

Revelation 17 & 18 • Chapter Study

INTRO

I like the way Levi Lusko intros his study into this section of Rev..

Imagine a teenager whose parents are about to go away for a week's vacation and they leave him alone at home.

They've gone over all the rules with him; ...

No more than 2 friends over at a time.

No food in the living room.

Curfew at 11 PM.

Absolutely no girls!

You know The basics.

He nods and seems to go along with it all; but really he's just eager for them to leave so he can do whatever he wants.

Once they drive away, he calls all his friends to come over and party.

It's chaos! His rebel comes out!

He thinks he's his own master & can do whatever he wants; **& DOES!**

For 6 days: Then it all comes to a screeching halt when his parents decide to come home a day early & find a wild party going on.

He's busted!

Okay: So that's the Tribulation.

It's not a week of **days**, it's a week of **years** that God lets the devil off the leash.

He makes himself into what he's always wanted to be; the god of this world.

He goes for complete control of the Earth through the career of a guy Rev. calls the beast, & we call the **antichrist**.

John is given visions of his rise and fall in the form of 7 seals, 7 trumpets & finally 7 bowls.

Chs. 17 & 18 are a kind of **parenthesis** as he's given a vision of the **demise** of the Antichrist's system.

This end times ultimate rebel system that unites the **political, economic, military** & even religions realms of the world under the Antichrist is called in these 2 chs, **Babylon**.

Students of the Bible have long wondered **why** God refers to it as **Babylon**.

Even in the 1st C when John wrote this, Babylon was an ancient ruin; a forsaken pile of rubble.

So why call the last days Realm of Rebel Man by this ancient name?

Remember: The key for understanding Rev. is the OT.

Throughout the OT, Babylon was the grand-daddy of Man's rebellion against God.

Babylon was the first great Human city after the Flood.

It's where they built a tower in **defiance** of God & God scattered them by confusing their languages.

In the end times, Humanity will re-unite & try again to define themselves **apart** from God.

So God uses the label **Babylon** to define Man's last great rebellion.

The seeds sown at the first Babylon will bear their final fruit under the reign of the Antichrist.

Here in Chs. 17 & 18 it all goes down!

In ch. 17 John sees the ruin of **Religious** Babylon.

Then in ch. 18 he's shown the demolition of **Economic & Political** Babylon.

CH 17

As we get into this now, we can go about it 1 of 2 ways.

One way is to read just a phrase then explain it, then go on to the next.

The other way is to read a larger section & look for the larger picture.

We're going to follow that second method tonight for reasons that will become clear as we do.

¹Then 1 of the 7 angels who had the 7 bowls came and talked w/me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, ² with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication." ³ So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having 7 heads and 10 horns. ⁴ The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. ⁵

And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. ⁶ I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement. ⁷ But the angel said to me, “Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the 7 heads and the 10 horns.

THAT’S why it best to read the whole thing.

The angel who charged with showing John these things explains them. // We read on ...

⁸ The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. ⁹ “Here *is* the mind which has wisdom: The 7 heads are 7 mountains on which the woman sits. ¹⁰ There are also 7 kings. 5 have fallen, 1 is, *and* the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time. ¹¹ The beast that was, and is not, is himself also the 8th, and is of the 7, and is going to perdition. ¹² “The 10 horns which you saw are 10 kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for 1 hour as kings with the beast. ¹³ These are of 1 mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. ¹⁴ These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those *who are* with Him *are* called, chosen, and faithful.” ¹⁵ Then he said to me, “The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. ¹⁶ And the 10 horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. ¹⁷ For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of 1 mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled. ¹⁸ And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.”
1 of the angels who’d poured out the last of the judgments invites John to behold a vision of the judgment of a “**great harlot**.”

That word “harlot” refers to a woman who sells herself for personal gain.

She lets others use her, but in reality she’s using them.

This harlot **sits on many waters**, which v15 describes as “peoples, multitudes, nations, & tongues.”

She holds sway over many people & nations.

V2 says the rulers of the world have been in cahoots with her.

She propped them up & they’ve lent her power & credibility.

Her evil influence has corrupted the entire world.

The angel describes that influence as **spiritual intoxication**.

If you’ve ever tried witnessing to a drunk, you know how difficult it is.

Reasoning with them is impossible because they don’t think straight.

The same is true with the **spiritual intoxication** of **religious error**.

Being religious doesn’t equal being saved.

There are lots of religious people going to hell.

Jesus saves, not religion.

And it’s really hard sharing the Gospel with a lost but religious person.

It’s the unchurched & **non**-religious we often have the easier time w/because they make no claim to faith.

But those whose righteousness is based on their devotion to some cult or group usually resist the Gospel.

Even Jesus had the hardest time w/the super-religious guys.

It was they who gave Him the most grief.

As we read John’s description of this harlot it becomes clear she represents a Last Days Apostate Church.

It’s in cahoots with the World; totally buddied up to the political structure of the day, just as the Church **has been** at different points throughout history.

She’s dressed in purple & red, the traditional colors of popes & cardinals.

She wears golden jewelry, like that found on their vestments.

She rides a red 7 headed, 10 horned beast – which ought to sound familiar.

In Chs12&13 that beast represented the satanically-empowered antichrist & his system
In the harlot's hand is a royal cup filled with foulness, and on her head is written her name.
It was the practice in parts of the ancient world for prostitutes to wear a tiara or circlet w/their names written on them.
That way they were easily identified & new customers could find them more easily.
In v6, John says his vision of this harlot **stunned** him; it causes him to marvel.
Not in a good kind of wonderment.
This was a shocked disbelief something so wrong could be allowed.
In v7, the angel snaps him out of his amazed disgust by asking Why.
John **ought** to have understood what he was seeing.
THAT gives us a key to the spiritual lesson behind this vision.
There's something here you & I are to understand & apply.

Look again at v7 ...

⁷ But the angel said to me, "Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman ...

In v5, her name is ...

MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

The word "**mystery**" in v5 isn't part of her name.

It's **descriptive**; an identifier of the name itself.

In other words, this is not a **literal** Babylon; this is a **spiritual entity**.

It's the "**mother**," that is, *the source* of "**harlots**" meaning **spiritual adultery**.

She's the source of "**abominations**" meaning **idolatry, false religion**.

In order to understand who this red beast riding, great harlot is, we need to do a brief review of history.

Babylon is 1 of the most prominent themes in the Bible.

It begins in Gen. 10 where the city of Babel is **first** mentioned.

It's repeated 287 times right thru Scriptures & climaxing here in Revelation.

In Gen. 10&11, we learn Nimrod, whose name means "Let us rebel" was the **founder** of Babylon.

He ruled Babylon in the days of their tower project.

Archaeology has shown that region is covered w/numerous **ziggurats**, tall mounds made of sun-dried brick, devoted to the worship of pagan gods.

While Nimrod was busy leading the **political affairs** of Babylon, his wife, **Semiramis** became the leader of the **religious system** born there.

She developed secret rituals called "**mysteries**" used by priests who worshipped of the idols of Babylon.

The ancient mythology of Babylon says Nimrod was killed while hunting, & 40 days later, Semiramis realized she was **miraculously pregnant**.

She gave birth to a son she named **Tammuz** whom she claimed was a reincarnation of Nimrod.

Tammuz became the savior of the Babylonians by taking the throne left by his father.

So Tammuz ends up being a kind of messiah-figure.

Semiramis & Tammuz were then elevated to the premier place in the pantheon of Babylonian gods.

Semiramis became known as the **Queen of Heaven** while Tammuz morphed into all the major deities of the ancient world; most notably – **Baal**, who ends up causing Israel so much trouble as an idol later.

1 of the most common religious icons thru-out the ancient Middle East is that of the **Mother & Son**.

An elaborate priesthood sprang up around this religious cult making an expansive system.

To this priesthood were entrusted the secret rituals that promised cleansing from sin and restoration to the favor of the gods.

This cleansing was bestowed by the sprinkling of special water.

Tammuz was even said to have been killed by a wild beast but came back to life after 3 days; an obvious satanic counterfeit of the resurrection of Christ.

Moses warned the Israelites against being seduced by the religious practices of the **Canaanites**.

Those were all just localized versions of the religion of Babylon.

The OT prophets repeatedly warned the people of God about being seduced by the counterfeit religion of Babylon.

Ezekiel protested the ceremony of weeping for Tammuz. (8:14)

Jeremiah decried the women of Israel making cakes for & burning incense to the Queen of Heaven (7:18 44:17-25)

Zechariah lumped all false religions under the rubric “Babylon.” (5:1-11)

Now, here’s what’s interesting

When the ancient Babylon was destroyed, its religious system ***wasn’t*** extinguished.

It moved to the City of Pergamos; its priests & scholars relocated there and set up shop.

This gives us an important insight into what Jesus said to the Church of Pergamos in Rev. 2:12-13.

“And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, ‘These things says He who has the sharp 2-edged sword: “I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is.”

Jesus’ warning to the Christians in Pergamos was about the ***danger of compromise*** – about listening to false teachers who’d convince them to *accommodate* themselves to idolatry for the sake of avoiding persecution.

The pagan priests at Pergamos were called “*Keepers of the Bridge*” because they were the link between the spiritual and the physical worlds.

When Rome emerged as the capitol of the ancient world, the Pergamon priests moved there so they could be at the center of things and spread their influence throughout the world.

So ingrained did they become with the religion of Rome the chief priest was called the Chief Bridge-Builder = *Pontifex Maximus*.

Then, when the Empire crumbled and the Bishop of Rome became the head of what was left of the Empire, *HE* took the title – and the Pope maintains it to this day.

Babylon moved to Pergamos, then Pergamos moved to Rome.

The harlot John sees represents ***all false religion*** as it comes to its final expression in the Last Days.

It began on the Plains of Shinar 6000 years ago and has filled the earth, giving rise to all kinds of error and evil.

Some Protestant commentators like to equate the harlot with the Roman Catholic church because historically, that’s what rose from the ashes of the Roman Empire.

But this harlot is FAR MORE than that.

Rome may take the ***lead***, but it includes and embraces ***all*** false religion;

Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism, Liberal Christianity, & Humanism.

The chief cause of John’s amazement at the great harlot is in v6 where she’s described as being drunk on the blood of the saints. ***She’s*** the one who killed them.

Famous Bible scholar & commentator John Walvoord says, “False religion is always the worst enemy of true religion.”

Some of the most vicious persecution conducted against the followers of Jesus has been done in the name of the Church.

The Roman Catholic Queen Mary killed 288 while having thousands beaten; earning her the title “Bloody Mary.”

The Inquisition murdered scores.

But it wasn’t just Roman Catholics who did the killing.

During the late Reformation, some Protestant rulers executed members of groups they disagreed with.

In v8, John describes ***the beast*** the harlot rides.

It’s a ***summary*** of the way he’s ***earlier*** described satan, the antichrist & the political system they erect during the Tribulation.

But I have to let you know what John says here throws commentators into fits.

Sorting out all the various views is rough.

The problem centers on his description of the beast as something that

... was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition

The bottomless pit translates the word ***abusoo***; the place satan always comes from.

Whatever this beast is, it finds some kind of expression in the past, then has a period when it is not, then comes back into being, and when it does, that’s its form when it is sent into perdition, which ch19 tells us is the lake of fire = which is Hell.

Let me just cut to the chase & say it’s my view the beast the woman rides is the political system of the antichrist.

That system will center on Europe Union, which will become a revived form of the Roman Empire.

That Empire **was**, is now **not**, but under the leadership of the satanically-empowered antichrist will rise again.

It's that last days system Christ returns to end & send to hell.

That's the beast the woman rides.

She represents a final apostate religious system buddied up to the antichrist's political-economic system.

They start out united. But they don't stay that way.

In vs9&10, John gets more details about the beast.

The angel warns at the beginning of v9 it's going to take some serious attention to parse what follows & figure out what the beast represents.

The 7 heads are 7 mountains on which the woman sits.

Hold on: V1 says she's seated on many waters, then v15 tells us those waters refer to many people & nations.

How can she be seated on waters & mountains **both**?

The **waters** refers to the scope of her influence.

The **mountains** are a feature of the beast the harlot rides & help us identify what it is.

In prophecy, mountains point to kingdoms, which is what v10 says these mountains are = They're kings.

5 have already passed away.

1 ruled when John wrote.

1 more is to come.

When that 7th rises, his reign is brief.

He's quickly put down & replaced by an 8th, who's distinct yet connected to the first 7.

It's best way to understand all this, this way ...

When John's wrote in the 1st C, 5 major world empires had passed:

Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, & Greece.

Now, the historian would say, "Wait! That's not all the world empires there's been.

What about the Hittites, China, India?"

Those were indeed great & mighty civilizations.

But from a Biblical & prophetic perspective, the **only** kingdoms reckoned are those that shaped **Israel's** story.

These 5 are mentioned in the visions of the OT prophets; most notably by Daniel.

The kingdom that ruled in John's time was **Rome**; that's the 6th.

The 7th which is to come is the re-born Rome, which will only last for a short time before it's co-opted & taken over by the 8th, the antichrist.

He & his kingdom will be defeated by the Lord and will go in to *perdition* – Hell; the Lake of Fire.

In v12, the angel describes the 7th kingdom that will morph into the 8th under the antichrist.

¹² "The 10 horns which you saw are 10 kings who have received no kingdom as yet,

They have no kingdom **yet**, because they're that 7th kingdom **yet to come** in v10.

but they receive authority for 1 hour as kings with the beast. ¹³ These are of 1 mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. ¹⁴ These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those *who are* with Him *are* called, chosen, and faithful."

It's during the reign of the 8th king Jesus comes again.

So the great globe-spanning end times religious system is linked to the antichrist's political system, which itself will be a Revival of the Roman Empire.

They scratch each other's back; at least at first.

Then something happens and the relationship sours

¹⁶ And the 10 horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. ¹⁷ For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of 1 mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.

The beast bucks the harlot off, then turns on her.

When the Church is Raptured, the only religious influence **left** on Earth will be that of the spiritually dead and **counterfeit church** along with the pagan religions of the world.

When the salt & light of the Gospel are removed, apostasy & error will abound.

There will be a move to unite the world under 1 religious umbrella.

That movement is already well under way.

The **Earth Charter** is the product of a think tank led by **Mikhail Gorbachev**.

Working w/the UN, they aim to create a One World Global Entity that unites Government, Religion, Law, & Economics under one over-riding banner.

The Preamble of the Earth Charter states:

We are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature. ... Towards this end, it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations.

According to the Charter, humanity must undergo a global “change of mind and heart.”

And the UN’s all-wise seers visualize themselves as leading change agents for this global undertaking.

In a meeting of the Earth Charter’s board some years ago, **Professor Steven Rockefeller**, of the famous Rockefeller family, said the way to go about bringing peace to earth is through the “inclusive, integrated and spiritual approach” of the Earth Charter. Rockefeller described the Charter as an effort to incorporate the “wisdom of the world’s religions.”

In her speech at the meeting, **Razeena Wagiet**, who works in South Africa’s Education Ministry, said astrologers have foreseen that the world is about to enter a “A New & Golden Age.”

The Earth Charter isn’t just some product of a bunch of fringe whackos.

It’s become the UN’s Constitution for Global Government.

Also of interest is **Pope Francis’** overtures to other religions.

This was a trend begun by Pope John Paul II.

Pope Benedict put the kibosh on it when he was the Bishop of Rome,

But Pope Francis has renewed the outreach to other faiths.

In addressing a prayer gathering of Christians, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists and others, Pope John Paul II told participants their efforts were “unleashing profound spiritual energies in the world and bringing about a new climate of peace.”

The *Catholic Review’s* comment on this said,

“The unity of religion promoted by the Holy Father Pope John Paul II and approved by His Holiness the Dalai Lama is not a goal to be achieved immediately, but a day may come when the love and compassion which both Buddha and Christ preached so eloquently will unite the world in a common effort to save humanity from senseless destruction, and leading to toward the light in which we all believe.”

Several liberal Protestant denominations have adopted paganism in their convention’s programs.

Even portions of the **evangelical church** are being corrupted; seduced by the errors of religious science; which is nothing but the old mysteries of Babylon repackaged for modern man.

During the 1st half of the Tribulation, as the antichrist gains influence & control of the *political machinery* of the EU, an Apostate church will bring the various faiths of the world together around a watered down spirituality.

The antichrist will **use** this Apostate Church to gain control, much as Adolf Hitler did in his rise to power in Germany during the 1930’s.

That Harlot Church will climb aboard the antichrist’s political machine.

But half way thru the Tribulation, the antichrist reveals His real plans & declares himself a god all must worship.

The Harlot Church will balk at such a blatant claim.

It’s hesitation to bow will be it’s doing.

V18 narrows it down even more on who the harlot is

¹⁸ And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.”

In John’s day, there was **no doubt** what city that was = Rome!

It was the political, economic, & religious center of the world.

Looked at from a **spiritual perspective**, Rome was just the latest manifestation of what started back at ancient

Babylon under Nimrod.

Rome conquered Babylon **militarily**, but Babylon conquered Rome, & everyone else **religiously**.

Rome was the most complete manifestation of the Spirit of Babylon ever seen.

When the antichrist rises to power, some have suggested Rome will be his capital.

CH 18

We're going to go somewhat quicker now thru ch18.

Ch17 is the judgment of the **religious** Babylon at the mid-point of the Trib.

Ch18 is the judgment of **political & economic** Babylon at the end.

¹ After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory. ² And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! ³ For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury."

This **doublet** of the word "fallen" points to the doom of **both** the religious & political systems of the antichrist.

The angel wants John to understand this falling thing called Babylon is the center & source of evil.

But it's been an engine of wealth for the world's merchants.

In other words, much of world economics is driven by the **demonic**.

Materialism has polluted the entire world & brought about a kind of spiritual inebriation.

As we'll see, the Babylon of ch18 is the antichrist's economic system which has extended its reach to the entire world.

⁴ And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.

That was the text for the sermon 2 Sundays ago.

⁵ For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. ⁶ Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her.

⁷ In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, 'I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.' ⁸ Therefore her plagues will come in 1 day—death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her.

God bases His appeal to His people to holiness because the world is going down.

Or maybe it would be better to say it's going **UP In Flames**.

And when judgment finally comes, it'll be swift.

⁹ "The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning, ¹⁰ standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in 1 hour your judgment has come.' ¹¹ "And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore:

Then John gives a list of 28 commodities these merchants traded in; all of them luxuries that commanded top prices.

¹² merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble;

¹³ and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots,

Then the last 2 which stand out from this list of items we call 'commodities.'

and bodies and souls of men.

They traded in BOTH bodies & souls.

Bodies speaks of **literal slavery**; & could refer in our time to human trafficking & the horrific sex trade growing rapidly across the world.

Trading in souls speaks to the **spiritual slavery** of crass materialism pumped to the entire world by modern media & advertising.

By trading in all these luxuries, they've enslaved people to their flesh.

I've been to India, Africa and just last week to central Mexico.

We went to a mall in Queretaro that rivals anything I've seen here in the US.

There are billboards every couple hundred yards along every major road hawking products promising happiness & the good life.

When I was in Africa a few years ago, in the middle of the bush in Sudan, I saw 9 & 10 year old boys with cell phones! They looked no different from any kid here in the States.

That globalization of the world economy isn't going to ease up or back out.

As we move forward month by month closer to the end times, it's only going to get more pervasive & connected so that by the time the antichrist arrives on the scene, it'll be possible for him to exert control over a good part of the planet.

The angel goes on ...

¹⁴ The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all.

The materialism the world is addicted to will be unsatisfied because the supply of goodies will be cut off.

¹⁵ The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her [Babylon's] torment, weeping and wailing, ¹⁶ and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls! ¹⁷ For in 1 hour such great riches came to nothing.' Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance ¹⁸ and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What is like this great city?' ¹⁹ "They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in 1 hour she is made desolate.'

This vast last days economic system all comes to a screeching halt when it's destroyed by God.

He wipes it out because like the religious harlot of ch17, it's corrupt & evil.

V6 is a clue to why God brings this Commercial Babylon down.

Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works

The Greek word render (apodidomi) means "to pay a debt."

God gives commercial Babylon exactly what she deserves.

In Exodus 22:4-9, **double restitution** was the fine for theft.

The antichrist's economic system has made its wealth by theft & injustice.

It's a classic case where the rich get richer while the poor get poorer because the rich and powerful manipulate the system to their own gain while the poor & weak have declining access.

It's the poor who become the victims of the end of the list.

They're "the bodies and souls" that are traded to be used by the wealthy.

They'll be used as sport, entertainment, and who knows what else.

We decry the barbarism of the gladiatorial combats in Rome.

But we're not far from it in some of the extreme sports of today.

Because of the internet, pornography has exploded.

According to some accounts, porn generates HALF of all traffic on the net.

What is pornography but the buying of bodies & souls?

And right now in the news is the disgusting report of the Planned Parenthood official negotiating to sell the remains of aborted children!

While what we read here comes to pass at the end of the Trib, the trends that will lead to it are already well underway in our time.

The emphasis on **trade & markets** suggested by these vs sounds a lot like **free-market capitalism**.

As an economic system, **Capitalism** is the best to ensure the greatest benefits to the most people.

But ONLY if it's coupled to a genuine expression of Biblical Christianity.

The great danger of Capitalism is the tendency to greed.

When greed is unchecked, it can quickly lead to those with power manipulating the system to their own advantage.

Christianity, with its emphasis on charity & generosity, its caution against envy, lust, & materialism, its promotion of moderation & abhorrence of excess – all work to put the kibosh on greed and keep

capitalism safe between the rails of justice & mercy.

Remove those rails and capitalism becomes a brutal system where the rich & powerful victimize the poor & weak.

THAT'S precisely what will happen once the Church is yanked out in the Rapture.

What John sees is the manipulation of world's markets by the antichrist.

He's secured the entire economic system thru the mark, & promises special privilege to those who join His system.

He increases the wealth of those he wants in power while taking it from those he wants to destroy.

But eventually God says, "That's enough" & rains down His judgment.

How judgment comes isn't stated. But it's swift & complete.

²⁰ "Rejoice over her, O heaven, and *you* holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!" ²¹ Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw *it* into the sea, saying, "Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore. ²² The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore. No craftsman of any craft shall be found in you anymore, and the sound of a millstone shall not be heard in you anymore. ²³ The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore. For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived.

This mention of a millstone reminds us of what Jesus said in Matt 18:6-

Whoever causes 1 of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

The system represented by Babylon here is worthy of the awesome judgment of God because it's seduced all humanity to sin.

It's enticed, cajoled, manipulated, used fear, intimidation, peer-pressure, threats, & at times the weight of law to make people to sin.

It's a terrible thing to sin yourself It's even **more terrible** to lead others into sin.

Vs 10, 15 & 17 say the lamenting merchants observe Babylon's ruin **from a distance**.

They do so lest it fall on them as well.

However God judges this end times commercial system, it's violent & quick & involves fire.

Just as the religious harlot Babylon of ch17 will be headquartered in some city,

The last day's commercial & political Babylon of ch18 will be **centered** in a city as well.

Think about this

On 9/11/2001, 2 jet liners smashed in to the twin towers of the WTC in NY & within an hr, they came crashing down.

And it set the global economy back by months!

That was **NOT** the fulfillment of what we're reading here.

But it does give us a graphic example of how judgment can come on an economic center in a short time & cause far-reaching & lasting damage.

There are several economic centers around the world; NY, London, Zurich, & Singapore are the main centers.

During the Tribulation, the antichrist will centralize his economic control at his capital, wherever that is.

John sees when it all goes up in smoke.

And while this Babylon likely does have some center, a headquarters, it's also an evil system that's reached far & wide.

It's been vehicle by which satan and the antichrist have persecuted believers.

So in 24 the angel says

²⁴ And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth."

CONCLUSION

We end by looking again at v5 –

For her [Babylon's] sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.

Judgment comes because sin has piled up to heaven like the bricks that built the 1st tower at Babel.

And God remembers **every 1 of them**.

Contrast that with

Psa 32:1 • Blessed *is he whose* transgression *is* forgiven, *whose* sin *is* covered.

Jer 31:34 • I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.

Psa 103:11-12 • As the heavens are high above the earth, *so* great is [God's] mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, *so* far has He removed our transgressions from us.

God remembers every sin of the lost but not a one of those who trust in Christ.

Christian, Listen: We don't live in Oxnard, or Camarillo, or Ventura.

Those are the labels for where we're ***camping*** for now.

But they are NOT our home; not our real City.

Either our home is Heaven, or Babylon.

To know where your ***home*** lies, ask where your ***treasure*** is.

Is what's of ***greatest value*** to you on ***Earth*** or in ***Heaven***?