

As we open Revelation 1:1, stop for a moment and remember how God starts this final book. We read that:

God Wants His Servants to Understand The Future

God opens the Book of Revelation by telling us that He wrote this book “to show His servants” (Rev. 1:1) things that we need to know about the future. Only followers of God and servants of Christ have the incredible insight for living that comes from knowing for sure, what will happen in the days, months, and years ahead.

If you stop and consider what God just said, it is amazing. God Himself wants us to know the future. He has written down and sent us these 22 chapters filled with everything we need: to understand the rest of history, both for the Church and for this world. We are in the midst of the study of the letters to the seven churches, and as we pause we notice that:

The Seven Churches Portray Seven Stages

For just a moment, let me give you a perspective. Revelation 2-3 contain seven specific letters to historic churches. But these letters also portray patterns, problems, and directions that also portray a prophetic perspective on the future of the church: from Christ's ascension in Century One, to His coming back to Rapture His Church¹. Let me show you what many Bible teachers have taught over the years. The seven historic stages of Christ's Church:

1. There was the **Ephesian period (30-60 AD)**: this was a period of warmth and love and labor for Christ, dating directly from the apostles, in which defection began just as Christ warned—by the gradual cooling of the love of some, the false professions of others and the incoming of undue exaltations of the clergy and church offices.
2. Then came the **Smyrna period (60-300 AD)**: this was the era of martyrdom, and of the sweet savor unto God of faithfulness unto death, but marked with further developments of the departure from the true simplicities of the Gospel.
3. Then followed the **Pergamite period (300-500 AD)**: this was when true faith began to fade, and spirituality gradually formed itself into a system, and the church united with the world, and finally the mystery rites of Babylon began to permeate Christ's Church.
4. Then came the **Thyatiran period (500-1500 AD)**: this became the age of purple and glory for the corrupt priesthood, and of the darkness of truth; the age of effeminacy and clerical domination, when the church usurped the place of Christ, and the witnesses of Jesus were give to the dungeons, stakes and inquisitions; the age of the enthronement of false prophetess, reaching up to the days of Luther and the Reformation.

¹ This material drawn from J.A. Seiss, The Apocalypse, in loc.

5. Then came the **Sardian period (1500-1800 AD)**: this was seen as the age of separation and return of the rule of Christ; an age of many worthy names, but marked with the deadness of institutionalizing Christ through the denominations; it was an age covering the spiritual lethargy of the Protestant centuries before the coming of the great evangelical movements of the last two hundred years.
6. Next was the **Philadelphian period (1800-1950 AD)**: this was a return to the zeal for missions of the early church, a time of great evangelistic outreach and devotional godliness. In this time nearly every corner of the world was penetrated with the Gospel like no time since Pentecost.
7. Which brings us to the **Laodicean period (1950 AD–present)**: the Church of the West has become so self-sufficient, comfortable, and untested that lukewarmness, materialism, empty profession, and false peace have become accepted. Jesus warned of this day in which He finds an unthinking multitude, who suppose they are Christians, and are not.

Christ's Call is to Hear His Voice And Follow Him

God wants those who are His servants to understand what is going on around them. He wants us to have insider knowledge about the timing, severity, and events that will surround the coming global economic and religious collapse, just before Christ's Second Coming.

As we turn back now to Revelation 17-18, we can see God describing the coming global financial and religious collapse coming upon this world at the end. Note the frequency of one word in both chapters: Babylon².

Have you ever noticed how much³ the word Babylon shows up in the prophecies from God about the end of the world? Just here in Revelation we find the word Babylon five times (14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21). Outside the book of Revelation Babylon is frequently cited in the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel, in ways that transcend just the physical city and kingdom of human rulers.

Babylon in God's sight is often a picture of Satan's rebellion. That is what we need to keep in mind:

Satan is Leading a Global Rebellion Against God

The only key to correctly understanding history comes from God's Word. God's Word explains to us the struggle going on behind the pages of history is that: Satan is a rebel.

First, as Lucifer, the greatest and most powerful creature God ever made, **Satan rebelled against God and lost his position as the anointed cherub (Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28)** and became Satan, the adversary of God.

Next, Satan led **a third of the angels of God in rebellion against God (Rev. 12:4)**, and they become Satan's demon warriors, following with him in his ongoing rebellion against God.

² Babylon occurs 265 x in the KJV Bible in 17 of the books; most notably Jeremiah has 150x, II Kings 28x, Ezekiel 18x, Isaiah and Daniel each 15x, and II Chronicles 13x; Babel is 2x in Genesis 10-11).

³ Abraham is only mentioned 230 x; Paul 159 x; and Peter 156 x; but Israel 2,318 x; Jesus 942 x; and Christ 537 x. Satan is 49 x; Devil 106 x.

Then, Satan goes on to enlist humanity in his rebellion against God by tempting Eve (Genesis 3), and leading Adam into sin.

Finally, at the Tower of Babel, Satan devises a global spread of his rebellion through false religion and materialism.

God had made a way for mankind to be redeemed, by a substitutionary, sacrificial, blood-sprinkled, way. But Satan wanted at all costs, to obscure and confuse God's Way. To do so Satan devised snares to catch humans up in his rebellion.

When God describes the world's end at the close of the Tribulation, He devotes two entire chapters of Revelation to detail the end of Satan's twin pathways of rebellion.

Revelation 17 & 18: God Judges the Rebellion of Religion & Materialism

Since the temptation and fall of humanity in Genesis 3, Satan has most often ensnared the world into his rebellion through one or the other of these two systems. First in Revelation 17:5, God describes the false system of Satan's religion, by which he deceived humanity and led them away from God. Note: Mystery, Babylon the Great.

Revelation 17:5 (NKJV) And on her forehead a name *was* written: **MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.**

Then in Revelation 18:2, God explains the end of the other way Satan has enslaved humanity through the false worship of materialism. Note: Babylon the Great.

Revelation 18:2 (NKJV) 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!

The Harlot of Revelation 17 represents the spiritual adultery, drawing people away from God and to false gods, of Babylon's Mystery Religions. Our study of the church at Pergamum, and the connection that Pergamum has to Satan's Seat through pagan religions, is where we are today.

Religion is mankind seeking the wrong gods, neglecting the True Creator, and offering any kind of worship, other than what God's Word has commanded.

Religion is the self-styled offering of a humanly designed worship, rather than the Spirit-prompted offering of strict obedience to God's Word. Now, turn back with me to:

Genesis 11: Babel's Idolatrous Tower, Babylon's Mysteries & Organized Religion

Remember that Satan's plans of false worship began to be exported globally at the tower of Babel in **Genesis 11:1-9** which was the advent of what we would call *Organized Religion*. This was over 24 centuries before Christ, and nearly 4,500 years ago.

The Tower was the first idol and it became the object of men's worship, the point of their pride. It spawned a complex of weird, strange, mysterious religions that are still going on in our world today.

Genesis 11:1-4, 9 (NKJV) Now the **whole earth had one language and one speech.** 2 And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. 4 And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and **a tower whose top is in the heavens;** let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth." 9 Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

Satan desires to counterfeit, confuse, and mess up God's plan. So the one-world plans Satan had at Babel, God confounds; but the scattered humans took with them Babel's false worship, mystery religions, and idolatry to the ends of the earth.

The rebellion of Satan promotes human-invented religion, and it has spread to every corner of the Earth. From the Tower of Babel's worship ziggurat, the Babylonian Mystery Religions fill the pages of ancient history. They're all over everywhere and they're still with us today all in different forms.

In Genesis 11, on the plains of Shinar, probably not far from the original Garden of Eden, Satan's rebellion grows as Nimrod organized humans into Creator-rejection and false worship. From history we can see that:

Idolatrous Religions Originate from Babylon

There is no record of any pre-flood idolatry among humans, they were just totally corrupted. Even the unsaved historians chronicle the spread of Babel's religion. Listen to the conclusions of the late Joseph J. Campbell (1904-1987), a New Age guru and media personality, who wrote in his classic treatment of mythology called *The Masks of God*⁴:

"the dead and resurrected god Tammuz (Sumerian Dumuzi), prototype of the Classical Adonis, who was the consort as well as son by virgin birth, of the goddess-mother of many names: Inanna, Ninhursag, Ishtar, Astarte, Artemis, Demeter, Aphrodite, Venus".

Unlike the unbelieving mythologist Campbell just quoted, the godly Alexander Hislop⁵, a great 19th century Scottish theologian and historian, traced the concept of false religions under the idea that Babel's idolatry spread as Babylon's mystery religions. Both Campbell and Hislop saw the same pattern.

After God destroyed the tower, He scattered mankind into multiplied language groups. According to the cult of Ishtar, Tammuz was conceived by a sunbeam, a counterfeit version of Jesus' virgin birth.

Semiramis & Tammuz of Babel were worshiped as a divine mother and son under many different names. They became:

⁴ Oriental Mythology: The Masks of God, pp 39-40.

⁵ Adapted from Two Babylons quoted by MacArthur in Acts and I Corinthians. (For a discussion of the relationship of the pagan mother-child cults to Roman Catholic teachings about Mary, see Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons* [Neptune, N.J.: Loizeaux, 1959].)

- **Ishtar & Tammuz of Assyria**
- **Ashtaroath & Baal of Phoenicia**
- **Isis & Horus of Egypt**
- **Aphrodite & Eros of Greece**
- **Venus & Cupid of Rome**

In every case, the worship of those gods and goddesses was associated with sexual immorality.

History shows that Babel, became the fountainhead of all false religion. That's why when false religion reaches its climax in the end times, God's Word calls Satan's rebellion by the name of Babylon again, in Revelation 17-18.

The mystery religions of Babylon also propagated the idea of baptismal regeneration, (being born again merely through the rite of water baptism), and the practice of mutilation and flagellation to atone for sins or gain spiritual favor.

Nimrod's wife Semiramis, along with her son Tammuz, formed the basis for the many counterfeit mother-child cults of antiquity. Satan deceived humans into a religious system, which made both the mother and her son the objects of divine worship. That is why:

Rebellion Against The Creator is The Common Denominator of World Religions

Always remember that behind every idol is a demon warrior that is part of Satan's rebellion. At the crescendo of the Tribulation, when demons are wreaking havoc, and hundreds of millions of people are dying, God makes this sobering declaration in Revelation 9. Turn there again with me:

Revelation 9:15-16, 20-21 (NKJV) So **the four angels**, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, **were released to kill a third of mankind**. 16 Now the number of the **army of the horsemen** was two hundred million; I heard the number of them. 20 But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, **that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk**. 21 And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

Demons promoting Satan's rebellion through idols, is also what Paul dealt with in the Church of the Corinthians. Those early saints had to face the influence over their city of Babel's mother/son religion portrayed in the temples of Aphrodite and Eros, at the midpoint of the 1st Century. Turn back to:

1 Corinthians 10:19-21 (NKJV) What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? 20 Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice **they sacrifice to demons and not to God**, and I do not want you to have **fellowship with demons**. 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and **the cup of demons**; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the **table of demons**.

God's people have always had to resist Satan's idolatry. Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost writes, "I visited an archeological museum in Mexico City. A find had been put on display, which Mexican archeologists had authenticated as belonging to the period about 200 years before Christ. The object was the center of religious worship among some of the early Indians in Mexico. To my amazement, it was an image of a mother with a child in her arms. This Babylonian religion spread abroad to become the religion

of the world⁶.”

What was the central teaching of Semiramis’ idolatrous worship? That Semiramis herself was the way to God. She actually adopted the title “Queen of Heaven.”

About 2000 B.C. God called Abraham away from all this idolatrous worship from Babel (see Joshua 24:2-3) and led him into the Promised Land.

But by the ninth century B. C. Israel had returned to this false worship of Babel’s idols under the influence of wicked Jezebel (see 1 Kings 16:30-33). At this time the cult was worshiped under the name of Ashtoreth (the mother) and Baal (her son). Israel had been snared repeatedly, but by the time of Jeremiah, Baal (Tammuz) and Semiramis (Queen of Heaven) had moved into the Temple at Jerusalem. The words “Queen of Heaven” are found in five verses in the Bible (Jeremiah 7:18; 44:17-19, 25).

Now open with me to:

Jeremiah 44: The Queen of Heaven’s False Religion

In Jeremiah, we are introduced to this whole idolatrous form of worship.

Jeremiah 44:17-19 (NKJV) But we will certainly do whatever has gone out of our own mouth, to burn incense to **the queen of heaven** ...18 But since we stopped burning incense to **the queen of heaven** ...19 The women also said, “And when we burned incense to **the queen of heaven** and poured out drink offerings to her, did we make cakes for her, to worship her, and pour out drink offerings to her without our husbands’ permission?”

Do you know where the title of the “Queen of Heaven” came from? It came right out of Egyptian idolatry, Isis and Osiris. It has nothing to do with the New Testament at all.

And if you have ever heard that the **Queen of Heaven** is Mary, and wondered where that came from—look at these words in Ezekiel 8:12-16.

The prophet Ezekiel is taken by God into the temple, and there he sees idols. God is very unhappy. To see what is offending God so greatly, he’s shown this scene:

Ezekiel 8:13-14, 16 (NKJV) And He said to me, “Turn again, and you will see **greater abominations** that they are doing.” 14 So He brought me to the door of the north gate of the LORD’s house; and to my dismay, **women were sitting there weeping for Tammuz**. 16 So He brought me into the inner court of the LORD’s house; and there, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men with **their backs toward the temple of the LORD** and their faces toward the east, and **they were worshipping the sun** toward the east.

There it is, the idolatry of Babel exported to Israel: the worship of the virgin goddess in Jeremiah 44 called the Queen of Heaven; and the worship of her son Tammuz, as they wept the 40 days awaiting his resurrection in Ezekiel 8. Here we find in God's Word:

⁶ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Prophecy for Today*, p. 133.

Semiramis & Tammuz: Lent & Romanism

Let me just give you some interesting details from a book entitled, “*The Two Babylons*” by Alexander Hislop. The worship of **Semiramis** throughout history has often had these elements:

- **Semiramis** was called the Queen of Heaven;
- **Semiramis** was worshipped by the offering of a wafer, or cake;
- **Semiramis** began the practice of 40 days of weeping over Tammuz before the feast of celebrating his resurrection.
- The mystery cults around **Semiramis** also taught of a place of purgatory.⁷

The worship of Mary as the Queen of Heaven and the 40 days of Lent for her Son, has no basis in Scripture, but rather developed from the pagan celebration of Semiramis’ mourning forty days over the death of Tammuz before his alleged resurrection—another of Satan’s mythical counterfeits.

There are some people in the Catholic Church who have met Jesus Christ and I praise God for that, but they had to do it circumventing their own theology, if they even knew their own theology.

So how did they get all that into the Church? We’ll find out next time.

Christ's message for them and to us today is: *Stay separated from false doctrine and evil practices.*

2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1 (NKJV) Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? 15 And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? 16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “**I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.**” 17 Therefore “**Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.**” 18 “I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty.” 7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us **cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.**

⁷ John MacArthur preached this in a Mother’s Day message on 5/14/72