she lift up? What is most important to her?

Where does the Harlot receive her “powers” from?

Read Revelation 18

List some of the things you notice Mystery Babylon is guilty of. What are her main attributes?

Read Isaiah 14:12-14

Look at what is written about Satan. What does he want? What is his sin?

How does this attitude relate to those who built Babel?

If you had to sum up the identifying characteristics of Mystery Babylon, what words would you use to describe it?

Understanding the Mystery

Read Revelation 17:3-13

Let's explore the "mystery" of the vision that John saw. In verse three, John "saw a woman sitting on a **scarlet beast** that was covered with blasphemous names and had **seven heads and ten horns**."

Then, starting in verse nine, the beast is explained:

"This calls for a mind with wisdom. The **seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits**. There are also **seven kings**. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for only a little while. The beast that was, and now is not, is an eighth king, who belongs to the other seven and is going into destruction."

Bible prophecy teachers have tried to decipher the meaning of the Woman who sits on the Beast with seven heads, which are associated with seven mountains and seven kings. Some believe that the seven mountains are literal mountains. Rome, for example, sits on seven hills. Seventh Day Adventists believe that the Catholic church is "Mystery Babylon" because of the great wealth the church possesses and how she has engaged in the whole-sale persecution of Christians since the time of Constantine and because Rome is a city with seven hills/mountains.

What theory have you learned is Mystery Babylon? What is their reasoning?

Do you believe that to be true? Has this study changed your thinking thus far? If so, how?

Let's dive a bit deeper into the verse.

When did John write down the Book of Revelation?

In verse 10, what did the angel tell John about the first five kings/kingdoms/mountains? At the time of John writing this, what does that mean? Are the kings currently in power, or have they already come and gone?

What does it mean when the angel says "one is"? To John, what could that king/kingdom/mountain represent at the time of the vision?

Finally, when the angel says “the other has not yet come,” what does that mean?

Read Daniel 2:24-45, Daniel 7:1-8, 15-28

How does the vision of Mystery Babylon relate to the visions from the book of Daniel? What are some similarities that you notice?

According to the book of Daniel, what are the kingdoms that were being prophesied about? There’s some different interpretations on this, but pick your favorite.

Was there another great kingdom in the Bible that was not part of the Daniel vision? (Think back to the Exodus).

What kingdom was in charge at the time of the writing of Revelation? What kingdom number would that be?

What does this tell us about the age of the Harlot? Is it older than the United States? Is it older than the Roman Catholic Church? How far back does Mystery Babylon go if the beast it is riding spans these known kingdoms?

The main problem with the popular theories is that it doesn’t take into consideration the fact that the Catholic church didn’t come into existence until hundreds of years after Revelation was written. But, we are told that the king in John’s day was the sixth mountain/king/kingdom! The previous five kings/kingdoms preceded John. Whoever this Harlot may be, she has been around for a very long time, well before the time of John. The same is true with those who think the Harlot represents the United States. The USA did not preexist the Apostle John! Whoever, or whatever the Harlot is, she is **very old**; far more ancient than any actual city, nation or religion on earth.

How many great kingdoms are left? What do we know about that final kingdom?

In Revelation 17:10, specifically, are we looking for a kingdom/civilization, or a single person? How do you know?

Knowing how kings work, what type of person needs to be in charge of what type of government?

This is an important distinction we need to make. Although a lot of scholars will focus on the "kingdom" aspect, this prophecy is actually focusing more on an individual person, or a king, within a kingdom. The Revelation story is not about seven world empires, but seven kings. According to scriptures, the seventh king will only be here "for a little", meaning that his relationship with the Harlot will be extremely brief, comparatively speaking. Additionally, just as with previous kings, the Harlot will be the dominant partner. Remember, the Harlot holds the reins and rides the beast. She is in control right now.

But wait, what about the ten horns?

"The **ten horns** you saw are **ten kings** who have not yet received a kingdom, but will receive one hour of authority as kings, along with the beast. These kings have one purpose: to yield their power and authority to the beast."

In Revelation, what do horns represent? Does that symbology match the angel's interpretation?

At what time do the ten kings show up? Are they part of the first six kings? The seventh king? The eighth king? How do you know?

What is the "one hour" that they have authority referring to? What is the main purpose of these ten kings?

Why do you think the eighth king (the beast) and the ten kings (horns) turn against its rider (the Harlot/Mystery Babylon)?

In summary, write out your thoughts on Mystery Babylon. What is it? How long has it been around? Is it a city or something else? Can we see it today? How do we recognize it? What are its defining characteristics? When and how will it be destroyed?

Final Thoughts

Tell me what you've learned in this study. Has this affected your thoughts on end-time eschatology? Do you agree or disagree with some of the things we focused on here? What are other questions or concerns that you have from this study?

Resources

Who is the Harlot:Mystery Babylon? .pdf

The Harlot .pdf