

I Saw a Woman Holding a Golden Cup, Filled with the Filth of Her Adulteries

17: 1-6a, 15 and 18

DIG: Who is the central figure in this scene? In what sense is she influential? Evil? Attractive? Repulsive? What is the ultimate sin here? What is the significance of the prostitute's clothing and the gold cup in her hand? Where is MYSTERY BABYLON geographically located?

REFLECT: Do you see anything like a one world religion, or religious Babylon in our society today? Where? How? When? How can you stay out of her clutches?

Rebellion began in the garden of Eden (**Genesis 3**). But it flourished, giving birth to man-made religion, in **Babylon** after the Flood (**Genesis 6-7**). Here, in this section, **John** gives us a heavenly perspective on the matter. Instead of obeying **God's** command to **be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth** (**Genesis 9:1 and 7**), the descendants of Noah moved east to the plane of Shinar - the location of ancient **Babylon**. There **they** defied **ADONAI's** mandate to **fill the earth**, preferring to band together and build a tower that would symbolize **their** man-made greatness (**Genesis 11:1-9**). Nimrod led the rebellion where **they** said to each other, "Come, let us build for ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth" (**Genesis 11:4**). So, instead of filling the earth as the **LORD** had commanded, **they** decided to make a name for **themselves**.

The plane of Shinar, where **Babel** was built, ultimately became the center for one of the world's earliest empires - **Babylon**. The religious arrogance of **the Babylonians** is well known. **They** took great pride in **their** city, calling it the heavenly city, *babili*, or *the gate of God*. It should not surprise us, therefore, that **Babylon** became a symbol of the godless, humanistic rebellion in this world. Looking back, we can see the foundations of man-made, counterfeit religion: **faithlessness**, or the rejection of **ADONAI's** promises; **disobedience**, or rebellion against **God's** commands; and **legalism**, or the rejection of **the LORD's** grace.

This is **the fifth of five events** that will occur throughout the first half of the Great Tribulation. Just as there are two political systems during the Great Tribulation, one during the first half (the ten kings), and one during the second half (the antichrist), there will be two religious systems, one for each half of the Great Tribulation. This section describes the religious system of the first half, the rule of religious **Babylon**.²⁷⁹

In the first two verses, **John** is invited to witness the judgment of **the great prostitute**. **One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me: Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters, who are actually the Gentile nations of many peoples, multitudes, nations and languages (17:1 and 15).** When **John** sees her, she will have contaminated all **the nations** of the world. To **prostitute** something means *to take something that is appropriate and turn it into something inappropriate*. A **prostitute** takes sex, which is appropriate within the context of marriage, and turns it into something inappropriate.

With her **the kings of the earth committed adultery and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries (17:2)**. This union results in corruption of both the religious sphere and the political sphere. Here, **the great prostitute** symbolizes religion, which has an appropriate use (**James 1:26-27**), and turns it into something inappropriate. Rather than serving, it rules. False religion causes spiritual **adultery**. The word **adultery** has two meanings. It is used of physical unfaithfulness and also spiritual unfaithfulness (**Hosea 1-2; Jeremiah 2:20, 3:1-9; Ezekiel 16:15-41 and 23:5-44**). It is with this **great prostitute** that **the kings of the earth will commit adultery**, showing that there will be a unity between religion and government. Mankind has a **God-shaped void** in our heart to worship something, and during the *Great Tribulation* the world will fill it with a false religious system led by the false prophet.

Then the angel carried **John** away in his spirit, or in a vision, into a desert. There he saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, which represents the Fourth Gentile Kingdom (see **Ar - Finally, There will be a Fourth Beast, That Breaks and Smashes Everything**). She was covered with blasphemous names, showing she was in opposition to **God** and had **seven heads and ten horns** describing the governmental system of the first half of the Tribulation (**17:3**). The **ten horns** represent **ten nations** that will support a one-world government.

This brazen **woman** must not be confused with the radiant **woman** of **12:1**. The two are enemies. Satan, or the dragon (**12:3**) empowers the antichrist, or **the beast**, so **the beast** supports **the prostitute**. **The woman** in turn makes **the beast** appear outwardly beautiful, thus making it easier for **him** to gain the control **he** seeks over mankind. This means that the false religious system will have the support of civil governments during the first half of the *Great Tribulation* (see **An - The Times of the Gentiles**).

Some people take a very anti-Catholic stance on **Revelation**, claiming that the Pope is, or will be, the antichrist. But I do not. The one world government will have many Catholics in it, but it will also have a lot of Protestants, Hindus, Buddhists, Baptists, Muslims, Mormons and other religions also. The saved, regardless of their religion or denomination, will be Raptured, and the lost, regardless of their religious beliefs, will be left behind to endure or die in the *Great Tribulation*.²⁸⁰

Then the description of the **woman** is given. **She** is seen as very wealthy and influential. **The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She will be fabulously wealthy, and the emphasis will be on the outside rather than on the inside.** It reminds us of what **Yeshua** said to the false religious leaders of His day: **Woe to you, teachers of the Torah and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead man's bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness (Matthew 23:27).** **She** will also be guilty of spiritual adultery. **She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of the adulteries (17:4).** This is a quote from **Jeremiah 51:7**, but don't be deceived by the **golden cup in her hand.** Materialism and selfism will replace **God.** Mankind will be left in the mindless pursuit of material prosperity as the basis for meaning and value in life. This cup becomes the cup of **ADONAI's** raging fury (**14:10, 16:19, 18:6**).

This title was written on her forehead: **MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH**, and is capitalized for emphasis (**17:5**). **She** is described as **the mother of prostitutes** because **Babylon** is where idolatry and spiritual prostitution began. In order to have fellowship with them, **she** drinks the wisdom of many religions of the world. Whether it is Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Jehovah's Witnesses, or Mormonism, **the great prostitute** will welcome them all. The Hindu's will merely make **Jesus Christ** one more of their thousand gods and it will not matter that for Buddhists only good works and nihilism count in Nirvana. Syncretism will rule the day. **They** will believe Satan's lie that **God** is the center of the spiritual wheel and all the spokes lead to **Him.** **They** will ask each other, "What difference does it make? **We** can still have fellowship with one another, can't **we**?"²⁸¹

Her name is **MYSTERY BABYLON.** A **mystery** in the Bible is *not* something that cannot be solved. No, a **mystery** in the Bible means something that was once hidden, but now is being revealed (**Colossians 1:16**). The **mystery** is not **Babylon** itself, nor is the **mystery** the fact that **Babylon** was the originator and center of idolatry; this is already known from the TaNaKh. The **mystery** is the fact that **Babylon** will develop into a one world unified religion, and will rule the world during the first half of the Great Tribulation. It will be headquartered in **Babylon, the great city that will rule over the kings of the earth (17:18);** it will be supported by the governments of that day; and it will be the primary persecutor of believers who will not submit to its religious authority. All this was previously hidden in the TaNaKh, only to be revealed in the end times.²⁸²

I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the holy ones, the blood of those who bore testimony to Yeshua (17:6a). This answers the question as to who murdered the Tribulation martyrs that were seen under the **golden** altar in heaven (6:9-11). It will be the false super-church. Millions of Gentiles will be saved as a result of the ministry of the 144,000 Jews, but they will suffer martyrdom at the hands of the one world religion. What we see here is the final form of religious apostasy, ending with the formation of a one-world super church. It is the final form of the woman Jezebel who was thrown into the Great Tribulation (2:20-22), and united with the apostate church from Laodicea (3:14-22). This will be the counterfeit bride of **Messiah**, presented as a **prostitute**, whereas the true Bride of **Christ** is presented as a pure virgin (2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:25-27; and Rev 19:6-8).²⁸³

Mystery Babylon the Prostitute represents the one-world religious system that rules over the religious affairs during the first half of the Great Tribulation. **She** rules over the Gentile nations, the **many waters**, in total control of all religious affairs, with the reluctant support of the governments. **The woman you saw will be the great city that rules over the kings of the earth (17:18)**. Therefore, the headquarters of **Mystery Babylon** will be **the rebuilt city of Babylon**. There are several scriptures in the TaNaKh that prophesy about the total destruction of **Babylon**; however, it never suffered the kind of destruction the prophets demanded until the Great Tribulation (see my commentary on **Isaiah Dk - Babylon, the Jewel of Kingdoms will be Overthrown**).

There will be **five events** that occur throughout the first half of the Great Tribulation. First, is the governmental system of the ten kings (**Bs**), second is the ministry of Elijah the prophet (**Bw**), third is the ministry of the 144,000 (**Cr**), fourth is the ministry of the two witnesses (**Dc**), and fifth is the rule of the one world religion (**Dd**).