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The World's Wisdom vs the Good News 1:18 to 2:5

At every turn, the background of the **Corinthian** believers worked against them. One of the greatest threats of all was the continuing influence from pagan mystery religions that they had formerly practiced. For over a thousand years these religions had dominated that part of the world.



The mystery religions have taken many forms, going back thousands of years. Many of the teachings and superstitions they embrace are very widespread. Clearly, all of them are linked together by common teachings. Much evidence indicates that they all are traceable back to a single origin . . . **Babylon**.³⁹ Every false system of worship has its roots in the mystery religions of **Babylon** because all false religions started at **the Tower of Babel**. It represented the first sophisticated, organized counterfeit religion (see the commentary on **Genesis**, to see link click [DI](#) - **The Tower of Babel**). **Nimrod**, grandson of Ham, and great-grandson of Noah, was the patriarchal apostate who organized and directed the building of **the tower** (see the commentary on **Genesis Dm** - **Let Us Build a City and Make a Name for Ourselves**). Part of the whole scheme was the establishment of a false system of religion, a counterfeit to the true worship of **ADONAI**.

Every false system of religion since that time has philosophical and doctrinal ties to that original apostasy at **the Tower of Babel**. Why? Because when **YHVH** judged the people who built it, **He** scattered them all over the earth (see the commentary on **Genesis Dn** - **Let Us Go Down and Confuse Their Language**). They took

with them the seeds of false wisdom that had begun in **Babel**. The Babylonian heresy is alive even today, and according to **Revelation 17:5**, it will dominate the Great Tribulation (see the commentary on **Revelation Dd - I Saw a Woman Holding a Golden Cup Filled with the Filth of Her Adultries**). There the apostle **John** describes a blasphemous **woman clothed in purple and scarlet** as **Babylon, the mother of harlots**, the one with whom **kings of the earth committed fornication**, the one who will be **full of the names of blasphemy**.

Obviously, in a sophisticated trade center like **Corinth**, they knew about, and practiced, every variety of mystery religion. Like false religions today, these sects had sophisticated rites and rituals that included baptismal regeneration, sacrifices for sin, feasting, and fasts. Those who practiced mystery religions mutilated and beat themselves. They believed in pilgrimages, public confession, offerings, religious washings, and doing penance to pay for sins.



But perhaps nothing was more characteristic of the mystery religions than what they called ecstasy. Those who practiced mystery religions sought to cultivate a magical, sensuous communion with the divine. They would do almost anything to get themselves into a semiconscious, hallucinatory, hypnotic, or orgasmic spell in which they believed they were sensually in contact with the deity. Some used wine to assist in the euphoric experience, as **Paul** implied in **Ephesians 5:28**, **“Don’t get drunk with wine, because it makes you lose control. Instead, keep on being filled with the Spirit.”** Whether from literal intoxication, or emotional exhilaration, when worshipers fell into a state of ecstasy, it was as if they had been drugged. They assumed they were in union with **God!**

In other words, the worshiper would get into a state where his mind would go into neutral and his emotions would take over. The intellect and conscience would give



way to passion, sentiment, and emotion. This was ecstasy, an intoxicating condition of euphoria. As the mystery worshiper experienced such ecstasy, he was lifted above the level of his ordinary experience and into an abnormal sense of consciousness. He experienced an exhilarating condition in which he believed his body ceased being a hindrance to his soul. This would allow him to commune with the spirit world. In that state, a person supposedly had the ability to see and understand things that only the eyes of the spirit could understand.⁴⁰ Thus, there is little doubt that various practices, rituals, attitudes, and other hangovers from the mystery religions had infiltrated the **Corinthian** church and were competing with the clear, sober message of the Good News concerning **Yeshua Messiah**.