

The Revelation Chronologically Arranged

The Most Perplexing Problem — Which Babylon? — Chapters 16–18

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The Most Perplexing Problem of the Book

At this point it is our sincere desire to help our beloved brethren on the most difficult problem in the book of Revelation, and that is the term "Babylon" in verse 19. To do so we must give God's Word its supreme place above the teachings of the best of men. The best are never wiser than Scripture. May the Lord grant each of our souls to ever welcome faithful correction by the right use of His Word and to look to Him for help, guidance and understanding. It is good to ever remember that the understanding of "no prophecy of Scripture is had from its own" isolated statement, but must comport with all else of God's Word.

Which Babylon Then Is Referred to in Revelation 16:19?

The traditional view found in virtually all of our finest expositions of the book of Revelation takes it for granted that "Babylon" in Rev. 16:19 refers to religious "Babylon" of chapter 17, as it seems inconceivable that the Holy Spirit would use the same identical term to apply to two entirely different objects. Therefore they see no difficulty to face or to solve. Nor is it easy for any who have long held this view, and who rightly fear being mislead, to listen to anything else. Others, however, have found that this view which delays religious Babylon's destruction until the end of the week, definitely conflicts with some of the clearest truths of this book.

All agree that Satan is to be cast out onto the earth in the middle of the week (chap. 12). All agree that Judaism will be set aside when the covenant is broken, sacrifices discontinued and the image is set up in the middle of the week (Dan. 9:27; 12:11). It is likewise certain that the beast will have universal dominion over all during the last half of the week (ch. 13:5,7), the harlot no longer existing. This makes it evident that the

harlot's dominion over the beast with its uncrowned horns is during the first half of the week (17:15).

All our best expositions on the Revelation agree that the beast of ten horns will throw off its rider and destroy her (17:16, ending this great religious system and its profession of Christianity.) This must be to make way for the universal worship of the beast (13:7b supplanting 17:15,) during the last "forty-two months" (13:5).

Testimony of Brethren Writers

C.S. says, "False Christendom will be destroyed to make way for the still worse thing, the worship of the beast."

E.D. says, "With the advent of the antichrist, the 'beast' is elevated into the supreme object of worship and the 'woman' ...will no longer be tolerated."

H.H.S. says, "This confederacy will ...eat her up, to advance the kingdom of the beast."

W.K. says, "The overthrow of the ecclesiastical power is necessary to leave a field unimpeded for the imperial power to develop itself in its final form of apostasy, blasphemy and rebellion against the Lord."

T.B.B. says, "The fall of Babylon ...is first announced and then the awful doom of those who ...worship the beast and his image ...to continue forty-two months ...also a new religion has sprung up, the worship of a man and all trace of Christianity must be obliterated." (pp. 199 and 228)

E.J.T. says, "The woman who rides the beast must be destroyed before the beast's supremacy can be asserted. The great tribulation will then follow for all who will not worship the beast."

J.H. McNairn says, "The beast casts off the woman ...before the ...forty and two months." (p.193)

The Key Evidences

- In Rev. 17:3,7,12,16 the 'ten horns' are not yet crowned, but in 13:1 the ten horns are 'crowned.'
- In 17:15 the woman has complete control, but in 13:7,8 the beast has taken over complete control.
- In chapter 17 there is not yet the worship of the beast nor yet his image made.
- In chapter 13 there is no woman riding the beast as there had been in 17:7,18, for the beast destroyed her in verse 16.
- In 16:20 'no mountains were found' (kingdoms), such as existed in 17:16, to destroy the woman.
- In keeping with all this, heaven's three rejoicings, as stated before, occur in the middle of the week, (12:12; 18:20; 19:7.)
- The beast martyrs the saints during the last three and a half years (13:7,15), whereas the woman martyrs the saints during the first three and a half years (17:6; 18:24; 20:4 N.T.)

J.N.D.'s Later Settled View (1868)

Twenty-nine years after his early attempts, J.N.D. owned his previous mistakes: "I have supposed that there were two destructions of Babylon in the Revelation. But the examination of the question ...has convinced me that it cannot be sustained. ...The destruction of Babylon is her destruction. She is utterly burned, chapter 17:16 and chapter 18:8. The judgment is identical" (Coll. Writ., Vol. 8, p.410). To this we say Amen.

The Scofield Bible's Summary

"Two 'Babylons' are to be distinguished in the Revelation: ecclesiastical Babylon, which is apostate Christendom, headed up under the Papacy; and political Babylon, which is the beast's confederated empire, the last form of Gentile world-dominion. Ecclesiastical Babylon is 'the great whore' and is destroyed by political Babylon (Rev.

17:15-18), that the beast may be the alone object of worship (Rev. 13:15). The power of political Babylon is destroyed by the return of the Lord in glory." We fully Amen this true statement.