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Introduction:

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Answer! NO!

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Because the faithful Church will be caught up with Christ at the beginning of the Tribulation.

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Yes, the Unfaithful Church will go through the Great Tribulation¹ we see this clearly in our passage today

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We had a brief introduction in Revelation 16:19 (the Judgment of the false church)

"God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath."

¹It is this other church to which we now come, and to which John devotes more than two entire chapters of Revelation. We had a hint of this other church in Revelation 2, the letter to the church at Thyatira, where the Lord says, You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.¹ The "Jezebel" of this passage is a forerunner of all the thousands of deceivers and false teachers who would infect and seduce later generations of the church, on down to our own generation and beyond. Her "children" are the false Christians whom she spawned in the Thyatiran church--and in a metaphorical sense, those later Jezebel-like deceivers who continue to lead people astray in our own age. "Jezebel" and her "children," says the Lord, will be cast into great tribulation, suffering, and destruction.

Revelation 17-19:5 unveils the dreadful wine of God's wrath against the counterfeit, apostate Church (Babylon the Great) the Mother of Prostitutes and of the Abominations of the Earth.

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. With her the kings of the earth committed adultery and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries."

Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. This title was written on her forehead:

MYSTERY

BABYLON THE GREAT

THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES

AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH

I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus. When I saw her, I was greatly astonished. 17: 1-6 ([Latana to read](#))

THE BEAST:

- A political leader or the coalition of Western Nations (Western Europe), the revived Roman Empire

This Coalition of Nations (The Beast) will dominate the world economy in the last days.

In this passage we see a woman sitting astride the beast.

The book of Revelation is full of metaphors and symbols but no symbol receives so much attention as the Dragon Lady, now why?

THE WOMAN:

- Babylon the Great-The Mother of All Prostitutes is extremely important to the overall meaning of John's vision.

So who is this Woman?

Who is this Babylon the Great?

Here are some 10 clues.

1: A Prostitute

In spiritual terms: An Organization or an Entity that is claims to worship God but is actually unfaithful to Him.

2: Universal Influence, v.15

The harlot exercises great power over the world's political systems² misleading the world with her false teaching.

"With her the kings of the earth committed adultery."

3: She Is Seated upon the Beast, vv.16-17

The prostitute dominates the beast for a time.

The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to give the beast their power to rule, until God's words are fulfilled.

4: Purple, Scarlet, Gold, and Jewels

The woman is obviously very wealthy and expensively adorned to make herself attractive.

5: The Golden Cup (counterfeit to the communion cup)

Gold is a symbol of divine activity in Scripture, so this golden cup³ gives every appearance of being a utensil of God's service. But it is false, abominable, adulterous and filthy

6: Mystery, Babylon the Great

An Inscription on the Prostitute's forehead: **"Mystery, Babylon the Great."**

The word **"Mystery"**⁴ indicates there is something deeper here than appears on the surface.

"Babylon"⁵ is a symbol of idolatry.

¹She is "the great prostitute, who sits on many waters." Later, in verse 15, the meaning of "many waters" is unmistakably explained: "Then the angel said to me, 'The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages.'" People all over the world are influenced by the teaching of this prostitute. Moreover, verse 2 makes it plain that the organization or entity, which the prostitute represents, exercises great power over the political systems of the world: "With her the kings of the earth committed adultery." The prostitute also misleads great populations of the earth with the teaching she spreads: "the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries."

²Many Bible commentators have pointed out that this cup appears to be a counterfeit of the communion cup of the New Testament--the cup of the Lord that is associated with the truth of God. On the outside the cup in the prostitute's hand gives the appearance of precious truth; on the inside it is vile and nauseating.

³The historical Babylon was the fabled capital city of the mighty Babylonian empire, which dominated the ancient world. It was located on the Euphrates River, about 50 miles south of Baghdad in what is now the country of Iraq. The founding of Babylon is recorded in Genesis--where it was called Babel when Nimrod, the hunter of human souls, established it. It became the focus of idolatry for all of the ancient world. But the Babylon that appears in John's vision is not the literal Babylon that stood on the River Euphrates. The title "Mystery" indicates that there is a deeper symbolism to be discerned. The Babylon, which the woman symbolizes, is *spiritually* identified with ancient Babylon--that is, with the practice of idolatry and spiritual adultery.

⁴Similar to Revelation 11:8, where Jerusalem is referred to as "Sodom" and "Egypt" because that city had become a source of false teaching and corruption.

7: The Mother of Prostitutes

"Her offspring that practice idolatry and spread false teaching.

8: Persecutor of Christians

"I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus."

She is so repulsive drinking the blood of the righteous! (Persecution of the Saints!)

9: Seven Hills

The next clue to the identity of the woman is given in verse 9, where John writes,

This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads [of the beast] are seven hills on which the woman sits.

That first line is important: Identifying the reality behind the symbol of the woman requires wisdom. It is not a matter that is immediately obvious. It requires thought and study.

There is one city that was famous in ancient times, as it is today, for being built on seven hills (the Aventine, Caelian, Capitoline, Esquiline, Palatine, Quirinal, and Viminal)

Can you guess which city this is?

But before we jump to any conclusions (remember, "this calls for a mind with wisdom"), let's look at one more clue.

10: The Great City, v.18

The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.

Lets piece all the clues together!⁶ This city has to be Rome, both Catholics and Protestants are agreed (vv.9-18). Truly, the city of Rome literally ruled over the kings of the earth.

The Catholic view: Pagan Rome

"When I saw her, I was greatly astonished." V.6

There is a problem here, why would John be astonished by Pagan Rome persecuting believers? Moreover we are told from our clues that it's not Pagan but Unfaithful.

⁶ Now we must carefully piece all these clues together into one composite picture of the truth behind the symbol of the woman. This entity, which is symbolized by the woman, has prostituted itself and been unfaithful to God; it has global influence; it is outwardly adorned with the garments and jewelry of precious spiritual truths, but is inwardly filled with false religious concepts and spiritual adulteries. Plainly, the woman represents an institutional religious body which outwardly professes to be Christian, which adorns itself with Christian truths, yet is corrupt and abominable within.



The Protestant View:

The Roman Catholic Church (The Institution)⁷ (Not the genuine believers in the Catholic Church)
 The Catholic Church has its own rule within Vatican City and has Embassies all around the world.
 The Pope is more than just a Religious position; it is also a Political position.

What is Babylonianism?

- Babylonian Christianity mixes extra-biblical teachings from pagan sources and brings them together under the guise of Christianity. It involves using religious authority in order to gain earthly power or status.
- So anywhere you see a mixture of extra-biblical teaching with paganism, you are seeing Babylonianism. What we call in theology Syncretism.
- Man looks on the outward structure of an institution and calls it a "church"; Jesus Christ knows His true church because He can see into every individual human heart.

Is this only found in the Catholic Church?

No this is found in all denominationalism including Protestant Church Institutions?

- It is the Institution not the people being spoken off here⁸.

The End of the Beast (Commercial Babylon Falls), vv.7-14

John is astonished at this woman sitting upon the scarlet beast, the angels explain the meaning and shows him the ultimate destruction and defeat in the Battle against the Lamb of God.

Then the angel said to me: "Why are you astonished? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast she rides, which has the seven heads and ten horns. The beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and will come up out of the Abyss and go to his destruction. The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast, because he

⁷The historical Babylon was the fabled capital city of the mighty Babylonian empire, which dominated the ancient world. It was located on the Euphrates River, about 50 miles south of Baghdad in what is now the country of Iraq. The founding of Babylon is recorded in Genesis--where it was called Babel when Nimrod, the hunter of human souls, established it. It became the focus of idolatry for all of the ancient world. But the Babylon that appears in John's vision is not the literal Babylon that stood on the River Euphrates. The title "Mystery" indicates that there is a deeper symbolism to be discerned. The Babylon, which the woman symbolizes, is *spiritually* identified with ancient Babylon--that is, with the practice of idolatry and spiritual adultery.

⁸Remember the last line in verse 6: "When I saw her, I was greatly astonished." Why was John so astonished? At the time John recorded his vision the church in Rome was the church of the catacombs. It was a persecuted and suffering church, having no earthly power and no worldly influence. Undoubtedly it came as a great surprise to John to see that the suffering church he knew in Rome would one day become a great and powerful force, dominating the kings of the earth while prostituting its own truths. I hasten to add that by taking this view we are *not* engaging in "Catholic-bashing." As we interpret this passage, we recognize that, while the Roman Catholic Church is an *institution*, Roman Catholics are *people*. The Catholic Church itself makes just such a distinction, teaching that it is the *clergy*--the pope and the hierarchy--which constitute the Church, not the people. There are believing and non-believing people in the Catholic Church, just as there are believing and non-believing people in Orthodox churches, Anglican churches, mainline Protestant churches, evangelical churches, fundamentalist churches, charismatic churches, independent churches, and neighborhood Bible studies. Moreover, there have been many godly popes, bishops, priests, and nuns through the centuries. I've met and known many godly Catholics, both clergy and laypeople, over the years.

once was, now is not, and yet will come.

"This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for a little while. The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction.

"The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast. They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings--and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers."17:7-14 ([Latana to read](#))

The Beast: The Revived Roman Empire (Western World)

In this passage, the angel describes seven "kings" or forms of government.

- 5 passed into history
- 1 dominant in John's day
- 1 will remain for a little while (Imperial Rule- Caesar to 1918)
- 8th King the Beast (Revived Roman Empire) would come into being

They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings and his Elect, Faithful Followers will be with him." vv.13-14

Notice that when the Lamb appears the church is already with Him--further proof that the church has already been gathered up to be with Jesus before the seven-year Tribulation begins.

Then the angel describes to John the destruction of the prostitute at the hands of the beast that she once dominated.

Prelude to the Destruction of the Prostitute!

Then the angel said to me, "The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages. The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to give the beast their power to rule, until God's words are fulfilled. The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth."17:15-18

The **Beast** (Political System) turns against the **Prostitute** (False Church)

After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor: With a mighty voice he shouted: "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! She has become a home for demons and a haunt for every evil spirit, a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird. For all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries. The kings of the earth committed adultery with her; and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries."18:1-3

Why is the Babylon the Great Overthrown?

1. She is demonic, a haunt for evil spirits⁹
2. She has committed adultery with the kings
 - She has lusted after earthly power
 - She has been spiritually unfaithful flirting with the power brokers of this world.
3. She has Excessive luxuries
 - In a world of human need and tremendous poverty the false church has lavished riches and excessive luxuries upon itself.

וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הַצְּעָקוֹת מִבָּבֶל וְיִשְׁמַע אֶת-הַצְּעָקוֹת מִן-הַיָּם וְיִשְׁמַע אֶת-הַצְּעָקוֹת מִן-הַיַּבֶּשֶׁת וְיִשְׁמַע אֶת-הַצְּעָקוֹת מִן-הַיַּם וְיִשְׁמַע אֶת-הַצְּעָקוֹת מִן-הַיַּבֶּשֶׁת

A Warning is issued to the true saints who are within the church during the last days

It is a plea to come out of the false church before it goes down to its destruction¹⁰.

Then I heard another voice from heaven say: "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues: for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes."18:4-5

The Observation:

- (1.) God may have a people even in Babylon, some who belong to the election of grace.
- (2.) God's people shall be called out of Babylon.¹¹

Further reasons for judgment against the prostitute, the false church:

"Give back to her as she has given; pay her back double for what she has done. Mix her a double portion from her own cup."18:6

The law of retribution is at work here. "What goes around comes around," and often in multiplied force.

In verses 7 and 8 God continues to detail the prostitute's sin--and her fate.

⁹Even today, during the church age, we see demonic teachings and ideas infiltrating various quarters of the church. During the Tribulation, after all church structures and institutions have been swept free of true followers of Christ; there will be no restraint upon the religiously motivated evil that remains. Places, which are now sanctuaries of worship, shall become haunts of evil in the last days.

¹⁰4. Fair warning is given to all that expect mercy from God, that they should not only *come out of her*, but be assisting in her destruction, v. 4, 5. Here observe, (1.) God may have a people even in Babylon, some who belong to the election of grace. (2.) God's people shall be called out of Babylon, and called effectually. (3.) Those that are resolved to partake with wicked men in their sins must receive of their plagues. (4.) When the sins of a people reach up to heaven, the wrath of God will reach down to the earth. (5.) Though private revenge is forbidden, yet God will have his people act under him, when called to it, in pulling down his and their inveterate and implacable enemies, v. 6. (6.) God will proportion the punishment of sinners to the measure of their wickedness, pride, and security, v. 7. (7.) When destruction comes on a people suddenly, the surprise is a great aggravation of their misery, v. 8.

¹¹Henry, Matthew, Blueletter Bible

"Give her as much torture and grief as the glory and luxury she gave herself. In her heart she boasts, 'I sit as queen; I am not a widow, and I will never mourn.' Therefore in one day her plagues will overtake her: death, mourning and famine. She will be consumed by fire, for mighty is the Lord God who judges her."

The false Church is judged (through torture, grief, famine and death) for her arrogant, and self-indulgent pride.

The beast and the ten horns (the ten nations) turn against her and destroy her with fire. But even beyond these horrors inflicted on her by her former allies comes a further judgment from God.

"When the kings of the earth who committed adultery with her and shared her luxury see the smoke of her burning, they will weep and mourn over her. Terrified at her torment, they will stand far off and cry: 18:9-10

*"Woe! Woe, O great city,
O Babylon, city of power!
In one hour your doom has come!"*

Why are the kings of the earth concerned about the ruin of Mystery Babylon?

"In one hour your doom has come!"

Remember that, in the context of Revelation 16, God's judgment against Babylon was announced at the moment of the great Earthquake, which split the city of Jerusalem.

These kings who committed adultery with Babylon, although they turned against her, they don't like her total ruin.

"The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes any more--cargoes of gold, silver, precious stones and pearls: fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet cloth: every sort of citron wood, and articles of every kind made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron and marble; cargoes of cinnamon and spice, of incense, myrrh and frankincense, of wine and olive oil, of fine flour and wheat; cattle and sheep; horses and carriages; and bodies and souls of men."18:11-13

Why?

Because their *business* is ruined by the destruction of Mystery Babylon

False religion has been good for business--but now it's all gone.

The lament of the peoples of the earth continues.

"They will say, 'the fruit you longed for is gone from you. All your riches and splendor have vanished, never to be recovered.' The merchants who sold these things and gained their wealth from her will stand far off, terrified at her torment. They will weep and mourn and cry out:

"Woe! Woe, O great city, dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet, and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls! In one hour such great wealth has been brought to

ruin!

"Every sea captain, and all who travel by ship, the sailors, and all who earn their living from the sea, will stand far off. When they see the smoke of her burning, they will exclaim, 'Was there ever a city like this great city?' They will throw dust on their heads, and with weeping and mourning cry out:

"'Woe! Woe, O great city, where all, which had ships on the sea, became rich through her wealth! In one hour she has been brought to ruin!'" 18:14-19

Business people (merchants-dealers, and seamen) are terrified at the swift judgment caused by volcanic activity spoken of in the 70th week of Daniel and here in Revelation¹².

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In contrast to the mourning over Babylon that takes place upon the earth, there is rejoicing in heaven.

"Rejoice over her, O heaven! Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets! God has judged her for the way she treated you." 18:20

The defenders of the faith: (the prophets, apostles, and saints) suffered under Babylon the Great, but God will make her pay for this mistreatment of the saints.

Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea, and said: "With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again. The music of harpists and musicians, flute players and trumpeters, will never be heard in you again. No workman of any trade will ever be found in you again. The sound of a millstone will never be heard in you again. The light of a lamp will never shine in you again. The voice of bridegroom and bride will never be heard in you again. Your merchants were the world's great men. By your magic spell all the nations were led astray. In her was found the blood of prophets and of the saints, and of all who have been killed on the earth." 18:21-24

No comment on vv.21-24 but to complete the flow of 18 let consider vv.1-5 of 19.

After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting: "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for true and just are his judgments. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants."

And again they shouted: "Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever." The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God,

¹² Geologists have long known that the entire western edge of the Apennine Mountains--from the region of Rome on the central coast all the way south to Mount Etna on the island of Sicily--is subject to earthquakes and potential volcanic activity. The Apennines are among the youngest mountains in Europe, and the geologic stresses beneath those mountains are such that they cause the entire range to rise at a rate of a fraction of an inch per year. So it may well be that tremendous volcanic destruction will befall Rome in the final days of Daniel's seventieth week.

Let us pray!

References: Ray C Stedman, Matthew Henry, Blueletter Bible, and Biblegateway.