

Revelation (2020) – 17

- We've reached the climactic period of the seven year Tribulation, the time of Jacob's Troubles

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- God is pouring out His wrath in a series of final bowl judgments prior to Christ's Second coming
 - Six of the seven judgments have already come upon the earth
 - The first five produced devastating destruction such that life on earth is virtually impossible so the end must come quickly
 - The final two judgments kick off a complex series of events that collectively are known as the war of Armageddon
- In Chapter 16 we get an overview of the seven judgments and the first stages of this war

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- Last week we studied the first phase where the Lord dries up the body of water of the Euphrates river east of Jerusalem near Babylon

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- In doing so, the Lord opens the way for the Antichrist's forces to attack Jerusalem and the Jews still living there
- The Lord motivates Satan to launch this attack by eliminating all sources of fresh water on earth making sustained life impossible

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- So with time running out and Satan aware that Christ's return is imminent, he causes the Antichrist to bring his forces to Israel
- The Antichrist moves westward toward the Jezreel Valley, near a place called Har-Megiddo, from which we get Armageddon
- The stage is now set for an epic battle between good and bad, and with it comes the end of Tribulation and this age
- So the Lord is directing the enemy's actions like pieces on a chess board bringing everything to its appointed end
 - Which brings us to the final bowl judgment at the end of Chapter 16
 - This judgment is focused on the fall of a great city, and that fall is the most important event in Tribulation

- In fact, it's so important that this one judgment is explained in greater detail in Chapters 17 & 18
 - That judgment is the next stage of the war of Armageddon

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Rev. 16:17 Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, "It is done."

Rev. 16:18 And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty.

Rev. 16:19 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.

Rev. 16:20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

Rev. 16:21 And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe.

- The final bowl judgment is poured out into the air, as if the wrath of God coats the entire planet like a blanket
 - The atmosphere of our earth is an ocean surrounding the planet
 - And just as the previous bowl judgments were poured into bodies of water, so is this judgment poured into an ocean of air
 - It's like a dye poured into a pool that mixes thoroughly bringing wrath to every part of the pool
 - So God's wrath is going everywhere on earth
 - And this judgment results in an earthquake that produces a unique destruction unlike any other earthquake ever
 - The damage must be on a par with the flood of Noah except without water
 - Mountains are gone, islands are gone, and even the continents are ripped apart
 - Mountains and islands are the same thing, geographically speaking
 - An island is simply the top of a mountain rising out of the sea

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- So the logical conclusion is that mountain ranges – both on land and in the sea – sink downward into the crust of the earth
- And anything built on a mountain would be gone...only the cities built on the plains remain and even these are leveled
- Then as this final judgment comes, a voice from the temple says “It is done”
 - The Greek word for done can also mean accomplished
 - Meaning the wrath of God and His purposes in the Tribulation would come to an end with this final bowl

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Rev. 15:1 Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished.

- As promised, these judgments bring an end to God’s wrath
- Remember also, when Jesus had completed the work of redemption, He declared it is finished as well

John 19:30 Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

- On the cross, Jesus took the wrath of God upon Himself for our sake
- And once He had received God’s wrath for sin, He declared the wrath of God against the elect is finished
- So the wrath of God will be poured out against all sin
 - It will be poured out either upon those who will bear God’s wrath themselves
 - Or it was poured out upon Jesus Who took it in our place

John 3:36 “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

- Finally, a hailstorm to end all hailstorms pummels the earth
 - Then the hailstorm brings 100lb hail falling on the entire earth

- When we think of hail, we think of ice, which would be bad enough
- But when the Bible speaks of hailstones, it literally means stones falling from the sky
- God destroys the world with 100lb falling rocks, leaving nothing intact...resulting in the complete destruction of anything man-made
 - Since the judgment is clearly Heaven-sent, people on earth recognize this is another act of God
 - Who couldn't recognize this as God's work?
 - Nevertheless, they blaspheme His Name in response
- So what is God's purpose in these terrible disasters? In v.19, we're told all the cities of the nations fall
 - The Greek word for nations, *ethnos*, can also be translated Gentiles
 - All nations apart from Israel are, by definition, Gentile
 - Therefore, "all the cities of the nations" means all the cities of the Gentiles
- Therefore, the purpose of the seventh bowl judgment was to eliminate all Gentile cities anywhere on Earth
 - Only Jerusalem has been excluded from these judgments
 - And since Jerusalem stands on a mountain, we can presume that the mountain is still there as well
 - So the Lord has made abundantly clear which city He favors
 - Jerusalem alone remains intact and rises above all other cities, literally the highest point on all the earth
- But there is one Gentile city still remaining on earth, at least to a degree
 - In v.19 we're told a "great city" was split into three parts
 - At first glance, we assume that the term "great city" is a reference to Jerusalem
 - But when we follow our rules for interpreting symbols we find a different answer

- The term “great city” appears in only eight verses in all the Bible, all of them in Revelation
 - And in every instance, the term references the same place: Babylon
 - For example, if we jump forward to Chapter 18 we find one of those eight occurrences:

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Rev. 18:21 Then a strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, “So will Babylon, the great city, be thrown down with violence, and will not be found any longer.

- One of the eight references to “the great city” in Revelation occurred back in Chapter 11

Rev. 11:8 And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.

- We know that verse was describing Jerusalem
- But the term “great city” was being used in that verse also as a reference to Babylon
- Notice Jerusalem is described in a total of four ways in that verse
 - It’s called the great city, Sodom, Egypt, and the place Jesus was crucified
 - The last of those four descriptions clearly tells us the city in view is Jerusalem
- And therefore, the first three references are all euphemistic:
 - Jerusalem is *like* the great city, Babylon, and *like* Sodom and *like* Egypt
 - Each of these three places are known for great sin and rebellion against God, and so will be the state of Jerusalem in that day
- So the term “great city” is always a reference to Babylon, and this city will now become the focus of our story for two chapters
 - In v.19 we’re told that Babylon is now receiving the cup of wine of God’s wrath

- Bowls and cups are commonly used in Scripture as symbols
- They store up God’s wrath for a later time when it will be poured out upon the deserving objects of God’s anger
- This is now the fate of Babylon, but the concept of Babylon is complex, which is why it requires two chapters to deal with her destruction
 - The destruction of Babylon is one of two major themes of the Bible (the other major theme being redemption through Christ)
 - These two themes play against one another throughout all of Scripture
 - Babylon serves as the antagonist to Christ’s protagonist in that story
- But just as Jesus’ identity was revealed slowly in stages over the course of Scripture, so is Babylon slowly unveiled
 - The word Babylon in scripture carries multiple meanings
 - In fact, Babylon stands for five related concepts in the Bible

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- First, Babylon is the home of sin, because it is the location for the Garden of Eden in present-day Iraq

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[Gen. 2:10](#) Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four rivers.

[Gen. 2:11](#) The name of the first is Pishon; it flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold.

[Gen. 2:12](#) The gold of that land is good; the bdellium and the onyx stone are there.

[Gen. 2:13](#) The name of the second river is Gihon; it flows around the whole land of Cush.

[Gen. 2:14](#) The name of the third river is Tigris; it flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

- The Garden of Eden was the location of Satan’s original attack against God
 - After Satan’s fall in Heaven, he was removed from his position in the Heavenly tabernacle
 - Later, Satan’s jealousy over the creation of Man and Woman led Satan to attack Adam and bring mankind into sin

- At that point Satan gained dominion over the earth, having taken it from Adam when Adam obeyed him instead of God
 - So Babylon is Ground Zero for the start of sin on earth and the beginning of his battle with God over control of the earth
 - Forevermore, Babylon has been Satan’s home territory, his stronghold
 - Today, this region continues to be heavily guarded by Satan and his dark forces
 - Demonic activity seems to be especially strong in these areas today as well
 - So when you hear the word Babylon, you should think of the home of Satan and sin
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- Secondly, Babylon was the source of idolatry on earth
 - Genesis 11 records how men gathered in Babel under the leadership of a man called Nimrod
 - Nimrod was the antichrist of his day, and his story even serves as a picture of the Antichrist
 - Nimrod was an all-powerful world leader of everyone in that day
 - He calls for a new kind of worship, one that leads mankind into a project building a tower that will reach to heaven
 - While that goal may seem like folly, it was actually deadly serious, because the Babel tower was the start of idolatry among mankind
 - The tower was the first false religion
 - And like all religion, it attempted to replace obedience to God with a man-made way to reach Heaven
 - In that first case, their attempt to reach heaven was a literal one using a tower of mud bricks
 - But behind their foolish act were hearts that believed for the first time that it was possible to make your own way to God
 - The building of the tower in Babel was no coincidence...who do you think was behind this idea? Satan

- Satan used Nimrod to establish the thinking that men could define their own way to reach Heaven
- The Lord responded by scattering people, confusing language to ensure such a worldwide rebellion would be more difficult in the future
 - Since that time, languages have kept men separated and fighting one another rather than organizing against God
 - Until recent times, as Western culture and the internet have increasingly reunited the world under a common language
 - So as the world overcomes the barrier of language, a new worldwide rebellion against God becomes possible yet again
 - So when you hear the word Babylon, we need to think “the source of idolatry”

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- Thirdly, Babylon is the first Gentile kingdom to conquer the nation of Israel and the city of Jerusalem
 - Prior to Nebuchadnezzar, no Gentile nation had ever succeeded in overpowering God’s people
 - God permitted Babylon to conquer Israel as part of His plan to discipline His people for their sins
 - And in that way, Babylon becomes the first of the nations to control Israel during the Age of the Gentiles
 - And as we studied in Daniel, the man at the head of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, is also a picture of the antichrist
 - God permitted Babylon to conquer Israel, but He also promised to eventually punish Babylon for their cruelty against Israel

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Jer. 51:24 “But I will repay Babylon and all the inhabitants of Chaldea for all their evil that they have done in Zion before your eyes,” declares the LORD.

- And the times of the Gentiles will end in a similar manner
- A single Gentile ruler controlling the entire world and persecuting Israel, controlling both Jerusalem and Babylon
- This will be the Antichrist’s kingdom and like the first Babylon, this final Babylon will be used by God to discipline His people

- Yet as God promised, the discipline will not be to Israel's destruction
- So when we hear the word Babylon, we need to think "God's instrument to discipline Israel"

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- Fourthly, Babylon becomes the seat of power for the Antichrist during the time of Tribulation
 - Some interpreters argue over whether the Babylon referenced in Revelation refers to the historical city or the symbol of Satan
 - But Scripture makes clear the Babylon in Revelation is both the literal place and a Biblical symbol
 - We've already seen in Revelation 16 that the Antichrist resides in the geographical Babylon near the Euphrates river
 - When the Euphrates river dries up, it becomes the opportunity for the Antichrist to bring the world's armies to Israel
 - Also, the seventh bowl judgment declared that the great city, which is always Babylon, would be destroyed like the other Gentile cities
 - Again, a destruction of the city Babylon is singled out precisely because the city has become a center of power again
 - The Antichrist moves the world's seat of power to Babylon during Tribulation at the point when he is indwelt by Satan
 - And that makes sense, since we know Satan's home has always been in Mesopotamia
 - So naturally, he headquarters a world government in that city
 - So when we hear the word Babylon, we need to think "the seat of power in the last days"

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- Finally, because Babylon is the home of the Father of Lies and the seat of power for the Antichrist during Tribulation, the city stands for false religion in general

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- Babylon does not represent one specific false religion but all false religious systems Satan has ever invented
 - Because in reality, there are only two religious systems on earth
 - One is the way of God made available by His promises found in His word and through our faith in the work of Christ

- Everything else is Babylon
- The enemy's counterfeit religion which began in the Garden, took shape at Babel, and eventually gave birth to uncountable numbers of children
 - Today's smorgasbord of religious choices is a testimony of the enemy's proliferation of lies
- Creating many false religions plays to Satan's advantage in two ways
 - First, it camouflages the truth, leading to confusion and making it harder for someone to find the truth
 - And secondly, it perpetuates the myth that there are many roads to heaven, so that all religions seem equally valid
 - So when we hear the word Babylon, we need to think "all false religion"
- Putting all this together, we find that Babylon is both a literal, physical place of importance in the end times and a seat of spiritual power in Scripture
 - It is a physical location where sin began, and the spiritual home for Satan and rebellion
 - It was the starting point for idolatry, and the source of all hatred and oppression against God's people in the Age of Gentiles
 - Babylon represents all of Satan's false religions and the untold damage they have done over the millennia
 - So Babylon becomes representative of everything Satan is and all that he does to undermine the truth and oppose God
 - Just as other places like Sodom or Las Vegas convey certain meaning, so is the term Babylon loaded with meaning
 - And as Babylon is the poster child for Satan and evil, so Jerusalem symbolizes the opposite: it's the city of God and a place of redemption
 - Jerusalem is God's dwelling place, the capital of His people and the place of Christ's sacrifice
 - It will be the seat of Christ's government and the center of the world in the Kingdom
 - So as Babylon is for Satan, so Jerusalem is for Jesus

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- Therefore, Babylon and Jerusalem are always set opposed to one another in all Scripture, though that relationship is often hard to see
 - Generally, it's expressed simply in terms of cardinal directions rather than by specific titles
 - So Babylon is east of Jerusalem, and therefore the direction east represents evil
 - Similarly, Jerusalem is in the west, and so moving west is a picture of moving away from evil and toward the Lord
 - For example, after Adam was created, the Lord put him in a Garden in the east, representing Adam moving toward sin
 - Later, Cain is sent to the east after he murders Abel
 - Then Abraham was sent from Ur in the east to the Promised Land in the west, intimating his move from paganism to faith
 - Even Jesus moved from west of the Jordan to the east to meet Satan in His temptations in the wilderness
 - And this pattern happens time and time again, with characters moving east or west suggesting a spiritual change as well
 - And now in this climactic end to the Age of the Gentiles, the figurative has become the literal
 - Where before Babylon and Jerusalem pictured the dichotomy of evil vs. good, now they have become the literal battle ground
 - The only two cities left standing at the end of the age are Babylon and Jerusalem
 - The Lord has narrowed the focus of the world on to these two locations
 - And with the bowl judgments he brings Satan from the east to the west to attack Jerusalem for a final battle
- We know that the bowl judgments of Tribulation are the final wrath of God upon the earth
 - Therefore, these Tribulation judgments must bring an end to Babylon in all her forms
 - When all is said and done, Satan's influence must be ended

- The Antichrist and his base of power, the city of Babylon, must be destroyed
- But more than that, all false religion must come to an end as well as all rebellion and idolatry
- So in the seventh bowl judgment, Babylon, the great city, will fall
 - The physical city coming to an end including its political, economic and military power
 - Once and for all, the city that stands opposed to God and His people will be gone
- But Spiritual Babylon will also be destroyed
 - All false religions will end, all idolatry including the idol of wealth, anything that could compete with worship of the Christ
 - All things Babylon will be conquered in preparation for Christ's return
- We see Babylon destroyed in two parts: first in Chapter 17 we see God judging Spiritual Babylon
 - The Lord brings an end to all false religion and its control over the unbelieving world
 - Interestingly, the Lord uses the father of false religion, Satan Himself, to complete that destruction
- Secondly, with Spiritual Babylon defeated, Chapter 18 describes the judgment of the physical city of Babylon
 - The Antichrist makes the city a seat of military and financial power in the last days of Tribulation
 - So the Lord brings the city to ruin, robbing it of its wealth, power and prestige
- We now see the judgment against Spiritual Babylon
 - In Chapter 17 we get a puzzle to solve, but the answers to the puzzle all appear in the chapter more or less

Rev. 17:1 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters,

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[Rev. 17:2](#) 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.”

[Rev. 17:3](#) 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.

[Rev. 17:4](#) 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,

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[Rev. 17:5](#) and on her forehead a name was written, a mystery, “BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”

[Rev. 17:6](#) And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. When I saw her, I wondered greatly.

[Rev. 17:7](#) And the angel said to me, “Why do you wonder? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns.

[Rev. 17:8](#) “The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come.

- The angel tells John he will give him greater insight into the seventh bowl
 - And he introduces the scene in vs.1-2 by describing a certain woman whom he calls a harlot who sits on many waters
 - In v.5 we learn that the harlot is a symbol for the great city, Babylon, and its rule over the kings of the earth
 - Women are commonly used to symbolize religious systems in Scripture
 - Israel is called the wife of Jehovah, and the Church is called the Bride of Christ
 - And harlot is used here to picture Spiritual Babylon because a harlot is a perfect representation of false religion
 - A harlot or prostitute is an illegitimate, counterfeit wife, who gives the illusion of a marriage without the substance or reality
 - So in that sense a harlot is a fitting picture of idolatry, a false religious relationship rather than covenant with the true God

- But more than merely picturing idolatry, John is told that this woman, the great city Babylon, is the Mother of all harlots
- Babylon is not merely one of many harlots or false religions, she is the source, the beginning of counterfeits
 - Here's confirmation of what we observe in the rest of the Bible
 - The source of false religion is Satan, personalized by His home city of Babylon
 - Notice the harlot sits on many waters, and the meaning of the waters is explained later in v.15
 - These "waters" represent the multitude of nations and peoples of the world...all of humanity in other words
 - So if the woman sits on waters, then it suggests she is over them or dominating them
 - The world is under the deception of false religion, which finds its source in Babylon, the home of Satan
 - The angels says that world leaders "fornicate" with her and the peoples became drunk in immorality
 - The enemy entices people to engage in false religion for a variety of fleshly reasons
 - Throughout time, world leaders have used religion to build a base of power, to enrich themselves to control their subjects
 - They fornicate with the harlot in the sense that they use her for their own pleasure and become partners with her
 - They become drunk by her immorality in the sense that they lose their senses as they come under Satan's influence
 - False religion is both a sedative and a stimulant
 - It stimulates the lust of the flesh for greater power, various lustful desires or other greed
 - And false religion sedates the mind, lulling a person into a spiritual stupor and inoculating them from the truth

[2Cor. 4:4](#) in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

- Then in v.3 John is taken to see this harlot in a new and more mysterious form
 - In the desert wilderness, John sees a woman riding a red beast, full of blasphemous names and having seven heads and ten horns
 - This beast is the same as the first beast John saw back in Revelation 13

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[Rev. 13:1](#) And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names.

- We said then the beast is the Antichrist, and in v.8 we see confirmation that this is the Antichrist
- He is the one who was, is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and to destruction referring to his death and resurrection
- And he is also the one the world will see and marvel over
- And the beast is being ridden by the harlot, clothed in scarlet and purple and adorned richly
 - We know the woman is Spiritual Babylon, the mother of all false religion and idolatry
 - She has existed long before the Antichrist, and in fact we just saw her sitting on many waters, which are the kings of the earth
- So Satan has been using false religion to control and manipulate world leaders throughout the ages
 - But now Babylon the harlot rides only the beast, the Antichrist who rules the world
 - As Satan indwells this man, Spiritual Babylon, the mother of idolatry, and the beast have become united as one
- Which means that at the end of the Tribulation, all world religion is vested in a single man, the Antichrist

- No longer will there be many false religions, because now there will be only the worst, the beast
- In that sense, the harlot is now riding the beast, since he is her owner
- And the woman is clothed like royalty and adorned with riches because Satan requires the world to worship him by making sacrifices to his false religion
 - Remember what Daniel told us about this same person during this time

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Dan. 11:36 “Then the king will do as he pleases, and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods; and he will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed will be done.

Dan. 11:37 “He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the desire of women, nor will he show regard for any other god; for he will magnify himself above them all.

Dan. 11:38 “But instead he will honor a god of fortresses, a god whom his fathers did not know; he will honor him with gold, silver, costly stones and treasures.

- The Antichrist honors Satan by calling the world to sacrifice greatly for the cause of the new world religion
- The world lavishes the one false religion with great wealth, which honors Satan
- And yet her judgment is assured because the effect of Spiritual Babylon has been to promote immorality and abominations and to kill the saints
 - In v.4 we’re told she holds a cup of abominations and immorality and it’s as if she indulges in these things like drink
 - She takes pleasure in them as if she is addicted to them
- And in v.6 John hears that she is drunk on the blood of the saints, which pictures the martyrdom of the Tribulation but also of earlier times
 - In effect this scene tells the story of religion in all times
 - False religion is Satan’s tool to enslave the world, bringing it into all manner of sin, and using it to persecute the saints
 - And of course the worst examples are so-called Christian false religions that Satan uses to discredit Jesus and the true Church

- So this is Spiritual Babylon, the system of lies and corruption Satan promulgates throughout the history of the world to counter the true God
 - In the final days of the age, all his schemes are vested in a single man, the Antichrist
 - Now John is given an answer to the meaning of the horns and heads of the beast
 - And the answer will explain how this beast relates to the fourth beast of Daniel 7
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- First, remember that we learned already in Chapters 12 and 13 that the dragon was Satan and the beast was the Antichrist
 - The dragon had ten horns and ten heads with crowns
 - This indicated Satan was in control of the entire world, all its kingdoms and all its rulers
 - But the beast had ten horns with ten crowns, but only seven heads with blasphemous names
 - And one of those seven heads was killed and then resurrected
 - Now we get the rest of the story

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[Rev. 17:9](#) “Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits,

[Rev. 17:10](#) 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.

[Rev. 17:11](#) “The beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth and is one of the seven, and he goes to destruction.

[Rev. 17:12](#) “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.

[Rev. 17:13](#) “These have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast.

[Rev. 17:14](#) “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.”

- To have wisdom is the Bible’s way of saying you must know history and the rest of the Bible, specifically the Old Testament

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- First, the heads are mountains, which is itself a symbol of world rulers
 - And in v.10 we get confirmation that these mountains are kings because the text goes on to say they are seven kings
 - So why did the text go from heads to mountains to kings?
- The angel is distinguishing these seven kings from the seven leaders who rule under the Antichrist
 - When the Bible uses mountains to stand for kings, it means kings of the highest authority...no one is higher
 - That means these seven kings cannot be the seven kings under the Antichrist, because they are not the highest authority

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- Furthermore, the harlot will sit on these seven kings
 - Remember, we learned earlier that the woman sits on the king of the earth
 - But once the Antichrist rises to power, she sits only on the beast
 - So if the harlot sits on these kings, they must have ruled before the Antichrist ever came to power
- Then in v.10, we're told five of these seven have fallen by John's day, one is in power in that day, and one has not yet come
 - Clearly we're talking of these kings appearing in a sequence over time
 - They don't all rule at the same time, which is another indication that these seven kings are not the ones who rule at the end
 - The ten kings of Daniel 7 who rule in the Tribulation are all in power at the same time
- Later in v.16, we're told that the ten horns, not the seven heads, represent the kings of Tribulation
 - These horns give their power to the beast, but in John's day they had not yet come to power
 - It would be 2,000 years or more before they come to power, but when they do they will rule for a short time (an hour)

- So these seven heads on the beast are different kings than those who rule under the Antichrist in Tribulation
 - Next notice in v.10 the beast himself is also one of the seven heads, which means he is a successor to these other kings
 - And when he comes to power he remains only a little while, referring to his 3.5 year reign in the second half of Tribulation
 - So that tells us these are kings that rule one after another, not all at the same time
 - Next, in v.11 we're told that the beast is not only a seventh but also an eighth
 - In v.11 John says he was and is not, which we know is a reference to the Antichrist's death and resurrection
 - So the Antichrist is also an eighth in the sense that he dies and then comes back to life
 - He was the seventh until he dies, and then when he resurrects, he is in charge again, as if he becomes an "eighth" king
 - To understand the meaning of the heads of this beast, we need to go back to Chapter 13 to take note of one important detail

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Rev. 13:2 And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority.

- The beast of Revelation 13, which is the same beast we see here in Chapter 17, incorporated aspects of all four of Daniel's beasts
- It had parts of the lion, bear, leopard and the fourth beast with his ten horns
- So this beast represents the entire age of the gentiles, culminating with the Antichrist's rule of the world
 - The heads of the beast, therefore, must be supreme world leaders who ruled in this age
 - So we must look across all four of the kingdoms in Daniel's Age of the Gentiles to find the identity of the kings

- We know that during the 2,600+ years of the Age of the Gentiles, there have been many more rulers than seven
 - So how do we know which ones are represented by these seven heads?
- Well, we get answers from the additional clues in the text
- John is told five of the seven kings have fallen, one is, and one will come for a short while
 - So as John received this revelation in 95 AD, five of the kings associated with the Age had come and gone already
 - Before we start guessing, we need to remember the criteria for any nation or ruler to be considered part of the Daniel's beasts
 - They must conquer both Babylon and Jerusalem
 - Now we begin to see a connection between this chapter and Daniel... it's always been about Babylon vs. Jerusalem!
 - Even in the way the Lord put together this age of discipline for Israel, He emphasizes the point of good vs. evil
 - The nations that rule over Israel will also possess Babylon
 - So that ultimately we can say Israel has remained under Babylon's authority until Christ's return
 - So what supreme kings ruled over Jerusalem and Babylon and had died by the time John wrote Revelation?
 - History records only five, beginning with Nebuchadnezzar's dynasty in Babylon
 - Followed by Cyrus' dynasty in Persia and Alexander's short rule
 - Upon Alexander's death, Greece dissolved into four parts, just as the four wings of the leopard represented
 - Initially, the Seleucid Empire retained control of Babylon while the Ptolemaic Kingdom controlled Jerusalem
 - Then in 246 BC Ptolemy III attacked the Seleucid Empire and temporarily achieved control over both Babylon and Jerusalem

- Later in 170 BC Antiochus Epiphanies IV of the Seleucid Empire attacked the Ptolemaic Kingdom and gained control of both
 - So by John's day five kings and kingdoms had ruled Babylon and Jerusalem during the Age of the Gentiles
 - In that way, each of these kings pictured the antichrist in the simple sense that they did what the antichrist would one day do
 - In John's day one was still in authority in the same way
 - General Titus conquered Jerusalem in AD 70 and ruled over Babylon when he ascended to emperor of Rome
 - Following Titus, the Roman Empire and its remnants continued to exert control over both cities off and on until 1923
 - The next head to conquer both will be the Antichrist during Tribulation
 - The Antichrist will be the last world leader to gain control over both places
 - He comes for a little while, meaning 3½ years, doing what his predecessors did, but doing it even more violently
- 17-**
- So the seven heads are those kings who lead Satan's kingdom, Spiritual Babylon, serving God's purpose of Gentile domination over Israel
 - And as the harlot rides these kings throughout the history of the Age of the Gentiles, she eventually settles on the Antichrist
 - These kings were her benefactor and the harlot was an enabler for them to gain control
 - Together, Satan ruled the world by deception and lies and greed and lust
 - Then in Tribulation, that relationship becomes even closer as she rides one world leader
 - Finally, the ten horns, the ten kings who lead the world at the start of Tribulation, exist only for that purpose and they give their authority to the beast
 - The only purpose these kings serve is to support God's program to bring the Antichrist to power

- Ultimately, they and their kingdoms are brought to an end with Christ's coming
- Finally, now that we understand Spiritual Babylon, let's see how the judgment comes to her

17-

Rev. 17:15 And he said to me, "The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.

Rev. 17:16 "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.

Rev. 17:17 "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 will be fulfilled.

Rev. 17:18 "The woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth."

- During the Age of Gentiles, God put Satan's counterfeit religious system to work for God's own purposes in discipling Israel
 - But now God sends the seventh bowl judgment to bring an end to this corrupt, counterfeit system
 - In v.16-17 we're told that the Antichrist and the world rulers under him come to hate the harlot
 - At mid-Tribulation when Satan indwells the Antichrist, he directs that all worship be given to him
 - He puts an end to any form of worship and religious practice
 - So all religious institutions, temples, churches, mosques, and other places of worship are destroyed
 - These physical structures and the relics within are burned with fire we're told in v.16
 - These things constitute the "flesh" of the harlot
 - And all religious institutions are stripped of their wealth, so she is made desolate and naked
 - The angel says in v.17 that these kings are working to fulfill God's purposes though they think it's their own idea

17-

- So after the seventh bowl is poured out, the only false religious worship remaining on earth will be worship of Satan
- Which has always been the goal of Spiritual Babylon anyway
- So now that Spiritual Babylon is no more, all that remains of idolatry and false religion is Satan and the Antichrist and the False Prophet
 - And in v.14 we're told that Jesus will take care of them Himself upon His return
 - So the Lord used the seventh judgment to greatly simplify the problem of cleansing the world of false religion
 - He allowed Satan to do it for Him, so that at His second coming He need only destroy one man to end all idolatry