

ARE YOU IN BABYLON?



And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stone and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations, even the unclean things of her fornication, and upon her forehead a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT...

Rev 17:4-5

Are you in Babylon????

And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. 3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.

*4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. **Rev 18:2-4***

With this powerful scripture, the admonition to leave Babylon is clear. But what is Babylon? How do you know if you are in Babylon? We will attempt to answer these questions by finding what the scriptures say about the characteristics of Babylon. Based on identifying these characteristics, we should be able to recognize if we are in Babylon and if we need to come out.

In order to identify the characteristics of Babylon, we will focus on the following aspects:

1. What is Babylon?
2. Definition of the word “Babylon”
3. Characteristics of ancient Babylon
4. Pictures of Babylon in prophecy
5. Characteristics of the religious systems during Jesus’ first advent

1. What is “Babylon”?

The Old Testament scriptures describe Babylon as a city and an empire that existed during those times. We know that Babylon WAS a world power, but that power was overthrown (in the time of Daniel) and exists no more. So what could the scriptures regarding Babylon be referring to in the New Testament? By the time of Jesus’ first advent, Israel was under the Roman empire and the Babylonian empire was long gone. There are indications in scripture that the city of Babylon did exist in the days of the Apostles. Peter sends his greetings to the church at Babylon in 1Pet 5:13, but historians agree that by this time the city was far from the grand city it once was.

Revelation is well known for being a book of symbols with prophecies that are difficult to understand. Yet in this book (written late in the Apostle John’s life) the term Babylon is referred to quite often. In Rev 14, an angel is declaring Babylon fallen AFTER the gospel is preached to every nation, tongue, and people – so it must be declaring something future from John’s day. In Rev 17, the woman with “Babylon” written on her forehead, is drunk with the blood of the saints and martyrs of Jesus. We know there have been martyrs for Jesus for upwards of 1500 years after Jesus died on the cross. So the “Babylon” in the book of Revelation is a symbol of something, and we would submit that the name is used to denote the FALSE CHURCH. As we proceed with this article we will attempt to show the scriptural proofs for this allegation, but for now we will give the following reasons:

1. Babylon was once a golden cup – meaning the true church had God’s divine blessing, but that cup over time has been filled with abominations and has become Babylon. (Jer 51)
2. Babylon is depicted as a woman – a harlot. Christ’s church is also pictured as a woman – a bride, the lamb’s wife. Christ’s bride is a chaste virgin, Babylon is a harlot because of her fornication with the kings of the earth.
3. The garments of the priests of God in the Old Testament (in charge of disseminating the law of God and performing the sacrifices) were of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet with precious stones. The

woman (harlot) is dressed in similar attire (although with some key things lacking). (Ex 36 – 39, Rev 17:4)

Babylon = False Church

2. Definition of the word “Babylon”

The word “Babylon” or “babel” is a word of Hebrew origin that occurs more than 250 times in the Old testament and 12 times in the new testament. Strong’s concordance for both the Hebrew (894) and Greek (897) define the word as “confusion”. In fact, the Bible also defines this word in Gen 11:9

Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

This account is referring to the collaboration of mankind to build the tower of Babel for evil purposes. Because they all spoke the same language, God saw that through the ability to clearly communicate they would be able to devise all kinds of sinful plans. (Gen 11:6) Because such great evil would have occurred too soon in His plan for mankind, and because God promised to never destroy the earth again, He caused great confusion among the people by giving them different languages. That way there could be no great collaboration amongst the people until God’s due time.

CHARACTERISTIC: CONFUSION

In searching the internet for various definitions of the word, the site www.yourdictionary.com has the following:

Baby·lon (bab’ə län’, –lən)

ancient city on the lower Euphrates River (in what is now central Iraq), the capital of Babylonia: noted for wealth, luxury, and wickedness

www.thefreedictionary.com shows 2 definitions:

Bab·y·lon¹

The capital of ancient Babylonia in Mesopotamia on the Euphrates River. Established as capital c. 1750 B.C. and rebuilt in regal splendor by Nebuchadnezzar II after its destruction (c. 689 B.C.) by the Assyrians, Babylon was the site of the Hanging Gardens, one of the Seven Wonders of the World.

Bab·y·lon²_{n.}

1. A city or place of great luxury, sensuality, and often vice and corruption.
2. A place of captivity or exile.

CHARACTERISTIC: WEALTH, LUXURY, CORRUPTION

Wikipedia also provides another definition for Babylon:

“The name *bab-ilu* in Akkadian means "gate of god" (from bab "gate" + ilu "god"). The word "babel" can also be seen to mean "gate of god" (from bab "gate" + el "god").”

Matthew chapter 7 describes two gates: the narrow gate that leads to life and the wide gate that leads to destruction.

13 *Go in through the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many are the ones who go through it. 14 *For narrow is the gate, and constricted is the way that leads away into life, and few are the ones who find it.**

For Babylon to claim to be the “gate of god” could be taken from a few different standpoints. Since “god” is not capitalized, it could be seen as the gate of the gods (false), and since we know ancient Babylon worshipped many false gods, this could be appropriate.

Another approach is that spiritual Babylon, the false church, could claim to be THE gate to THE GOD – meaning that they claim the only way to God is to be a part of their system. From John 14:6: “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” Note that Jesus does NOT say that to come to the Father you must be a part of this group or that group. No, you must go through the gate which is Jesus, and Jesus only.

CHARACTERISTIC: CLAIMS TO BE “GATE TO GOD”, THE WAY TO GOD

3. Characteristics of ancient Babylon

Most of us remember learning about ancient Babylon in school. Nebuchnezzar built a large city with beautiful gardens, one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world. But Babylon had a history long before Nebuchnezzar.

From the website www.livius.org:

“**Babylonia** is the Greek name of what the inhabitants knew as *Mât Akkadî*, the fertile alluvial plain between the Euphrates and Tigris. This was the heartland of the Babylonian Empire, which dominated the ancient Near East between the fall of the Assyrian empire (612 BCE) and the rise of the Achaemenid Empire (after 539). Its capital was Babylon.”

Because the land was between 2 major rivers, it was very fertile and capable of producing a variety of crops in addition to providing habitation for many animals. This great fertility brought great wealth to Babylon.

CHARACTERISTIC: WEALTH

Ancient Babylon was also Polytheistic. They worshipped many gods including:

Anu, Enlil, Ea, Marduk, Sin, Shamash, and Ishtar

Read more: <http://www.cliffsnotes.com/WileyCDA/LitNote/Mythology-About-Babylonian-Mythology-Major-Babylonian-Gods.id-83,pageNum-20.html#ixzz0b7spgoOD>

While historians may not always agree on the function of the particular god, the fact that the ancient Babylonians served many gods and the fact that their god Marduk usurped authority over all the others is generally agreed upon. From www.encyclopedia.com:

Marduk, ancient god of Babylonia and chief god of the city of Babylon. His cult rose to prominence in the reign of Hammurabi, and Marduk became the omniscient king of the pantheon—the creator of mankind and the god of light and life. In his various aspects he was the successor of the Sumerian earth god Enlil.

Therefore assessing the religious aspects of the ancient people, we can see that their worship of gods changed over time.

CHARACTERISTIC: SERVING MANY GODS/NOT SERVING SUPREME GOD

4. Pictures of Babylon in prophecy

“Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity; for this is the time of the LORD’S vengeance; he will render unto her a recompence. Babylon hath been a golden cup in the LORD’S hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad. Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed: howl for her; take balm for her pain, if so be she may be healed. We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed: forsake her, and let us go every one into his own country: for her judgment reacheth unto heaven, and is lifted up even to the skies.” Jer 51:6-9

“And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.” Rev 17:4-5

The “golden cup” is an important concept in these scriptures. It shows that initially God’s blessing was upon the true church before it became Babylon (confusion). The golden cup (vessel) could likely represent God’s word – the Bible. The Bible contains the doctrines (wine). God’s true doctrines were given to His church (the woman), but over time this woman polluted the doctrines with her fornication (illicit relationships with earthly governments) and became not just a harlot, but the mother of harlots.

The Jeremiah scripture also encourages fleeing from Babylon in order to avoid being destroyed with her. While this was impossible to do in ancient Babylon because the Lord’s people (Israel) were held captive, in spiritual Babylon the Lord’s people (followers of Jesus) are captivated by her intoxicating wine. If they refrain from the wine (put away her doctrines and study God’s word), they will recognize the damaging effects of those doctrines, identify them as contrary to God’s teachings in the Bible, and be able to flee out of Babylon.

In the Revelation scripture it is also important to note what the woman is wearing. She arrayed herself with the colors of royalty and decked herself with gold, precious stones, and pearls. Contrast this with what the Bride of Christ is wearing:

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. Rev 19:7-8

Another possible link to the golden cup: the events detailed in Daniel 5 where Belshazzar, king of Babylon is throwing a party and improperly uses the gold and silver vessels from God’s temple in Israel (which Nebuchadnezzar took) for him and his guests to drink from. As they were misusing God’s vessels and getting drunk, within the hour the handwriting appeared on the wall. Daniel translated that writing and shortly thereafter Belshazzar was killed and the city had fallen to Darius the Mede.

CHARACTERISTIC: WEALTH, LUXURY, CORRUPTION, ILICIT TIES TO EARTHLY GOVERNMENTS

5. Characteristics of the religious systems during Jesus' first advent

By looking at the religious systems during Jesus' time, we can get a glimpse of the types of characteristics abhorred by God by those who claim to be priests of God. These characteristics can also be applied to spiritual Babylon because she was once sanctioned of God, but has become something God abhors and will destroy. Our scriptural proof that we can apply these characteristics to the false church comes from Revelation chapters 2 and 3 – the messages to the 7 churches. In 2 of these messages: Smyrna and Philadelphia, the message includes those which say they are Jews, but are actually from the synagogue of Satan. These Churches are Christian churches set up after Jesus died and nailed the law to the cross, so the mention of false Jews here must be symbolic of the false church. Also, the message to Thyratira regarding Jezebel is also a clue regarding the characteristics of the rulership in Israel correlating to the “rulership” in the false church. Jezebel was the true power behind her husband King Ahab, just as Babylon was/is the true power behind many of the rulers of the earth.

Matthew 23 has a whole list of concerns with the religious system (scribes and Pharisees) during Jesus' first advent. Jesus is describing the reasons why those who sit in Moses' seat (those who were sanctioned of God to mediate God's law) were being cast off.

“Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted. But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous,

And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.” Matt 23:1-38

Lets just look at a few of the reasons the religious system of Israel was being cast off:

- They burden the people while they live free from the burden
- They do their works to be seen of men
- They love the “elevated status” of their position which “entitles” them to the best seats, etc..
- They love their title of “Rabbi” or “Master”, not remembering that there is only one true Master
- They shut up the kingdom of heaven
- They pretend to make long prayers
- They compass sea and land to make one proselyte
- Pay tithes but forget about judgment, mercy, and faith
- They clean the outside of the cup and platter, but inside full of extortion and excess
- Beautiful outwardly, but inside full of uncleanness
- Righteous outwardly, but inside full of hypocrisy and iniquity
- They killed the prophets which were sent to them for guidance

1. They burden the people while they live free from burden. Matt 23:4

Revelation 18:7 ties in specifically with this. *“How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.”* She lived deliciously while the people struggled. There are many historical reports of churches taxing the nations to the point where the nations could not bear it. Refusal to pay the exorbitant taxes was met with excommunication and war. The pride in her heart says she still had her husband even though she was fornicating with the kings of the earth. This part of the verse correlates with Isa 47.

Isa 47:1-10 is a prophecy of literal Babylon taking the nation of Israel captive, but note the correlations in verses 6 through 8 to Revelation and Matthew 23. These correlations are scriptural evidence that we can tie together; ancient Babylon, spiritual Babylon, and the Scribes and Pharisees.

Isaiah 47:1-10

- 1 Come down, and sit in the dust, **O virgin daughter of Babylon**, sit on the ground: *there is* no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate.
- 2 Take the millstones, and grind meal: uncover thy locks, make bare the leg, uncover the thigh, pass over the rivers.
- 3 Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen: I will take vengeance, and I will not meet *thee as* a man.
- 4 *As for* our redeemer, the LORD of hosts *is* his name, the Holy One of Israel.
- 5 Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called, The lady of kingdoms.

6 I was wroth with my people, I have polluted mine inheritance, and given them into thine hand: **thou didst shew them no mercy; upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke.**

7 *And thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever: so that thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it.*

8 *Therefore hear now this, thou that art given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children:*

9 But these two *things* shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their perfection for the multitude of thy sorceries, *and* for the great abundance of thine enchantments.

10 For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness: thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, **I am, and none else beside me.**

The chapter is directed at the “virgin daughter of Babylon”, but in verse 6 we see that Babylon itself is included because this verse is describing how God gave Israel over to Babylon, and that Babylon laid upon them a heavy yoke (burden). In verses 7 and 8 this daughter (including Babylon) says she will be a lady forever and will not sit as a widow. Revelation 18:7 above states the same thing, that spiritual Babylon will sit as a queen and be no widow. Matthew 23:4 describes the scribes and Pharisees with the same characteristics of burdening the people as ancient and spiritual Babylon.

CHARACTERISTIC: LIVING RICHLY AT THE EXPENSE OF OTHERS, PRIDE

2. They do their works to be seen of men. They love the “elevated status” of their position which offers them the best seats, etc..., they love to be called Rabbi.. Matt 23:5-7

The scribes and Pharisees were reluctant to relinquish their status when Jesus came. They wanted the people to continue to look up to them, not Jesus. They had placed a lot of effort in attaining their position as the ones “closest to God”, God’s representatives, and through their lack of humility failed to recognize the true pathway to God – Jesus. They were willing to kill Jesus to hold on to this status.

John 11:47 Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles.

48 If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.

It seems as if the building of the Tower of Babel was an effort with the same motive. Men were trying to reach heaven and get to God by their own works, to elevate themselves. They wanted to become well renowned and have high status, and to disregard the Lord’s will of spreading out in the earth. God saw that attaining this would have opened them up to things much worse.

Gen 11:4 And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

5 ¶ And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.

6 And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

7 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.

8 So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.

9 Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

Another link between the scribes and Pharisees and Babylon is in Revelation 2 in the messages to the churches of Ephesus and Pergamos.

Re 2:6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

Re 2:15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

From the following website: <http://www.church.sierra-vista.az.us/church/tst/nicolaitanes.htm> - in an article THE DOCTRINE OF THE NICOLAITANES By Bruce De Lay

“To understand this doctrine, one must simply break down and define the word Jesus used to describe it. **“Nicolaitanes”** means **“Victorious over the people; a follower of Nicolaus, a heretic”**. ... The meaning can be better seen in the phrase: **“to conquer the laity”** (from “nikos - to conquer”; and “laos” - where our word “laity” comes from). Laity means “the people, or the public”. “

In Revelation we see that the false church contains this Nicolaitan spirit of trying to attain victory over the people. Isn't this exactly what the scribes and Pharisees were trying to do by killing Jesus? “Conquering” means having power and influence over the people, and the evilness of this spirit indicates this power comes either by force or by deception. As the contrast, Jesus' influence comes through His example and His service. From the same article:

“So how does the Nicolaitan doctrine live and breathe among us today? Anyone who uses their leadership position to manipulate others is bumping up against the thing Jesus hates. ... The Lord wants us to be under His control, no one else's. But even He doesn't use such tactics of manipulation. He wants willing obedience, not contrived. ... Jesus rules by example and through serving. A Nicolaitan rules through manipulation and control. ... Nicolaitan authority is false authority. Therefore a believer is not required to submit to it. Nicolaitan authorities may try to label you as a rebel, but Christ must reign supreme, regardless of what others say.”

The religious leadership in Jesus' day was doing this exact same thing, trying to exert influence over the people by manipulation and deceit. On numerous occasions they tried to trick him, and when that didn't work they gathered a hearing in the wee hours of the morning to sentence Him to death.

CHARACTERISTIC: EXALTING THEMSELVES, SEEKING RENOWN, RULE BY MANIPULATION/DECEPTION

3. They shut up the kingdom of heaven. Matt 23:13

First of all, let's define the kingdom of heaven.

Shutting up the kingdom of heaven could have a variety of meanings. If we look at the greek word used for “shut up” in this passage:

2808  kleio *kli'-o*, a primary verb; ; v

AV-shut 12, shut up 4; 16

1) to shut, shut up

2) metaph.

2a) to cause the heavens to withhold rain

2b) to shut up compassion so that it is like a thing inaccessible to one, to be devoid of pity towards one

2c) to obstruct the entrance into the kingdom of heaven

Most of the time it is used in the New Testament, it is referring to a door being shut. The other few times such as in Rev 11:6 and Rev 20:3, it can refer to shutting up heaven so it doesn't rain, or shutting up the devil in the bottomless pit so that he can not escape. Since all these use the same Greek word, let's try to apply these concepts to Matthew 23.

If the scribes and Pharisees were shutting up the kingdom of heaven, it could mean:

1. They were obstructing others from entering because they were not teaching the nation regarding God's law, for if they had, the nation would have been in expectation of the Messiah based on the time prophecies in Daniel.
2. They did not want to recognize the Messiah and the dispensational shift that was taking place. God's kingdom was transitioning from the earthly kingdom with Israel as His chosen people, to a heavenly kingdom with His son as king, and the lamb's wife (called out of the world) as joint heirs with him. The call was going only to Israel, but because of their unbelief it eventually opened up to the gentiles. If the scribes and Pharisees subscribed to this shift, then they would lose their power and status in the nation.
3. They didn't believe in a heavenly hope and therefore taught there was none. This would be a typical belief of Jews at that time because they were never promised a life in heaven as a nation. It wasn't until Jesus "opened the way" that those who followed Him could receive a spiritual body and be a part of the kingdom of heaven.

In looking at the tower of Babel, the people of the land wanted to build this tower for the purpose of reaching Heaven, making a name for themselves, and so they couldn't be scattered throughout the earth. (Gen 11:4) Another thought is that the tower was meant to save them should there be another flood in the future. This thinking was in direct opposition with God's promise to never destroy the earth again. Such a lack of faith caused them to take matters into their own hands and devise evil by building an alternative "gate to God". It is possible that in their thinking, the only way to God was through this tower.

If this chapter can be applied to the religious systems of this day, how might they be shutting up the kingdom of heaven? It appears they may do it in a similar fashion.

1. Some "Christian" systems today do NOT recognize that the ONLY way to heaven is through Jesus and participating in His sacrifice. Some systems claim that good works/deeds will get you to Heaven, others claim that all you need to do is "believe" on Jesus.
2. Some "Christian" systems teach that THEY are God's representatives on earth, and the only way to heaven is through membership in THEIR system, denying that ALL have direct access to God. They place man-made obstacles between mankind and God such as the priest and purgatory.
3. Some systems teach that the heavenly calling has been closed and the only calling now is to God's kingdom on earth.

CHARACTERISTIC: OBSTRUCTING THE TRUE PATH TO GOD – JESUS, FALSE CLAIM THAT THEY ARE THE ONLY WAY TO GOD

4. Their outward appearance was beautiful and righteous and obedient, but inside they were full of extortion, excess, uncleanness, hypocrisy, and iniquity.

In Revelation, the woman Babylon is wearing glorious attire – which happens to be similar to the high priest's garments of glory and beauty as shown in Exodus.

Rev 17:4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH

Ex 28: 15 ¶ And thou shalt make the breastplate of judgment with cunning work; after the work of the ephod thou shalt make it; of gold, of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine twined linen, shalt thou make it. 16 Foursquare it shall be being doubled; a span shall be the length thereof, and a span shall be the breadth thereof. 17 And thou shalt set in it settings of stones, even four rows of stones: the first row shall be a sardius, a topaz, and a carbuncle: this shall be the first row.

Notice the similarities: they both are wearing purple, scarlet, gold, precious stones

Also notice the differences: Babylon is a woman while the high priest is a man, the high priest is also wearing blue which is absent from Babylon, and Babylon has pearls which are absent from the high priest.

The reason for comparing these two is shown in what the high priest pictures. The glorious garments of the high priest are put on AFTER all the sacrificing is completed on the day of atonement. This pictures Christ head and body (or Jesus and His church) which reign in God's throne. By Babylon putting on these glorious garments, the thought is that she already reigns – even without the bridegroom or the completion of the church's sacrifices.

However, the Apostle Paul urges women of the church are told not to wear pearls, gold, or costly array: 1Tim2:9 ¶ In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array.

Outwardly beautiful with the appearance of righteousness, but inwardly full of hypocrisy, iniquity, uncleanness, etc. As mentioned previously, the true bride (church) should be dressed in fine, clean linen which is the righteousness of saints. The fact that Babylon is not wearing linen shows Babylon as the false church, trying to usurp the position of high priest by adorning herself in similar attire.

2Thes 2:3-4 ¶ Do not let anyone deceive you in any way, because that Day will not come unless first comes the falling away, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, the one opposing and exalting himself over everything being called God, or object of worship, so as for him "to sit in the temple of God" as God, proclaiming that he himself is God.

Is it necessary to mention the exposure in our day of the uncleanness of the catholic church and the pedophilia scandals that are widespread? Do we need to mention the worst part about it is the cover-up by the church?

CHARACTERISTIC: APPEARANCE OF BEAUTY AND RIGHTEOUSNESS, USURPATION OF POWER AND GLORY, INWARDLY CONTRARY TO CHRIST-LIKENESS

5. They killed the prophets which were sent to them for guidance. Matt 23:34

Just as Israel (once God's chosen people but cast off for their lack of faithfulness) murdered the messengers and servants God sent to redirect them onto a proper path, Babylon (once God's chosen people but also cast off for lack of faithfulness) too persecuted and murdered the saints and servants sent to them by God. Which of the reformers was not hunted down, excommunicated, and/or burned at the stake?

Re 17:6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

Re 18:24 And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.

A few examples of the blood shed:

Excerpts from Fox's book of Martyrs (<http://www.biblebelievers.com/foxes/fox104.htm>)

Persecution of the Waldenses in France

Popery having brought various innovations into the Church, and overspread the Christian world with darkness and superstition, some few, who plainly perceived the pernicious tendency of such errors, determined to show the light of the Gospel in its real purity, and to disperse those clouds which artful priests had raised about it, in order to blind the people, and obscure its real brightness.

By the year of Christ 1140, the number of the reformed was very great, and the probability of its increasing alarmed the pope, who wrote to several princes to banish them from their dominions, and employed many learned men to write against their doctrines.

At length, Peter Waldo, or Valdo, a native of Lyons, eminent for his piety and learning, became a strenuous opposer of popery; and from him the reformed, at that time, received the appellation of Waldenses or Waldoys.

Pope Alexander III being informed by the bishop of Lyons of these transactions, excommunicated Waldo and his adherents, and commanded the bishop to exterminate them, if possible, from the face of the earth; hence began the papal persecutions against the Waldenses.

Persecutions of the Albigenses

The Albigenses were a people of the reformed religion, who inhabited the country of Albi. They were condemned on the score of religion in the Council of Lateran, by order of Pope Alexander III. Nevertheless, they increased so prodigiously, that many cities were inhabited by persons only of their persuasion, and several eminent noblemen embraced their doctrines.

The reformation of papistical error very early was projected in France; for in the third century a learned man, named Almericus, and six of his disciples, were ordered to be burnt at Paris for asserting that God was no otherwise present in the sacramental bread than in any other bread; that it was idolatry to build altars or shrines to saints and that it was ridiculous to offer incense to them.

The martyrdom of Almericus and his pupils did not, however, prevent many from acknowledging the justness of his notions, and seeing the purity of the reformed religion, so that the faith of Christ continually increased, and in time not only spread itself over many parts of France, but diffused the light of the Gospel over various other countries.

In the year 1524, at a town in France, called Melden, one John Clark set up a bill on the church door, wherein he called the pope Antichrist. For this offence he was repeatedly whipped, and then branded on the forehead. Going afterward to Mentz, in Lorraine, he demolished some images, for which he had his right hand and nose cut off, and his arms and breast torn with pincers. He sustained these cruelties with amazing fortitude, and was even sufficiently cool to sing the One hundredth and fifteenth Psalm, which expressly forbids idolatry; after which he was thrown into the fire, and burnt to ashes.

An Account of the Inquisition

When the reformed religion began to diffuse the Gospel light throughout Europe, Pope Innocent III entertained great fear for the Romish Church. He accordingly instituted a number of inquisitors, or persons who were to make inquiry after, apprehend, and punish, heretics, as the reformed were called by the papists.

At the head of these inquisitors was one Dominic, who had been canonized by the pope, in order to render his authority the more respectable. Dominic, and the other inquisitors, spread themselves into various Roman Catholic countries, and treated the Protestants with the utmost severity. In process of time, the pope, not finding these roving inquisitors so useful as he had imagined, resolved upon the establishment of fixed and regular courts of Inquisition. After the order for these regular courts, the first office of Inquisition was established in the city of Toulouse, and Dominic became the first regular inquisitor, as he had before been the first roving inquisitor.

Courts of Inquisition were now erected in several countries; but the Spanish Inquisition became the most powerful, and the most dreaded of any. Even the kings of Spain themselves, though arbitrary in all other respects, were taught to dread the power of the lords of the Inquisition; and the horrid cruelties they exercised compelled multitudes, who differed in opinion from the Roman Catholics, carefully to conceal their sentiments.

The most zealous of all the popish monks, and those who most implicitly obeyed the Church of Rome, were the Dominicans and Franciscans: these, therefore, the pope thought proper to invest with an exclusive right of presiding over the different courts of Inquisition, and gave them the most unlimited powers, as judges delegated by him, and immediately representing his person: they were permitted to excommunicate, or sentence to death whom they thought proper, upon the most slight information of heresy. They were allowed to publish crusades against all whom they deemed heretics, and enter into leagues with sovereign princes, to join their crusades with their forces.

In 1244, their power was further increased by the emperor Frederic II, who declared himself the protector and friend of all the inquisitors, and published the cruel edicts, viz., 1. That all heretics who continue obstinate, should be burnt. 2. That all heretics who repented, should be imprisoned for life.

CHARACTERISTIC: USING POWER TO MURDER GOD'S TRUE FOLLOWERS, ALLIANCES WITH CIVIL GOVERNMENTS FOR EXECUTING HER JUDGEMENTS

Conclusion

Based on numerous scriptures, we have identified the many characteristics of Babylon – the FALSE church to which God urges all of His people to come out of her. These characteristics include:

- Confusion
- Wealth, luxury, corruption
- False claims to be the gate to God
- Serving many false gods not recognizing the ONE TRUE God
- Illicit ties to earthly governments
- Living richly at the expense of others
- Pride/arrogance
- Exalting themselves

Seeking renown
Rule by manipulation/deception
Placing obstructions on the true path to God
Appearance of righteousness and beauty, but inwardly unclean
Shedding of innocent blood

Do any of these characteristics look familiar to you? If you recognize any of these qualities in your religious organization, then it could mean you are in Babylon. The goal of this article is to help those who are searching to be able to identify the characteristics of the Babylon spirit so that if they find themselves involved in these systems, they can do as God commands and come out. Lord willing, this will serve the purpose intended.