

Chapter 14

Mystery: Babylon

I really wanted to cover the last days chronologically. But there are a few subjects (like angelic preaching and the 144,000 witnesses) that must be handled topically because they develop over, or last throughout, much of the Tribulation period. (And then, of course, there's the fact that I have no earthly idea of precisely when some of these things show up.) I don't feel too bad about it, though; John faced the same problem when he penned the Revelation; apparently, he just wrote things down in the order in which they were shown to him. The book, as far as we can tell, has chronological aspects but is not strictly linear—it's peppered with parentheticals, detours, flashbacks and instant replays from other camera angles. I'll try to provide some sense of the timing as we proceed by correlating Revelation events with prophecies from elsewhere in scripture. In the mean time, forgive me if I skip around a little.

All that being said, note that we're well over halfway through the Revelation when we see one of the primary players for the very first time: **"And another angel followed, saying, 'Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.'**" (Revelation 14:8) If we can figure out who or what Babylon is, we'll be well on our way toward understanding what angers Yahweh in this present world. Useful information indeed.

The angel here was referring to scripture: **"Babylon is fallen, is fallen! And all the carved images of her gods He has broken to the ground."** (Isaiah 21:9) When Isaiah penned these words, Babylon's (i.e., the city's) glory days were still a hundred and fifty years in the future. But by the time John's angel repeated the refrain, Babylon as a political entity had been dead for half a millennium. So it's clear that neither messenger was talking about temporal military or political power. Rather, both passages speak of God's judgment upon idolatry. Fornication or adultery, as we saw in Hosea's prophecy, is invariably a picture of false worship—of giving to another "god" what rightfully belongs exclusively to Yahweh. Isaiah talks about the "carved images of her gods," but idolatry goes beyond the worship of "graven images." It is *anything* that takes the place of God in our lives.

I can't speak for the whole world, but I know Americans pretty well. We worship some very strange things. Of course, there are the big three (power, sex, and money), but we obsess over pointless fluff as well. The toys. The career (or worse, the work itself). The car, the house, the *lawn*, for cryin' out loud. Relationships, recreation, children, friends, health, political causes—even church. I have heard of fundamentalist Christians being accused of worshipping the Bible.

Intrinsically, there's nothing wrong with any of these things—not even power, sex, and money—but if these things obstruct or take the place of our personal relationship with Yahweh, they become wrong; they become our “carved images.” The good things in our lives are gifts from God—they're not supposed to be mistaken for gods themselves.

Babylon, then, is a code word for idolatry. But it's also a physical place (a few miles down the river from Baghdad), with a history that collided with that of God's people on occasion. Some Bible expositors teach that it will rise again as a world power in the last days. And at first glance, a few passages like this one seem to support that view: **“Then the angel who talked with me came out and said to me, ‘Lift your eyes now, and see what this is that goes forth.’ So I asked, ‘What is it?’ And he said, ‘It is a basket that is going forth.’ He also said, ‘This is their resemblance throughout the earth: here is a lead disc lifted up, and this is a woman sitting inside the basket.’ Then he said, ‘This is Wickedness!’ And he thrust her down into the basket, and threw the lead cover over its mouth. Then I raised my eyes and looked, and there were two women, coming with the wind in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the basket between earth and heaven. So I said to the angel who talked with me, ‘Where are they carrying the basket?’ And he said to me, ‘To build a house for it in the land of Shinar [Babylon]; when it is ready, the basket will be set there on its base.”** (Zechariah 5:5-11) God is telling the prophet that he intends to “keep a lid on” the whore of Babylon until her “house” is ready. Is this a literal place, or only a metaphor for the form she will assume in the last days? Let's look carefully at the record.

We first see the city in Genesis, shortly after the flood. **“Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. 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. Then they said to one another... ‘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.’ But Yahweh came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. And Yahweh said, ‘Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.’ So Yahweh scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. Therefore its name is called Babel, because there Yahweh confused the language of all the earth; and from there Yahweh scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.”** (Genesis 11:1-9)

A cursory reading of this passage might lead you to think that Yahweh was a petty and vindictive God, afraid that people would get so smart they would accomplish great things. So in a jealous fit, He used his magical powers to squash their dreams like a bug, changing their language comprehension so they couldn't

communicate with each other. That picture couldn't be farther from the truth. What actually happened was that Noah's great grandson Nimrod, along with his wife, Semiramis, began a secret cult that deified its founders. It came to be called a "mystery religion" because its hidden doctrines were revealed little by little to its followers—the really nasty stuff remaining a secret until the devotee was too compromised to back out. Yahweh chose to divide the populace to slow this insidious false doctrine's spread among men.

Though the details have been muddled by time and a plethora of conflicting traditions, the religion seems to have been based upon the aggressive personality of Nimrod and the insatiable ambition of Semiramis. Nimrod was known as "a mighty hunter before the Lord," that is, a warrior, a conqueror, a despot—the first of his breed (after the flood, at least). His ruthlessness led to his being worshiped as a demi-god during his lifetime.

Semiramis may have been born of humble stock, but her beauty elevated her to the position of Nimrod's queen. Being the wife of a demi-god had its perks, as you might imagine. But Nimrod died unexpectedly. Faced with seeing her position of power evaporate for want of a male sitting on the throne beside her, Semiramis became pregnant—long after Nimrod's untimely demise (oops)—and bore a son, Tammuz, at the winter solstice. The boy, of course, was claimed to have been miraculously conceived, and he was marketed as the fulfillment of the Messiah prophecy of Genesis 3:15—the seed of the woman who would crush the head of Satan. Semiramis was positioned as the holy (if not quite virgin) mother, the queen of heaven, having been impregnated by her now-fully-deified late husband. This made Semiramis the prototype for the goddess of fertility. Because he was born near the winter solstice, on December 24th or 25th, Tammuz was worshiped as the Sun God, the conqueror of winter's darkness, celebrated by the burning of the "log of the son," or "yule" as it's called in Babylonian.

Alas, no good scam lasts forever. According to the legend, Tammuz was killed in his fortieth year by a wild boar. (By some accounts, it was Nimrod who was boared to death, but the legend stuck to Tammuz, who was supposedly the reincarnated Nimrod. Other accounts state that Nimrod was slain by Shem for his idolatry and cut in pieces as a warning.) Satan needed a rebirth or resurrection miracle if he hoped to pass his boy off as the Messiah (remember, the Genesis 3 prophecy had said the serpent would only "bruise his heel"), so Tammuz was said to have been brought back to life as a miraculous egg that descended from heaven into the Euphrates River, from which hatched a rabbit. Tammuz' birth was celebrated every December 25th by hanging silver and gold-covered balls upon an evergreen tree. The phallic inference was lost on no one. It was a fertility cult, after all.

Every spring, the faithful would feign sorrow, “weeping for Tammuz,” for forty days (cf. Ezekiel 8:14), one day for every year of his life. At the end of the mourning period, though, there was a day of great rejoicing for the reincarnated “son of god.” That day they would ritually slay and eat the boar that had killed Tammuz. There was also a ritual in which the high priest of Babylon would impregnate a lucky “volunteer,” whose child could be expected to be born the following winter. Here’s where the thing got really demonic. The highlight of this annual spring festival of Semiramis (who was also known as Astarte by the Assyrians, Inanna by the Sumerians, Asthoreth by the Caananites, and Ishtar by the Akkadians) was when the priest would kill the three-month-old baby who had been conceived during the previous year’s celebration, dyeing Ishtar eggs red in the innocent child’s blood.

I don’t know how to break it to you, but your “Christian” holiday traditions are a lie, right out of the pit of hell. It was not Yahshua who was born on the 25th of December; it was Tammuz and every subsequent permutation of the “sun god.” Evergreen trees hung with festive balls, holiday candles, mistletoe, yule logs—even the Christmas goose—all have pagan origins, and they’re all an abomination to Yahweh. And Easter? Forty-day Lenten fasts preceding the big day (and lascivious carnivals preceding Lent), colored eggs, and the traditional Easter ham were all instituted to honor not Christ, but Satan. It’s no wonder Yahweh declared swine’s flesh unclean in the Torah.

All of this was Satan’s counterfeit of Yahweh’s plan for the redemption of mankind. The center of worship for Nimrod’s mystery religion was Babel, or Babylon, one of four cities he founded on the plain of Shinar, in the Euphrates river valley. Yahweh, of course, could have wiped out Nimrod’s little scheme on day one. But as we have seen time and again, God is (pardon the expression) pro-choice. He won’t force anyone to love him, but rather lets us choose, for good or ill, and then usually gives us time to repent of our bad choices. That’s exactly what He did here. The earth’s languages were divided in the days of Peleg, who was six generations removed from Noah—two generations past the time of Nimrod (though on a different branch of the family tree). And why did Yahweh choose to split up the families of the world like this? It was primarily to separate—to keep holy—the people through whom would someday come the Messiah. We see this pattern recurring in scripture, first here, then with Abraham, then with Moses at the Exodus, then with Joshua at the time of the conquest of Canaan. And what were the Canaanites doing that was so horrible they had to be wiped out? They were following the mystery religion of Babylon!

The city of Babylon went through its ups and downs, finally to reach its glory days under Nebuchadnezzar in the sixth century B.C. At the very height of its power, as the Chaldeans were carting Yahweh’s rebellious people off in chains,

the prophet Jeremiah, “Mr. Diplomacy,” declared concerning his nation’s new masters, **“They shall not take from you a stone for a corner nor a stone for a foundation, but you shall be desolate forever,’ says Yahweh.”** He gave the quartermaster of the captive Jewish King Zedekiah a message to take with him to his new home in exile. **“Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that would come upon Babylon, all these words that are written against Babylon. And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, ‘When you arrive in Babylon and see it, and read all these words, then you shall say, “O Yahweh, You have spoken against this place to cut it off, so that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but it shall be desolate forever.” Now it shall be, when you have finished reading this book, that you shall tie a stone to it and throw it out into the Euphrates. Then you shall say, “Thus Babylon shall sink and not rise from the catastrophe that I will bring upon her. And they shall be weary.””** (Jeremiah 51:26, 60-64) “Desolate forever,” and “sink and not rise” sound to me like the *city* of Babylon is finished as a political entity. It will never rise from the sands of Iraq to be anything more than an archaeological dig, a tourist attraction. The *spirit* of Babylon however, the insidious fraud meant to replace Yahweh in the hearts of men, is a different story. That never left.

Let’s rejoin John as he copes with information overload from one of the angels: **“Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, ‘Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.”** (Revelation 17:1-2) John’s introduction to this “harlot” tells us several things. She exerts her seductive influence over many gentile nations. (“Waters,” or the sea, invariably symbolizes gentiles in scripture, while “land” or “earth” represents Israel.) Then we see that political rulers and common citizens alike have been “committing fornication” with the harlot. That, as we have seen, is a picture of abandoning our proper relationship with Yahweh our God for a dead-end liaison with someone else—*anyone* else. It’s hard to find appropriately evil-sounding words for this in English because we have trivialized the crime of adultery. We call it an “affair,” or a “fling,” or we try to whitewash the filth by using clinical terms like “marital infidelity.” But it’s betrayal, pure and simple—treason, treachery. The angel, however, tells John that the harlot is about to experience judgment.

And notice something else: Whereas the leaders were consciously and purposely cheating on God, the inhabitants of their lands had to be “put under the influence” first. They (that is, *we*) have been drugged, duped, lied to, and seduced by our politicians, our media, our cultural heroes, and even some of our clergy. They have put us into a drunken stupor with sweet sips of intoxicating fairy tales

(e.g., “humans are the glorious end product of eons of evolution.... There’s no god directing our destiny.... Marriage may be a lifestyle you can choose to add convenience and gratification to your life, but homosexuality and ‘serial monogamy’ work just as well.... There is no real right or wrong way to live your life, because there is no such thing as absolute truth.... It doesn’t matter what god you believe in, so long as you are sincere in your beliefs....”). It’s no excuse, you understand; we are no less guilty. But when the whore of Babylon keeps trying to buy us drinks, woe to the bartender who keeps pouring them.

“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 seven heads and ten horns. 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. And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.” (Revelation 17:3-5) Now there’s something you don’t see every day. (Or do you?)

The symbolism is flying hot and heavy here, so let’s try to break down the scene into its component parts. The woman, the harlot, is seen sitting on a “scarlet beast.” This beast is doubtless the same thing we saw back a few chapters **“having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name.”** (Revelation 13:1) In other words, it’s the Antichrist and his kingdom. The woman is seen riding the beast, so it’s clear they’re not one and the same. She’s in control, or at least that’s the way things appear. She’s probably got her sharpest spurs on. *Yee-haw!* This harlot has apparently been doing a land-office business, for she’s grown rich plying her trade, the *real* oldest profession, seducing people away from the God who loves them. She may be nothing but a two-bit spiritual whore, but her bag of quarters is full to the brim. And although she’s been a mystery, able to disguise her true identity and intentions since she turned her first trick in the Garden of Eden, John now sees the I.D. badge that’s tattooed on her forehead: “Hello. I’m a really bad person,” or words to that effect. This is the strongest language in the entire Bible. God apparently doesn’t like her very much.

And why, exactly, is that? **“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.”** (Revelation 17:6) Okay; that would explain it. Whomever she couldn’t seduce, she killed—or at least tried to. Sounds exactly like Potiphar’s wife back in Genesis 39. John probably recognized that the harlot represented false religion, misplaced faith, but this scene didn’t compute. How could a religious entity persecute the saints of God and still prosper? Remember, John was from a culture that more or less equated riches and success with blessings from God. He was having trouble figuring out how such a nasty woman could have gotten so far in life.

“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 seven heads and the ten horns. 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.’” (Revelation 17:7-8) It will transpire that the “mystery” that the angel promised to sort out had little to do with who the harlot was or how she got so successful, but rather how she would end up. Same thing for the beast. The messenger left the rest for us to ponder on our own. And ponder we should, for the only way to avoid the harlot’s snare and the beast’s rage is to know who they are and what they’re up to.

For the post-rapture world, the particulars won’t be a mere academic exercise. The harlot by this time will have already achieved her goals; it’ll be too late to stop her from getting “drunk on the blood of the saints.” And although the true Church will have been removed from the earth by this time, the new believers who come to faith after the rapture, the Tribulation saints, will be powerless to effect change or protect themselves from her. Names, dates, and GPS coordinates will all be beside the point to them. All they’ll be able to do is support each other and wait out the storm. What matters for us is that we understand that Yahweh *will* deal with both the harlot of Babylon and the beast she rides. This much is clear: the unsaved multitudes will “marvel” at the beast’s wonderfulness: they’ll think he’s the coolest thing they’ve ever seen. Men will weep with joy in his presence and women will swoon at his feet. The newly redeemed will not be similarly impressed; they’ll merely be afraid.

The bottomless pit, or abyss, is mentioned four places in Revelation. In chapter 9 it’s seen as a sort of holding tank for some rather interesting demonic beasties whom we’ll discuss in due time. In chapter 11, it is identified, as it is here in 17, as the home town of the beast. It is seen one last time in chapter 20 as a place where Satan will be bound for a thousand years.

There’s also a telling little incident recorded in Luke: **“Then [Yahshua and His disciples] sailed to the country of the Gadarenes, which is opposite Galilee. And when He stepped out on the land, there met Him a certain man from the city who had demons for a long time. And he wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, ‘What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me!’ For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had often seized him, and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and shackles; and he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the wilderness. Jesus asked him, saying, ‘What is your name?’ And he said, ‘Legion,’ because many demons had entered him. And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss.”** (Luke 8:26-31)

And one more interesting reference presents itself. **“The angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day...”** (Jude, v.6) Here it is made clear that demons are really fallen, rebellious angels—those who wanted what Yahweh had not given to them.

Apparently, then, the bottomless pit, or abyss, is a place where some—but not all—demonic spirits have been incarcerated, awaiting their final judgment in chains and darkness. Whether or not they’re consigned to this place during the time of man seems to depend on how dangerous or destructive they are to us. Yahshua allowed Legion’s demons to go into a herd of pigs (who were only good for Tammuz worship and making footballs anyway) instead of sending them directly to the bottomless pit. Thus they presumably weren’t all that bad as demons go (although try convincing the poor guy whom they had possessed all that time). It is also terrifyingly obvious that these demons from the abyss can get out on parole from time to time, at Yahweh’s discretion, of course.

Back in Revelation, the angel continues explaining to John what’s going on. But he’s not handing him the answers on a silver platter. The angel merely points out the puzzle pieces; he doesn’t say where they fit in. There are almost as many theories about the meaning of this passage as there are expositors, so I can’t be dogmatic about its interpretation. But what I’ve found is intriguing, to say the least. **“Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time. And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition.”** (Revelation 17:9-11) The angel says that the beast “was, and is not,” and “will be” again as he makes his way out of the bottomless pit on his journey toward perdition. He is not, and yet is. Well, I’m certainly glad we’ve got *that* cleared up.

Okay, just kidding. We’ll tackle this mess, though it doesn’t look easy. When the beast is said to have been, but is not, and yet is, it is clear (at least to me) that he is a demon—or, alternately, a man *possessed by* a demon—who has been released from the abyss in the past, has been sent back there for bad behavior, and will be released again during the Tribulation. As in the case with Legion, the demon takes over the persona of the man he inhabits. Contrary to popular opinion, this demon cannot be Satan himself, for they have divergent destinies. For all practical purposes, he ceases to be harmful to anyone while he’s locked up (which Satan has never been so far). But he’s especially nasty, so God keeps him chained in the abyss most of the time. This more or less ends the debate about whether or not the Antichrist is demon possessed. He is, but not by Lucifer.

The beast’s seven heads are now identified, sort of. The angel says the seven heads are indicative of two separate things, though apparently related somehow.

The first is a location, the place where the woman, the harlot who rides the beast, is enthroned. Thus the beast and the woman are connected here; it's as if they're perceived as being the same thing, though we'll soon see that they most definitely are not. The place (or what it represents) is described as "sitting on seven mountains." A religious system influential enough to control governments? One sitting on seven hills? This seems easy enough. The seven mountains must mean Rome, legendary for its seven hills, Aventine, Caelian, Capitoline, Esquiline, Palatine, Quirinal, and Viminal. Maybe. You see, as Rome expanded, it annexed more territory, and more hills—Janiculum and Pincium, for example. But the moniker "the city of seven hills" stuck. I for one am willing to buy this theory; after all, the "windy city" is still Chicago, even on dead-calm days.

A blind man could see where this is heading. So it's worth noting that although the Roman *empire* reigned supreme, the Roman Catholic Church as such did not exist in John's day. The local body of believers there to which Paul had written his epistle was just one of many churches scattered throughout the empire at the time, no more influential than the assemblies at Antioch or Ephesus. John had no ax to grind here, no hidden Protestant agenda. He's just reporting what he's seen and heard. If the shoe fits....

The seven kings are a bit more problematical. Many expositors have tried to tie the kings to past and future gentile kingdoms: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the revived end-times Roman empire alluded to in Daniel. But a careful examination of this list reveals some apparent flaws. Yes, in John's time, Rome "is," and will come around again for another go—a short one. But the beast, who "is not," is said to be the eighth, and is at the same time one of the seven. If Rome "is," and the beast "is not," (though he "was" previously) then the beast can't be Rome. Besides, nations don't go to "perdition," in the sense of being consigned to hell, which seems to be the meaning of the phrase. Demonic spirits (and people) do. I think we need to look for another explanation.

A theory that more directly illuminates the "Rome-on-seven-hills" idea is that the seven kings are seven emperors of Rome. Several sources I consulted named Julius Caesar, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero as the five who had fallen; the sixth, the one who "is" is Domitian (who was reigning during the traditional date for the penning of the Revelation, about A.D. 90-95); and the Antichrist is the seventh, who after being slain and resurrected (we'll get to that in a bit) is also the eighth. Although I think we're getting warm, this hypothesis also has its flaws. According to Suetonius, there were not seven, but *twelve* Caesars from Julius to Domitian. Sure, you can discount several of them (four of 'em claimed the throne more or less simultaneously in A.D. 68/69), but you can hardly sweep Caesar Augustus under the rug. He reigned all the way from 31 B.C. to A.D. 14. You'd

also have a hard time ignoring Vespasian and his son Titus (of let's-go-sack-Jerusalem fame).

But like I said, I think we're close. The first thing to note is that one of the seven Kings, the sixth, was said to be in power in John's day. "One is." That establishes beyond a doubt that Rome and/or its ruler(s) are in view. But where does the line of "kings" start? The first real emperor of Rome was not Julius Caesar (who technically led the empire under the auspices of the Republic), but his great-nephew and adopted son Octavian, who assumed the honorific title Augustus Caesar. Number two was Tiberius, in whose time Yahshua of Nazareth ministered in the Roman province of Judea. Next came Gaius, a.k.a. Caligula, followed by Claudius. Number five was Nero, whose life bears further study—he was the first Roman emperor to officially persecute the Church. Nero's suicide in 68 left the empire in a chaotic leadership vacuum that it took a year to fill. Galba, Otho, and Vitellius all got their shot but couldn't manage to consolidate their grasp on power (which is hard to do after you're dead), and thus couldn't properly be called "kings." The man who ended up on the throne was a soldier, a commoner: Vespasian, who ruled from 69 to 79—interrupting his invasion of Judea to seize the throne. If you're keeping score, you've noticed that he's in position number six, making him the one who "is," that is, the king who was in charge when John had his vision. That would make number seven, the king who has "not yet come," Titus, the destroyer of Jerusalem and its temple. Did he "continue for a short time," as the prophecy said? He reigned from June 24, A.D. 79 to September 13, 81—less than two and a half years. I'd call that a big yes.

Bear in mind that Yahweh's prophecies don't deal with the world in general, no matter how significant certain episodes may seem to us. He only reveals events in the context of His plan of redemption. So even though Julius Caesar was a military genius pivotal in the history of Rome, even though the senile and parsimonious Galba, the scheming bankrupt senator Otho, and the slothful epicurean Vitellius technically held the throne for a few months each, and even though Rome continued to seat "emperors" on its throne for hundreds of years after Titus, none of this is germane to prophecy. But Yahshua was born during Augustus Caesar's reign. He ministered, died and rose again during that of Tiberius. His Church gained a foothold among the Jews during the reign of Caligula, and the first of millions of gentiles were reached under Claudius. Nero was the first to show God's people what it was like to endure systematic unjust tribulation for the name of Christ. And Vespasian, with his son Titus, brought the curtain down on the generation of Jews who had rejected Yahshua their Messiah, leaving not one stone of their temple atop another, precisely as He had predicted. Thus every Roman emperor after Titus is beside the point, from God's perspective. (Okay, Constantine counts, but not in this context.)

If you're sharp though, you've noticed that this scenario has its own little snag. John is assumed to have received his Patmos vision in the 90s, not the 70s. Tradition says that he was exiled to the Aegean island during a great persecution—presumably Domitian's. But traditions get garbled. What if he were sent off under *Nero's* purge instead, in the 60s, when Peter and Paul bought the farm? That would have put John on Patmos during Vespasian's reign, an elder well into his seventies but not quite the ancient apostle of legend—yet. (Tertullian, by the way, agrees with me. And everyone concurs that he didn't *die* on Patmos.) That, my friends, makes everything fit like a glove. Except for our precious traditions. Of course, those traditions came down to us from the same people who brought us Christmas and Easter. Enough said?

Anyway, I'm glad my salvation doesn't depend on knowing what's going on here. Once again, everybody in the parade is out of step but me. Well, almost everyone. Preterist theologians (those who insist that none of these prophecies have future fulfillments) have, in their desperate efforts to paint *Nero* as the Antichrist, pointed out the dearth of hard historical evidence placing John on Patmos in the 90s. I'm no preterist (as you may have noticed) but I'm grateful for the assistance. (I'm not suggesting, by the way, that John didn't *live* well into his nineties, a beloved and respected elder of the Church at Ephesus. I'm only saying that his Patmos exile was a bit earlier in his life—that the Revelation was written sometime between 69 and 79 A.D.)

It's interesting that the preterists should home in on Nero, however. There is a connection—an important one. Remember Revelation 17:8? **"The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition."** The angel is clearly describing a demon, not a man, a demon who had already come and gone at least once in John's time but would come back to possess the beast, the Antichrist. In context, this spirit is connected with one of the seven kings, specifically one of the five who had "fallen." The logical candidate, of course, is Nero, the first imperial persecutor of the Christians (and don't forget; it was Nero who sent Vespasian and Titus to Judea to pummel the Jews). So what happens when we compare the historical life of Nero with the prophesied life of Antichrist? We hit pay dirt.

Let's begin with Nero's given name: Lucius (from the Latin *lucis*, light). Sound familiar? Right, Satan's anglicized name is Lucifer (Heylel or Halal, in Hebrew). Nero's father, Cnaeus Domitius, was said to have looked at his son's bloodline and remarked to his wife Agrippina, "No good man can possibly be born from us." *Gee, thanks, dad.* Agrippina later dumped Cnaeus and married her uncle, the emperor Claudius (his fifth marriage). Then she engineered her teenage son's ascension to the throne by assassinating her hubby with poisoned mushrooms, assuring the senate's confirmation of Nero by leaning on her friend

Burrus, who controlled the Praetorian Guard. She appointed the philosopher Seneca to teach her son literature and morals (but not philosophy, which she forbade, saying it would make Nero unfit for government).

From all indications, the Antichrist will begin his reign looking like a popular hero, a merciful peacemaker and forward-looking “friend of the common man,” a rider on a white horse. How does Nero stack up? Historian Will Durant writes, “Nero made the usual obeisance to the Senate, modestly excused his youth, and announced that of the powers heretofore taken by the prince he would keep only the command of the armies....” What was it that Daniel had said about honoring a “god of fortresses”? Durant continues, “When the Senate proposed that statues of gold and silver should be raised in his honor, the seventeen-year-old Emperor rejected the offer; when two men were indicted for favoring Britannicus [his elder step-brother and the rightful heir to the throne], he had the accusations withdrawn; and in a speech to the Senate he pledged himself to observe throughout his reign [the] virtue of mercy.... Asked to sign a death warrant for a condemned criminal, he sighed, ‘Would that I had never learned to write!’ He abolished or reduced oppressive taxes.... The empire prospered within and without.... Parthia signed a peace that endured for fifty years. Corruption was reduced in the courts and the provinces, bureaucratic personnel was improved, and the Treasury was managed with economy and wisdom.... Nero made the far-reaching proposal to abolish all indirect taxes, especially the customs duties collected at frontiers and ports, and so establish free trade throughout the Empire.” So far, he sounds like the perfect politically-correct man (okay, *boy*) for the job.

What does Daniel 11 have to say about the coming prince? **“He shall regard neither the God of his fathers nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall exalt himself above them all.”** (v.37) Nero, though a pagan by birth and upbringing, regarded no god but himself. Suetonius reports, “He despised all cults, and voided his bladder upon an image of the goddess whom he most respected, Cybele.” Cybele, or Rhea, was a permutation of the Babylonian Semiramis, depicted with a turreted crown as the goddess of fortresses. To finance his indulgences, Nero robbed many temples of their votive offerings and melted down their gold and silver idols. But by the age of twenty-five, Nero was himself being hailed as a god. Durant again: “When Tiridates came to receive the crown of Armenia he knelt and worshipped the Emperor as Mithras [the sun god, an incarnation of Babylon’s Tammuz]. When Nero built his golden house he prefaced it with a colossus 120 feet high, bearing the likeness of his head haloed with solar rays that identified him as Phoebus Apollo [ditto: it’s the sun-god Tammuz again].” This reminds us not only of Nebuchadnezzar’s big statue, but also of an image of the beast/Antichrist mentioned in Revelation—something we’ll get to later.

And what was that about not regarding the desire of women? It's not like Nero was averse to the services they could render, but, well, let's just say it wasn't healthy to be a woman in Nero's world. He ignored his wife, Octavia, in favor of an ex-slave, Claudia Acte, of whom he soon grew weary. Replacing her with the beautiful Poppaea Sabina was problematical, however, for they were both married, and Poppaea wouldn't settle for merely being our boy's mistress. Nero divorced Octavia on grounds of barrenness, forcing Poppaea's husband to do the same. Meanwhile, Nero's mother Agrippina came to the innocent Octavia's defense, so the Emperor arranged for mommy to meet with a fatal accident—actually, it took poison, a contrived shipwreck, and finally the sword to “accidentally” kill her. Then the paranoid Poppaea imagined that the exiled twenty-two year old Octavia was plotting against her (that's what *she* would have done in her shoes) so she goaded Nero into having her killed as well. Ironically, the pregnant Poppaea was herself done to death by a kick to the stomach, apparently administered by Nero in response to her nagging about his coming home late from the races. Suetonius reports that the grieving Emperor then found a young man named Sporus who closely resembled Poppaea, had him castrated, married him in a formal ceremony, and “used him in every way like a woman.” I think that's about all that needs to be said about Nero's lack of regard for “the desire of women.”

Then of course there's the little matter of burning Rome to the ground in July of 64. Nero made a great show of trying to control or contain the fire while it raged, and of providing relief for the hundreds of thousands of homeless Romans in its aftermath—not to mention placing the blame squarely on the shoulders of the Christians, whom everyone just *knew* were antisocial and bigoted enemies of the Roman way of life. This is just one more example in a long string of striking parallels between Nero and the prophesied Antichrist. Am I suggesting, with the preterists, that Nero fulfills the prophecies? No, though he is clearly a type of what is to come. What I am suggesting is that the same demon who possessed Nero will be released from the bottomless pit to take up residence in the sorry carcass of the Antichrist sometime during the last seven years. Remember John's words: “**The beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition.**” (Revelation 17:11)

But I digress. (I've been known to do that.) The angel isn't through explaining the scene to John: “**The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. 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.” (Revelation 17:12-14) We are being given a bit of insight into the nature of the Antichrist’s rise to power (not to mention his fall). Elsewhere we have seen that three of the ten kings are “ripped out by the roots,” that is, they cease to exist as separate political entities. But here we see that Antichrist’s kingdom is not assembled through military conquest but is rather handed over to him willingly by the governments of the ten nations because they believe he is the answer to their problems. They all agree: he’s the Man. Then we’re given a snapshot of the Antichrist’s whole career: he and his followers fight against Yahshua. Yahshua wins. End of story. Note that the “Lamb,” Yahshua, is not alone, but He nevertheless overcomes the Antichrist and his allies all by Himself. As we shall see later, “those who are with Him” are the raptured saints, now the Bride of Christ.

Then the angel sheds more light on the relationship between the harlot and the beast. **“The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. And the ten 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. For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled. And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.”** (Revelation 17:15-18) The harlot dominates not just one gentile nation, culture, or religious tradition, but many—I would venture to say *all* of them. Here we have our first peek at her fate: she will be destroyed by the Antichrist and his new Roman confederacy. Talk about strange bedfellows: the Antichrist’s ten-nation kingdom ends up being the sword in Yahweh’s hand (just as Sennacherib’s Assyria and Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon were). Yahweh hates the whore of Babylon because she’s responsible for luring His people away from His love. The Antichrist hates her because she’s a rival for power—one who stands in the way of his insatiable ambitions. It’s worth noting that the Greek word for “city,” *polis*, means a place with walls around it; the root from which it’s taken means “battle, fight, or war.” Calling the woman a “city” implies her readiness to defend her position. The plot thickens.

Many people have been tempted to equate the whore of Babylon with the Roman Catholic Church and call it a day. They’re on the right track, though a little short sighted. I believe it goes far, far beyond that. Yes, the Catholic Church is today’s most obvious repository of the rites and rituals of the Babylonian mystery religion, but Babylon’s scarlet thread runs through the fabric of almost every religion on the face of the earth. At its heart is a turning away from the revealed will and plan of Yahweh, adopting instead an alternate path—*any* alternate path; Satan doesn’t particularly care which one you choose (at least not yet).

He's happy, of course, with die-hard atheistic secular humanists who have convinced themselves that there is no God. But he's just as happy with devout and pious Catholics (and Protestants and Orthodox Christians too, for that matter) who rely on good works and church tradition to earn merit with God on some grand cosmic scale of good deeds versus bad. I think Satan particularly enjoys the irony of Islam, because it holds well over a billion adherents in slavery in spite of the fact that it's an incredibly stupid excuse for a religion. Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and a plethora of other "religious philosophies" serve his purposes quite nicely as well. So does ignoring God all together while trying to build a comfortable life for yourself and your family. Babylon, in the long run, is found in anything and everything we put between ourselves and our Creator.

I said that mystery Babylon permeates *almost* every religion. There are two—and only two—exceptions, and one of them isn't really a religion at all. The first is Judaism, which today is little more than the strict observance of a set of traditions handed down not from Nimrod, but from Moses—via a long line of scribes and rabbis who've added layer upon layer of obfuscating minutia. (Judaism took a serious left turn early in the second century A.D., when Rabbi Akiba took control.) Its adherents, who are virtually all Jews racially, follow these traditions as faithfully as they can, but they don't know what they mean. They've lost sight of the fact that the Torah, the *Instructions*, are an elaborate rehearsal of Yahweh's plan for the redemption of all mankind. If the Jews understood this, they would have already become part of the second uncorrupted religion, which is not actually a "religion" at all in the technical sense, but merely a personal relationship with *their* God, Yahweh. Christianity at its core is nothing but Judaism fulfilled—Judaism purified. The shame is that few Christians understand the Law of Moses any more than the Jews do. It's *not* an onerous collection of 613 rules and regulations from which we were released by the risen Christ. He Himself said he had not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it. The Torah is, rather, a beautiful picture of Yahweh's love for us. It's there to instruct us about God's intentions. It's the Owner's Manual for a successful life.

If you ask most people about the Ten Commandments, they'll tell you (if they know anything at all about them) that they prohibit bad things like lying, stealing, murder, and committing adultery. True enough, but that's not where they start. The heart of the Torah begins with a description of our proper relationship with the God who made us. **"I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, Yahweh your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. You shall**

not take the name of Yahweh your God in vain, for Yahweh will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.” (Exodus 20:2-7)

Recognizing that our English translations invariably start off poorly by getting the most important part—the name of God, Yahweh—wrong, substituting it with a mere title “The LORD,” perhaps it would be to our benefit to paraphrase these first three commandments for modern American ears. “I am Yahweh, the *only* One whom you are to worship. I am He who delivered you from your chains of slavery. Therefore, don’t worship, revere, or bow your heart to anything or anyone else. Don’t let the work of your hands come between us, either—in other words, don’t spend all your time and resources chasing after the things of this world. And don’t equate Me with the things I’ve made for you to enjoy, for I made *you* for *My* enjoyment. I hate it when you turn your back on Me, though I’ve built you with the ability to do that. If you reject My love, it’s not good for you—you’ll die without My constant care; the harm you’re doing to yourself will have repercussions for generations to come. But if you reciprocate My love, I will delight in showering you with mercy and blessing. And be careful not to accept or advance anything that is false, deceptive, or destructive in My name, or associate these things with My character, or say that they’re My word. They are not! I *can’t* ignore it when you choose to worship counterfeit gods, for I am holy.”

The very next commandment reminds us of Yahweh’s plan of sevens: God said He worked for six “days” and rested on the seventh, revealing the pattern He has ordained for us. Man first did this through the observance of the weekly Sabbath, codified in the fourth commandment. The ultimate fulfillment of this principle will be our millennial “rest” after six thousand years of trying to get it right. Don’t give up. We’re almost there.

So if by far the largest segment of “Christianity” is the Roman Catholic Church, how does this institution correlate with the identity of the harlot of Babylon? At this point, it seems I’ve pointed out two mutually exclusive definitions: first that **“the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits,”** which can only be Rome, and second, **“The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues... And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth,”** which is so far beyond Rome, it’s silly. I’ve also hypothesized that false and errant religion is only part of the puzzle, that Babylon at its most basic is comprised of anything that takes the place of Yahweh in our affections, religious or not. And you’re wishing, would you *please* make up your mind!

Okay, let me explain what I’m thinking. I’ll preface my remarks by stating flatly that I’ve known nominal Roman Catholics who seemed to me (for what that’s worth) to be true children of Yahshua. I can’t bring myself to dismiss all Catholics out of hand, as so many have done, as mere “puppets of Popery.” On

the other hand, it is only insofar as they ignore (or deny) some of the teachings of their church that they are able to come to a knowledge of the truth. And don't look so smug. The same holds true for most Protestant denominations these days. At one time or another we have all assumed we were doing God's will, when in fact we were merely following our own man-made traditions. We need to repent: stop being willingly ignorant, and start paying attention to what Yahweh has communicated to us in His word. Don't assume that just because you and your people have "always done it that way," it's what Yahweh wants.

That being said, the Roman connection with the harlot of Babylon is too blatant to ignore. I have to conclude that Catholicism has something (though not *everything*) to do with it. At first glance it seems that the prophecy about "reigning over the kings of the earth" is out of date; there was a time when the Roman Catholic Church did indeed extend its political authority over much of the world (at least the western world)—and wielded virtually uncontested power within Europe. But those days are thankfully gone. Today the church wields influence, not power. The pope is respected, even honored, among the nations; he is not necessarily obeyed. Popes no longer threaten excommunication at the drop of a hat to achieve their personal agendas—that ploy doesn't work any more, for although captains and kings may still long for heaven, they no longer believe in hell.

If we honestly look at the world around us, we observe that manifestations of false doctrine (a.k.a. Babylon) are often *regional*. Europe (especially the Europe that fell within the old Roman empire) has been joined at the hip with the Roman Catholic church since the days of Constantine. Because of their conquest by Spain and Portugal, Latin America largely shares Europe's Roman Catholic leanings, albeit with some indigenous superstitions blended in. North America is a hodgepodge of religious heritage, most heavily influenced today by Protestantism, Catholicism, and secular humanism (and don't kid yourself; secular humanism, atheism if you will, is a "faith" in every sense of the word). The Middle East is dominated by Islam, as Asia is by Hinduism and its many children. Communism (in its role as a religion) and its cousin secular humanism are most influential in Russia and China. And Africa is a strange, self-destructive mixture of Islam, Christianity, and Animism.

Obviously, I'm using an extremely broad brush here, missing spots and slopping outside the lines. My point is simply that Roman Catholicism is one of the primary manifestations of Babylon *within Antichrist's own kingdom*. In point of fact, it's not the only one. Islam is another; as we have seen, the entire eastern half of the old Roman empire—formerly known as Byzantium—is now enslaved under this particular curse. Outside of the neo-Roman empire, Babylon takes other forms—though she will ultimately meet the same fate. So at the very least,

when **“the ten horns which you saw on the beast... hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh, and burn her with fire,”** we are seeing what the ten governments who give their power to the Antichrist will do to the Vatican, who rode Europe like a beast of burden for fifteen hundred years, and to Islam, which swallowed Byzantium whole. This is a metaphor, a picture, a *preview* of the judgment that will fall upon spiritual Babylon as a worldwide entity. It is a prophecy that will be fulfilled in a literal sense of all the world’s religions—every last one of them. As we shall see, the Antichrist will ultimately absorb and usurp all “faiths” into the worship of himself and the dragon who empowers him—Satan. It’s the only thing Satan really wants.

As much as Roman Catholicism has come to embody the spirit of Babylon in the western world, Islam is actually far closer to Satan’s ideal religion. Our scriptures are full of subtle warnings against it, if only we knew what to look for. Islam is the truest modern permutation of the Ba’al worship that was so roundly denounced throughout the Old Covenant scriptures. The reason we in the West don’t recognize this is our abysmal lack of knowledge—our willful ignorance—of its roots and teachings. Ancient Israel was warned not to tolerate the practice of Ba’al worship in any of its forms. Their compromise brought them to ruin. Today, our politically correct tolerance of this poisonous doctrine will bring us down just as surely, for Islam is the child of Ba’al. You can’t keep a dragon for a pet. When it grows big enough, it will devour you.

But there’s more to the whore of Babylon than satanic religions. She has not only “spiritual” aspects but also a political and financial side. It is therefore a dangerous mistake to identify her exclusively with one thing or another. She is, rather, many things—but with one thing in common: a burning hatred for Yahweh, His people, and His precepts. The harlot is described in Revelation 18:10 as “that great city.” I think we might come close to the heart of the matter if we mentally replace the word “city” with “system,” a concept for which there was no direct equivalent in the Greek of John’s day. If a system—ubiquitous, interlocking, interdependent, prepared to defend itself, and driven by self interest—was what Yahweh meant to convey, He couldn’t have picked a better word than *polis*, translated “city.”

I’m going to have to save the ultimate fate of Babylon for later discussion, for her ultimate destruction apparently happens quite suddenly and a bit later in the Tribulation than we are discussing here. Suffice it to say that it will be Yahweh, not the Antichrist, who will finally pour out His wrath on greater Babylon in all its guises. (If you can’t stand the suspense, go read Revelation 18. I’ll catch up.)

When you look at it this way, it’s shockingly obvious that the whole world is already permeated with the poison of Babylon, the crime of systematically accepting and advancing in the name of Yahweh that which is not of Him. The

third Commandment has been shattered beyond recognition (thanks in part to our woefully inadequate English translations). We dare not dismiss spiritual Babylon as a future phenomenon, or worse, a myth. While the *Ekklesia* will be gone from the earth before God finally delivers His wrath upon the harlot, we would still do well to heed the warning of Jeremiah: **“Flee from the midst of Babylon, and every one save his life! Do not be cut off in her iniquity, for this is the time of Yahweh’s vengeance; He shall recompense her. Babylon was a golden cup in Yahweh’s hand, that made all the earth drunk. The nations drank her wine; Therefore the nations are deranged.”** (Jeremiah 51:6-7)

The harlot sitting on **“peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues”** speaks of something beyond “religion,” a pervasive, world-wide system united in the cause of controlling all of mankind through its influence **“over the kings of the earth.”** I can see you rolling your eyes, mumbling, *that doesn’t exist, except in the minds of paranoid conspiracy theorists*. I don’t know—maybe it *does* exist, but we’ve lived so close to it for so long, we can’t see it. It’s hard to observe the blindfold that covers your own eyes.

Frankly, what I’m about to share with you is so weird I wouldn’t have given it a second glance if not for the fact that it fits biblical prophecy so well. Having already observed that *religions* like the Roman Catholic Church or Islam are but two of many manifestations of the whore of Babylon, I went looking for other candidates who might fit her description. Since the story of Babylon’s fall (which we’ll cover in due time) makes it clear that false religion is only part of the puzzle, I was on the lookout for secular or quasi-secular organizations that wield inordinate control over commerce and money, who are dedicated to bringing about one-world government and/or religion, or that generally share Satan’s pride, greed, or *modus operandi*. It would be a bonus if they had some connection with Roman Catholicism and Islam. And I found one—an octopus-like entity that fit *all* the criteria so well its scary. They’re so nefarious it’s hard to believe they even exist, yet their existence and activities are no particular secret—there are scores of websites and books that openly discuss and explain their program. Still, it’s hard to talk about them without sounding hysterical and paranoid—even to myself.

That being said, myths are seldom baseless; legends get started *somewhere*. This one starts in Bavaria. Adam Weishaupt was a Catholic priest, a Jesuit-trained professor of Canon Law at Inglecot University. In 1770 he defected from the Church and, financed by several powerful international bankers, began an admittedly Satanic organization called the Illuminati. The name, according to

Weishaupt's writings, is derived from "Lucifer" and means "holders of the light." The ultimate goal? World domination under Luciferian ideology.

Weishaupt completed his "business plan" on May 1, 1776. Never one to shrink from a challenge, his stated objective was the destruction of all existing governments and religions, replacing them with one all-powerful government run by (and for) the elite ruling class under the banner of Lucifer. This would be accomplished, the plan said, by dividing the masses into opposing camps on whatever social, political, or economic issues presented themselves, and then arming each side with weapons or rhetoric—the tools of conflict appropriate for each situation. (So much for "Blessed are the peacemakers.") Pitting one side against the other would leave the Illuminati—the elite of society—with more power and influence after each successive conflict.

This would not happen overnight, of course. Weishaupt realized that it would take many generations to achieve his goal. Building the Illuminati and positioning it for increasing influence would be achieved through a four-pronged plan of attack. First, in order to gain control over men already in high places within government or commerce, they would be compromised—either bribed with power, sex, or money, blackmailed with scandals Illuminati operatives had engineered, or threatened with financial ruin or physical harm. They would find the "soft spots" of influential men and simply squeeze. If they couldn't turn the man, they would settle for taking his assets and ruining him professionally. If you want to know how it works in practice, check out my first book, co-authored with Craig Winn, *In the Company of Good and Evil* (CricketSong Books, 2001). It tells the true story of how the three-billion dollar publicly traded company Winn had built (with a little help from yours truly) was taken over through the maneuverings of a Washington-based "religious" power-broker organization called the International Fellowship (a name we disguised in the book). Yahweh protected Winn, but his company (and *mine*, by the way) was stolen and sucked dry.

Second, bright and gifted students from upper-class families were to be singled out for special training—with such means as the Rhodes Scholarship—preparing them for a future role in the Illuminati. They were to be encouraged in their internationalist leanings and taught that talented and high-born people (like them) had a right and a destiny to rule over the unwashed masses. Third, the young people thus recruited would be placed behind the scenes in governments and businesses as "experts" and specialists. They were to be the power behind the throne—that is, until they could seize the throne for themselves. And fourth, Weishaupt knew that absolute control of the press—the media—was essential for indoctrinating and distracting the masses.

Weishaupt watched the progress of the American revolution with great interest. There is evidence that several of our revolutionary “heroes,” Thomas Jefferson, for instance, were familiar with—and complimentary of—his writings. He decided his first order of business would be to foment a similar revolution in France. In 1784 he issued orders to his agent Maximilien Robespierre to begin preparations. The entire plan was put into book form by a German named Zwack, but the book fell into the hands of the authorities when the dispatch rider carrying it to France was struck by lightning. (You can’t say God wasn’t trying to help us figure it out.)

France’s monarchy brushed off the warnings as being too preposterous to be believed (oops), but the Bavarian government *was* sufficiently alarmed. They raided the lodges of the Grand Orient (as they were then known) and outlawed the Illuminati in 1785, publishing the details of the conspiracy a year later. This document reached all the heads of state of Europe, who promptly dismissed it all as hysterical paranoia. Weishaupt, driven underground in Bavaria, began efforts to infiltrate secret societies like the Freemasons. A high-degree Mason in the Scottish Rite, John Robison, got far enough inside to learn the truth. When the French revolution broke out (on schedule) in 1789, Robison wrote his own exposé of the Illuminati, entitled, hysterically enough, *Proof of a Conspiracy to Destroy All Governments and Religions*. It too was ignored.

The Napoleonic wars offered the Illuminati their first large-scale chance to play one side against the other. International bankers controlled by the group bankrolled both Britain and France. An inventive twist was introduced when the English press falsely reported that Napoleon had won the battle at Waterloo. The London stock market crashed, and the very bankers who were making so much money propping up the war effort were able to buy up vast holdings in English commerce for pennies on the pound. This move amply demonstrated the value of controlling the news media.

Weishaupt died in 1830. The reins of the Illuminati conspiracy were taken up by Italian revolutionary Giuseppe Mazzini, who ran the organization from 1834 until his death in 1872. Mazzini in turn recruited an American General named Albert Pike who was fascinated by the concept of a one-world government, the *novus ordo seclorum*, or new world order, as it was known. He eventually rose to lead this insidious Luciferian society.

In the late 1840s, separate Illuminati factions sponsored and directed two competing philosophical theories, calculated to ultimately divide large segments of humanity into warring factions. The first was the Communist Manifesto, penned by Karl Marx. Its anti-thesis was written by another German, Professor Karl Ritter of Frankfurt University, whose ideas were further developed after his death by Friedrich Nietzsche.

Albert Pike used these source materials to formulate a military blueprint designed to bring the Illuminati's goals to ultimate fruition. His plan, developed between 1859 and 1871, envisioned three worldwide wars, and in general his scenario has proved to be uncannily accurate. The first war would destroy Czarism in Russia, replacing it with Marx's Communist doctrine that the Illuminati had promoted in 1848. (This was supposedly in retribution for a Czar's interference in an early-nineteenth-century Illuminati plot.) The second war, Pike said, would pit Ritter's and Nietzsche's racist "superman" theories against International Zionists (which should be a big red flag signaling Satan's involvement), hopefully elevating Communism in the process to the point where it could hold its own against the combined "Christian" nations. The whole thing transpired as if Hitler had read the script. Balance of power, of course, was considered essential for playing one side against the other—until the Illuminati, under Satan, was ready to assume its rightful place alone at the world's helm.

Pike's vision of the third and decisive war is fascinating. Still fixated on the destruction of the Jews, he imagined a war pitting Zionists against the Muslim world, dragging other nations into the fray—an unwinnable war that would leave the Illuminati's money interests holding all the cards. This is intriguing for two reasons. First, considering when the scenario was conceived, it is amazing that he could identify the players, even in a general way. The doomed Ottoman empire held Islam's reins of power at the time, but the Zionist dreamers held nothing. No one in the 1860s could have foreseen today's Israeli state or the unlikely way it came into being. Pike's version of World War III is still future, of course, but as we shall see, the prophecies of the Bible predict something very similar: Muslims against Jews, sucking in the rest of the world into the conflict. Who knows? Maybe Pike got into Ezekiel and Daniel and figured it out. But if so, he should also have figured out that his dream of a one-world government, a new world order, would be a colossal bust.

The question remains as to whether or not the Illuminati's intricate and far-reaching plans had anything at all to do with what actually happened. Was Pike just a good guesser, or were the Illuminati actually able to foment the major wars of the twentieth century? And if they were powerful enough to do that, what else have they managed to do? Remember, at its heart, the goal of the Illuminati is to place Satan on the throne of God, an objective that identifies it as a cog in the wheel of Babylon. With Lucifer's demonic assistance, they could have accomplished a great deal toward that end. Without it, it's hard to envision them gaining control over a quilting bee. There is a maddening dearth of verifiable facts but the circumstantial evidence is plentiful that they have indeed, within the last two hundred and fifty years, grasped enormous power.

Space and time won't permit a complete study of the Illuminati in this book. But I feel that it offers us a revealing glimpse of what the organizational structure of the whore of Babylon might be like as we enter the last days. If the Illuminati isn't part of Babylon, I'd strongly suspect that some group who looks just like them is. I'll leave it up to you to figure out who they are. But please, don't take my word for any of this. Rather, I would encourage you to do your own research—anybody with a library card or a Web browser can figure this out. To whet your appetite, I would like to present a partial list of organizations compiled by Terry Melanson and published on the website www.ConspiracyArchive.com. We needn't draw all the same conclusions he did, of course, but we'd do well to avail ourselves of the research. Each of the names on this list has been linked directly to the Illuminati:

Religious groups: World Council of Churches; National Council of Churches; World Parliament of Religions; the Vatican; Unity Church; Unitarian Universalist Church; Baha'i; Knights of Malta; plus a plethora of new age groups and liberal protestant denominations....

Secret societies: Freemasonry (Satanic to its core—don't get me started); Skull and Bones (a member of which currently occupies the White House, after having defeated a fellow member in his reelection campaign); Grand Orient Lodge; Grand Alpina Lodge; Knights Templar; Royal Order of the Garter; Priory de Sion; Rosicrucians....

Financial institutions: World Bank; International Monetary Fund; International Bank of Settlements; World Conservation Bank; plus many central banks, multinational corporations, and foundations....

Educational groups: UNESCO; Planetary Congress; World Goodwill; World Union; Esalen Institute; Lucis Trust; World Federalist Association; World Constitution and Parliamentary Association; plus other global peace groups, environmental awareness organizations, and the media establishment....

Political groups: United Nations (surprise, surprise); Council on Foreign Relations; Trilateral commission; Club of Rome; Bohemian Grove; Aspen Institute; Communist Party; plus regional federations like NATO and the EEC, and international labor unions....

Intelligence groups: CIA, FBI, British Intelligence (MI6); Interpol; KGB; plus drug cartels and organized crime syndicates....

It's like the old joke: just because you're paranoid, it doesn't mean they *aren't* out to get you. As I said, I'm not going to take the time to explore every nook and cranny of the Illuminati. But two of these organizations bear further exploration, if only because they're so pervasive and influential in America today. I am fully aware, of course, that the unfolding of Biblical prophecy will not be confined

within our borders. These are merely two examples among many of how the whore of Babylon can operate under our very noses without us being aware of it.

Any good detective will tell you to “follow the money” if you want to find out “who done it.” So let’s do that. Quiz: when did America achieve its all-time lowest national debt? Here’s a hint. It was under the administration of a President who clearly saw the evils inherent in a central bank, a man who firmly believed that money should have something of actual value backing it up (something he called “specie”). Andrew Jackson, our seventh president, abolished the two-decade-old Bank of the United States, an early attempt at a central bank, stating, “The bold effort the present bank had made to control the government, the distress it had wantonly produced...are but premonitions of the fate that awaits the American people should they be deluded into a perpetuation of this institution or the establishment of another like it.” By the middle of his second term, in 1835, the national debt had fallen to \$33,773—the price of a decent mid-sized car today—down from a previous high of \$127,334,934. (The debt had *never* fallen below \$45 million before Jackson’s time; the average was almost \$80 million.)

Fast forward to 1913—a very good year for opponents of Jacksonian sanity. Woodrow Wilson, who favored Jackson’s anathema, a central bank, was voted into office when the bankers of J.P. Morgan and Company threw their weight (and money) behind Teddy Roosevelt’s Progressive Party, splitting the Republican vote and losing anti-bank William Taft his re-election bid. In that landmark year, two interrelated laws were passed. The first was the national income tax (which had been declared unconstitutional in 1895). Its proponents solemnly promised to the American people that it would cap out at one percent of all income under \$20,000, and that it would never increase (ouch!).

And why was an income tax needed? To pay for the crushing national debt that would soon be precipitated by the second law, the Federal Reserve Act (also unconstitutional—see Article I, section 8). This law provided the very thing that Andy Jackson’s fiscal performance had proven was a bad idea—a central bank, with the power to buy and sell government securities as well as providing loans to member banks to enable them to buy them. This, of course, gave the bankers (read: Illuminati) a strong motive for finding ways to *increase* the national debt.

Note that there’s nothing “Federal” about the Federal Reserve system. It is privately owned by its member banks. And get this: seven of its top ten shareholders are based in Europe (the other three are in New York). Required reading on the subject is G. Edward Griffin’s *The Creature from Jekyll Island—A Second Look at the Federal Reserve* (1994-2004), American Media). It’s a cogent and scathing look at what we’ve allowed to happen to our financial well-being, a college level course in how money works. Of course, Griffin doesn’t see the

prophetic ramifications. He thinks our money system can still be fixed. It can't, and it won't be.

Was it just a coincidence that World War I started in Europe the very year following the Federal Reserve Act? Was it coincidence that the U.S. national debt rose from under three billion dollars in 1914 to over twenty-seven billion—a nine-fold increase—by the end of the war? (A similar jump occurred during WWII—from forty-nine billion in 1941 to \$258 billion in '45.) Was it a coincidence that the man who shepherded the Federal Reserve Act through Congress was the same man who authored the Covenant of the League of Nations? Wilson's top aide (and Illuminati "minder") throughout both terms, Colonel Edward M. House, was also the man who negotiated a secret pact with the British government ensuring U.S. participation in the European conflict—*before* Wilson ran for re-election in 1916 (and won) on the slogan "He kept us out of war." Busy boy.

When it became apparent that the U.S. wasn't going to buy into his one-world government scheme, the League of Nations, House and others formed the Institute for International Affairs with an eye toward shifting public opinion. The American branch of this Illuminati promotional agency was to be called the Council on Foreign Relations, which was begun on July 29, 1921. Its founding members included Colonel House, J.P. Morgan, John D. Rockefeller, Paul Warberg, Otto Kahn, and Jacob Schiff—the same group who had pushed through (and profited by) the Federal Reserve System.

Emerging from the 1929 stock market crash unscathed (apparently because they had engineered it) this same group was poised to put their man in the White House in 1932. Franklin Delano Roosevelt's solution to the Depression was for America to borrow huge sums of money from the very men who had caused its fall in the first place. In 1934 he put the last nail in the coffin of Jacksonian fiscal soundness by taking America off the gold standard—a move that opened the door to the unrestrained expansion of the money supply. Since any problem could now be "solved" by borrowing money, and since the supply of money could be expanded to fit any perceived need, the bankers who controlled the Fed could now create profits at will, like turning on a faucet. Instant money: just add trouble. The fox was not merely *in* the henhouse. He *held the mortgage* on it.

It is fitting, perhaps, that it was during the Depression that the Council on Foreign Relations gained control of the top echelons of government in this country. I mean, it certainly makes *me* depressed. Since 1934, almost every U.S. Secretary of State has belonged to the CFR. The CIA has been under the Council's thumb almost continuously since its inception. And forget what you think you know about Democrats versus Republicans, liberals versus conservatives: virtually all presidential candidates since Roosevelt—on both sides of the political fence—have been members of the Council on Foreign Relations,

dedicated to the new world order. (One notable exception, Harry Truman, was advised by an inner cadre of “wise men,” all six of whom were CFR members.) The only real exception to the rule was Barry (“A choice, not an echo”) Goldwater, whose candidacy in ’64 was torpedoed by his own party’s CFR-led Rockefeller wing.

It almost goes without saying that the Council on Foreign Relations was instrumental in the formation of the United Nations. The central plank of their agenda is the surrender of America’s sovereignty and independence to a world governing body controlled by the elite ruling class. Part of the picture is the subjugation of our armed forces under the auspices of the U.N. The nagging question to all of this is *why*. Why do a bunch of elitist bankers and power-hungry politicians want the U.N. to control everything?

They don’t—not exactly. They aren’t particularly interested in world peace, or stopping hunger, eradicating disease, protecting the environment, or any of a thousand worthy causes that the U.N. would claim to support. But taking control of the world one nation at a time is like herding cats—just when you’ve got one cornered, another one slips out of your grasp. No, world domination is far easier to achieve if you can first get everybody to surrender their sovereignty and defense to one central organization, benevolent, democratic, easily corrupted, and relatively clueless.

That’s why they *think* they want a one-world government: so they can rule the world. The real solution to this puzzle is somewhat more sinister. Remember the Illuminati’s founder, Adam Weishaupt? He knew exactly what he was doing, and why: his ultimate goal was to put Lucifer, Satan, the devil, in the driver’s seat. In a way, he succeeded: Since the days of Albert Pike, no one could point to a single man and say, “He’s the leader of the Illuminati.” Because of this, some say it no longer exists. But the truth is, Satan has taken the reins himself. And by now, he has everybody singing out of the same hymnal, even without a choir director.

So am I saying that Bill Clinton and George Bush get together with their other CFR buddies on the weekends to hold satanic rituals and maybe sacrifice a goat at the base of the Washington Monument? No. I can guarantee that ninety-plus percent of today’s CFR members have no idea who they’re working for. They think they’re in it for the money or the power (or in Clinton’s case, the sex). I’m sure some of them even have altruistic motives: they really *believe* that the poor, dumb sheeple of the world need gifted and enlightened shepherds like them. They are mistaken—about many things. In their arrogance, they have become the unwitting pawns of Satan. Paul warned Christians what they were facing: **“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”** (Ephesians 6:12) The elite and powerful members of the Council on

Foreign Relations have no idea what they're doing, who they're doing it for, or why.

When I began this soap-box rant a couple of pages back, I mentioned that there were *two* Illuminati-dominated organizations operating in America that could shed light on the nature (and perhaps the identity) of the whore of Babylon. The Council on Foreign Relations was pretty easy to spot. Treason in high places usually comes to light sooner or later. The other one, however, is in stealth mode, and not only because they style themselves a “secret society.”

At first glance, it's hard to take the Freemasons seriously. To outsiders they come off, at best, like a civic-minded fraternal service organization, or at worst like harmless buffoons, no more (or less) dangerous than Rotarians, Elks, or the Loyal Order of Moose. They seem to be all about secret handshakes, funny hats, and esoteric rituals leading toward incomprehensible grades of achievement called “degrees.” High-degree Masons called Shriners support burn wards and hospitals for crippled children and drive their funny little cars in parades, delighting young and old. It's hard to think of them as members of the Illuminati because Freemasonry is a much older society, one which traces its lineage back thousands of years (if you believe their press). Many of America's founding fathers were Masons. Their public image is one of religious neutrality, welcoming Catholics and Protestants, Muslims and Jews, Buddhists, Mormons, and Hindus—members of any or no religion—to the fold (that is, if you're a Caucasian male—otherwise, forget it).

Though they claim roots as far back as Solomon's temple (or even farther—all the way back to the building of the tower of Babel) it appears that Freemasonry as an organized entity was actually begun by John Dee, a self-styled sorcerer who achieved a position of power in the court of Elizabeth I of England. (There is some evidence that a form of freemasonry was practiced by the Knights Templars, the original international bankers, after they were outlawed and driven underground by the Roman Catholic Church on Friday, October 13th, 1307—a ban engineered by Philip IV of France in an effort to avoid having to repay the vast sums he had borrowed from them—an act that might be reprised in the Last Days.) Blending the occult practices of Catholic heretics like Giordano Bruno and Pico della Mirandola with the Jewish mysticism of the Kabbalah and the black magic practiced by Rabbi Judah Lowe of Prague, Dee's brand of Freemasonry was overtly satanic. But Lucifer prefers to work in the shadows. The group soon

morphed into something that could be embraced—or at least tolerated—in polite society.

In its present form it was heavily influenced—some would say redefined—by our old friend and Illuminati leader Albert Pike, who was the “Sovereign Grand Commander” of the Southern Jurisdiction of Scottish Rite Masonry from 1859 until his death in 1891. His massive tome, *Morals and Dogma*..., is supposed to be read by Masons upon reaching the fourteenth degree. In practice, hardly anybody reads it, and *nobody* understands it. But Pike’s influence pervades the Scottish Rite just as much through his work in editing the rituals of the Masonic degrees. Ex-33rd degree Mason Jim Shaw, in his book *The Deadly Deception*, tells in detail how the rituals were administered. He says, “I had no idea of what I would be swearing to until I was actually hearing and repeating each line. Had I been able to hear or read the oath in advance, I might not have been able to say it. Even while I was taking it as I did, one might expect that the nature of parts of it would have made me hesitate; but I really wasn’t thinking of the nature of the oath....”

The “nature of the oath” was Pike’s satanic philosophy, wrapped up in a cloak of feel-good quasi-religious gibberish. Though Pike made a career out of obfuscating his nefarious agenda, he occasionally stated plainly what was on his mind, as he did on July 14, 1889 to the twenty-three Supreme Councils of the world: “That which we must say to the crowd is, we worship a God, but it is the God that one adores without superstition. [Like I said, clear as mud.] To you, Sovereign Grand Inspectors General, we say this, that you may repeat it to the Brethren of the 32nd, 31st, and 30th degrees—the Masonic Religion should be, by all of us initiates of the high degrees, maintained in the purity of the Luciferian doctrine...” (Quoted by J. Edward Decker Jr. in *The Question of Freemasonry*). Remember this the next time you go to a Fourth of July parade in your hometown and applaud the Shriners in their fezzes and funny little cars. Those guys are *all* 32nd degree Masons—they have all taken blood-curdling oaths honoring Lucifer—disguised, of course, as Osiris, Allah, Shiva, Baal, or Thor—most of them without having the foggiest notion of what they were saying. *Yeah, I know it sounds silly, but you’ve got to say this stuff if you want to be in the club. Where’s the harm in it?*

If you tell the average Mason that he’s worshipping Satan, he’ll laugh in your face. Most never get beyond the third degree and don’t really understand what they’re a part of. To them, Freemasonry is just a fraternity. Most would be shocked to read what Manly P. Hall, a 33rd degree Mason, had to say about the source of enlightenment: “When the Mason learns that the Key to the warrior on the block is the proper application of the dynamo of living power, he has learned the Mystery of his Craft. The seething energies of Lucifer are in his hands, and

before he may step onward and upward, he must prove his ability to properly apply [this] energy.”

To fully understand the relationship between Lucifer and Freemasonry, let’s return to the quote from Pike in the previous paragraph. He goes on to say, “Yes, Lucifer is God, and unfortunately, Adonay [the Hebrew word for “Lord,” supposedly descriptive of Yahweh in the Old Testament] is also god [note his lower case g]. For the eternal law is that there is no light without shade—no white without black, for the absolute can only exist as two gods: darkness being necessary for light to serve as its foil.... Thus the doctrine of Satanism is a heresy, and the pure philosophical religion is the belief in Lucifer, the equal of God of Light and God of good....” At first blush, this sounds contradictory: “Lucifer is God,” but “Satanism is a heresy.” But consider this: “Satan” is not a name; it’s a title, an epithet. It means “adversary.” Pike is actually saying something quite profound, that Lucifer is *not* his adversary; he’s his *deity!* The heresy, in his mind, is that someone would call Lucifer “the adversary.”

Okay, it’s time for a reality check: **“Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.”** (II Corinthians 11:14-15) There is only one true light, and His name is Yahweh. Evil disguised as righteousness will receive evil’s reward.

I hope I’ve successfully conveyed the concept that the harlot of Babylon could have a whole range of manifestations. It’s potentially anything and everything that Yahweh would consider a false system of worship—that is, something that would systematically violate any of the first three commandments: One, you shall have no other gods before Yahweh. Two, you shall not make, bow down to, nor serve an image of any created thing. And three, you shall not accept or advance anything that is false, deceptive, or destructive in Yahweh’s name, or associate these things with His character (which is what the Hebrew that’s translated “take the name...in vain” means).

We commonly (and unwittingly, I hope) break these three commandments on our own. That’s bad enough. But when people band together to worship false gods in groups, they are manifesting the spirit of Babylon. Satan knows how to use group dynamics to get us do things we wouldn’t normally do—just because the crowd is doing them. That makes religion one of the most popular flavors of Babylon bouillabaisse. (Others—equally fishy—are politics and commerce.) The recipe for this evil brew is one part deception, one part pride, and a pinch of greed

(substitute with lust if you like). Let it simmer over hell-fire until it's half-baked, and serve it up neither hot nor cold. It tastes terrible and it's horribly expensive, but people eat it because the critics say it's wonderful, and they don't want their friends to think they can't afford it. Besides, it sure looks better than the Christian diet: all they get is the Bread of Life and Living Water.

Just as the world will come together as one politically during the Tribulation, it will also come together in matters of faith. Once the Christians are gone, religion will be more a matter of style than anything else. I have a feeling that the world's religions will begin to see themselves during this time not as separate entities, but merely as different "denominations" in one great faith, different ways to reach heavenly enlightenment. If this new/old super-faith is given a name, it will be called Babylon (or ought to be). Proselytizing will become the epitome of bad form, perhaps even illegal (it already is in many places), because it will be a universally accepted *fact* that there is no such thing as absolute truth; therefore there is no *wrong* way to reach god.

This, of course, will pit "Laodicean" Christians—gentiles saved after the rapture—and Jews looking for their Messiah against the whole rest of the world. Claiming to have a "savior" implies that (1) you needed to be saved (and by extension, it says your fellow man must need salvation too—that we are all creatures whose sins have separated us from God); and (2) there is something from which we need to be saved. Both of those propositions will be considered heresy against the universal Babylonian doctrine, constituting the crime of religious terrorism, sort of like "disturbing the peace" on steroids. And the *appearance* of keeping the peace is what it's all about in the post-rapture world. No one may say, or even suggest, that they have a corner on truth. As Pontius Pilate once asked, "What *is* truth?" In these dark days, no one may imply that there is one God who defines righteousness.

There is, of course, one slight problem with this doctrine. It's completely wrong. Shortly after the exodus, two of the elite of Israelite society, the Illuminati of their day so to speak, found out the hard way. **"Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of [the high priest] Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before Yahweh, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from Yahweh and devoured them, and they died before Yahweh. And Moses said to Aaron, 'This is what Yahweh spoke, saying: "By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified."'"** (Leviticus 10:1-3) That statement reveals the false heart of the whore of Babylon. She makes a show of coming near to God, but she does not regard Him as holy. Instead, she gathers people together and glorifies herself.

If I had a lawyer, he would be quite alarmed by this point, so I'd better tell you what he would tell me. I am not advocating any pre-rapture course of action designed to thwart or hinder the whore of Babylon. Don't go out and do rash things like letting the air out of the tires on the Shriners' little cars or blowing up the U.N. building. Yahweh is perfectly capable of taking care of His own interests, and He doesn't need your unsolicited assistance. He has told us to do only one thing: **"Flee from the midst of Babylon, and every one save his life! Do not be cut off in her iniquity, for this is the time of Yahweh's vengeance."** (Jeremiah 51:6) Take a good, hard, look at your life. Are you a part of something that promotes a false image of Yahweh? Do your traditions carry more weight than the words of your God? If you find yourself living in Babylon, there's only one thing to do: *flee!*