

An aerial night view of a city, likely Jerusalem, with a prominent glowing red overlay. The city is illuminated with blue and white lights, and a large, glowing red circular pattern is visible in the foreground. The text "BABYLON THE GREAT" is overlaid in large, bold, white capital letters.

BABYLON THE GREAT

REVELATION 17

An aerial night view of a city, likely Rome, featuring a large circular arena (the Colosseum) in the foreground and a prominent classical building with a portico in the center. The scene is illuminated with a mix of warm orange and cool blue lights, creating a dramatic atmosphere. The text "BABYLON THE GREAT" is overlaid in large, bold, white letters across the center of the image.

BABYLON THE GREAT

INTRODUCTION

False religion is not new. It has been with us since the garden of Eden and it will be humanity's companion until Jesus comes again. False religion comes in many shapes and sizes. Often it appears harmless and attractive. However it is always harmful, and sometimes even lethal.

Yes, false religion is alive and well. It is dangerous not harmless. Never will this be more apparent than during the Great Tribulation, when religious Babylon will flourish and assist Antichrist in ushering in his kingdom.

REVELATION 17

An aerial night view of a city, likely Rome, featuring a large circular arena (Colosseum) in the foreground and a grand classical building (the Vatican Museums) in the background. The scene is illuminated with a mix of warm orange and cool blue lights, creating a dramatic atmosphere. The text "BABYLON THE GREAT" is overlaid in large, bold, white letters across the center of the image.

BABYLON THE GREAT

CONTEXT

Revelation 15-16 has shown us the final 7 bowls of the wrath of God. The 7th Bowl is the destruction of the great empire of the Antichrist - Babylon the Great. Revelation 17-18 take us into greater detail of the system, scope, and downfall of Babylon the Great.

Chapter 17 may be the most difficult chapter in all of the Revelation to interpret. Great caution and care is a must. Never is dogmatism in interpretation more out of bounds. Chapters 17 & 18 actually go together. Chapter 17 addresses the spiritual and religious nature of Antichrist's kingdom.

Chapter 18 addresses the economic and material nature of Antichrist's kingdom. As we examine the salient characteristics of this spiritual and religious system of ancient origin, religious Babylon, we will discover significant similarity with the New Age thinking of our own day.

An aerial night view of a city, likely Rome, featuring a large circular arena (the Colosseum) in the foreground and a prominent classical building with a portico in the background. The scene is illuminated with a mix of warm orange and cool blue lights, creating a dramatic atmosphere. The text 'BABYLON THE GREAT' is overlaid in large, bold, white letters across the center of the image.

BABYLON THE GREAT

TEXT

Revelation 17:1–2 (CSB) Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me: “Come, I will show you the judgment of the notorious prostitute who is seated on many waters. The kings of the earth committed sexual immorality with her, and those who live on the earth became drunk on the wine of her sexual immorality.”

Revelation 17:3–4 (CSB) Then he carried me away in the Spirit to a wilderness. I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold, jewels, and pearls. She had a golden cup in her hand filled with everything detestable and with the impurities of her prostitution.

Revelation 17:5–6 (CSB) On her forehead was written a name, a mystery: Babylon the Great, the Mother of Prostitutes and of the Detestable Things of the Earth. Then I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the witnesses to Jesus. When I saw her, I was greatly astonished.

Revelation 17:7 (CSB) Then the angel said to me, “Why are you astonished? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast, with the seven heads and the ten horns, that carries her.

REVELATION 17

Revelation 17:8 (CSB) The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up from the abyss and go to destruction. Those who live on the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast that was, and is not, and is to come.

Revelation 17:9–10 (CSB) This calls for a mind that has wisdom. “The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated. They are also seven kings: Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he comes, he must remain for only a little while.

Revelation 17:11–12 (CSB) The beast that was and is not, is itself an eighth king, but it belongs to the seven and is going to destruction. The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they will receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour.

Revelation 17:13–14 (CSB) These have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast. These will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will conquer them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings. Those with him are called, chosen, and faithful.”

Revelation 17:15–16 (CSB) He also said to me, “The waters you saw, where the prostitute was seated, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and languages. The ten horns you saw, and the beast, will hate the prostitute. They will make her desolate and naked, devour her flesh, and burn her up with fire.

Revelation 17:17–18 (CSB) For God has put it into their hearts to carry out his plan by having one purpose and to give their kingdom to the beast until the words of God are fulfilled. And the woman you saw is the great city that has royal power over the kings of the earth.”

An aerial night view of a city, likely Rome, featuring a large circular arena (Colosseum) in the foreground and a prominent classical building with a portico in the background. The scene is illuminated with a mix of warm orange and cool blue lights, creating a dramatic atmosphere. The text "BABYLON THE GREAT" is overlaid in large, bold, white capital letters across the center of the image.

BABYLON THE GREAT

COMMENTARY

Revelation 17:1 (CSB) Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me: “Come, I will show you the judgment of the notorious prostitute who is seated on many waters.

One of the 7 angels of the 7 bowls connects the judgment of the great harlot with the bowl judgments of chapter 16.

Revelation 17:1 (CSB) ...“Come, I will show you the judgment of the **notorious prostitute** who is seated on many waters.

Notorious prostitute denotes false religion, spiritual whoredom. It stands for idolatry, religious apostasy and spiritual defection. Nineveh (Nahum 3:4), Tyre (Isaiah 23:15-17) and even Jerusalem (Isaiah 1:21) are so designated.

Revelation 17:1 (CSB) ...the notorious prostitute who is seated on **many waters**.

Her influence crosses racial barriers. Note what the **many waters** entail (peoples). All races will experience and yield to the seduction of her illicit ways.

Revelation 17:1 (CSB) the notorious prostitute who is seated on many waters.

No nation will escape the intoxication of the cup of her abominations and filthiness (v. 4).

Our nation, every nation, will dine at her table.

Revelation 17:1 (CSB) the notorious prostitute who is seated on many waters.

Rich and poor, educated and uneducated, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Jew, Christian, Animist, Secularist, all will be welcomed and feel drawn to this queen of darkness, this spiritual seductress. A worldwide ecumenical religion proclaiming tolerance for all will, for a time, reign supreme.

Revelation 17:2 (CSB) The kings of the earth committed **sexual immorality** with her, and those who live on the earth became drunk on the wine of her sexual immorality.”

Sexual Immorality or Fornication (3 times in vs. 2-4) – means idolatry, loyalty and devotion to a false god.

Revelation 17:2 (CSB) The kings of the earth committed sexual immorality with her, and those who live on the earth became **drunk** on the wine of her sexual immorality.”

The harlot fornicator makes **drunk** – her spiritual lies are intoxicating. seduces both the kings of the earth and the inhabitants of the earth.

Revelation 17:3 (CSB) Then he **carried me away in the Spirit** to a wilderness. I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns.

Carried away in the Spirit (cf. 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10).

Revelation 17:3 (CSB) ... *I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns.*

The harlot sits on the scarlet (luxury, wealth, splendor, royalty; also sin and blood!) beast. She rides the Antichrist. 1) He supports her! 2) For a time she controls him! The description identifies this beast with the beast of chapter 13.

Revelation 17:4 (CSB) The woman was dressed in **purple** and **scarlet**, adorned with gold, jewels, and pearls. She had a golden cup in her hand filled with everything detestable and with the impurities of her prostitution.

These are garments of wealth, luxury and splendor. **Purple** – royalty / **Scarlet** – magnificence.

Revelation 17:4 (CSB) ...She had a golden **cup** in her hand filled with everything detestable and with the impurities of her prostitution.

Cup – golden speaks again of wealth, but it is defiled and vile, filthy and immoral.

She deceives the world into following false gods and rejecting the true God. She is enticing, attractive, alluring. False religion always works this way. Delightful on the outside with death on the inside. What is the nature, in sum, of her teachings?

A Comparison of Religious Babylon and The New Age

Babylonianism

New Age

- 1) Polytheistic and idolatrous
- 2) Salvation by mystical knowledge
(spiritually deceptive)
- 3) Deifies special humans
- 4) Affirms reincarnation (esp. of nature
& the salvation child Tammuz)
- 5) Promotes mystical religious rituals
- 6) Founded a mother/child cult

- 7) Accepts evolution, at least implicitly
- 8) Amoral
- 9) Utopian in outlook
- 10) Human centered
- 11) Uses religion to achieve political ends

- 12) Emotionalism and ecstatic
utterances prominent
- 13) Astrology is important
- 14) Sensually oriented

- 1) Pantheistic and idolatrous
- 2) Salvation by mystical knowledge
(spiritually deceptive)
- 3) Deifies all humanity
- 4) Affirms reincarnation

- 5) Promotes mystical religious rituals
- 6) Worships mother earth and her
offspring [Romanism fosters a
mother/child doctrine]
- 7) Accepts evolution explicitly
- 8) Amoral
- 9) Utopian in outlook
- 10) Human centered
- 11) Infiltrates political processes to
achieve its own purposes
- 12) Emotionalism and ecstatic
utterances prominent
- 13) Astrology is important
- 14) Sensually oriented

Revelation 17:5 (CSB) On her forehead was written a name, a mystery: Babylon the Great, the Mother of Prostitutes and of the Detestable Things of the Earth.

John now receives additional understanding as to the nature and character of the great harlot.

Revelation 17:5 (CSB) On her forehead was written a name, a mystery: Babylon the Great, the Mother of Prostitutes and of the Detestable Things of the Earth.

The degree to which she stands in contrast to the Church, the bride of the Lamb (19:8) is striking and instructive. She is a fornicator and idolater. She is also a mother and a murderer

Revelation 17:5 (CSB) On her forehead was written a name...

On her forehead was written a name...

– 7 other references in Revelation to marking the forehead. Prostitutes in the ancient world often wore a headband with their name on it (Jeremiah 3:3). She is not ashamed of who she is and what she does.

Revelation 17:5 (CSB) On her forehead was written a name, a **mystery: Babylon** the Great,

Mystery Babylon – Meaning: “She has a name which is a mystery: Babylon.” A mystery is a truth previously concealed but now revealed. This mystery is explained in the next statement/truth.

**Revelation 17:5 (CSB) ...the Mother of
Prostitutes and of the Detestable Things of the
Earth.**

**the Mother (source, origin) of Prostitutes and
of the Detestable Things of the Earth.**

Revelation 17:5 (CSB) ...the Mother of Prostitutes and of the Detestable Things of the Earth.

“She is the fountainhead, the reservoir, the womb that bears all the individual cases of historical resistance to God’s will on earth; she is the unholy antithesis to the woman who wed the Lamb (19:7-8) and to the New Jerusalem (21: 2-3)” (Johnson, 155).

Revelation 17:6 (CSB) Then I saw that the woman was **drunk with the blood of the saints**

Drunk with the blood of the saints She has a lust for violence and a lust for blood. Throughout history she has murdered millions of believers and her final genocide of Christians will be her bloodiest ever. She only tolerates her kind. All who oppose her must be exterminated.

One historical example of her work: Christians faced dire persecution in the corrupt city of Rome

In Annales, by Tacitus. This Roman senator and historian commented:

“But all the endeavours of men, all the emperor’s largesse and the propitiations of the gods, did not suffice to allay the scandal or banish the belief that the fire had been ordered...”

“And so, to get rid of this rumor, Nero set up as the culprits and punished with the utmost refinement of cruelty a class hated for their abominations, who are commonly called Christians....”

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“Besides being put to death they were made to serve as objects of amusement; they were clad in the hides of beasts and torn to death by dogs; others were crucified, others set on fire to serve to illuminate the night when daylight failed.” Tacitus, Annales 15.44, in Documents of the Christian Church, ed. Henry Bettenson

A Brief History of Babylonian Idolatry -

This diabolical religious system can be traced from Nimrod's establishment of the city of Babel (Gen. 10:8-10), later called Babylon. Nimrod built a huge tower made of sun-dried bricks, known as a ziggurat, on the plains of Shinar (Gen. 11:4). The tower was recognized as a temple or rallying center and a symbol of mankind's pride and rebellion against God.

God poured out judgment on this rebellious act by confounding their language and scattering them across the face of the earth (Gen. 11:7-9). However, this did not mean the demise of the Babylonian religious system. Ancient tradition records that Nimrod's wife, Semiramis, became the head priestess of an idolatrous system of secret religious rituals known as Babylonian Mysteries.

Babylon became the fountainhead of idolatry and the mother of pagan systems that spread across the world. Semiramis supposedly gave birth to a son named Tammuz, who was miraculously conceived by a sunbeam. He was presented to the people as a Savior.

Tradition says that Tammuz was killed by a wild boar, but after a 40-day fast he was resurrected from the dead on the feast of Ishtar (Easter). This legend of a mother-son cult became part of the Babylonian mystery ritual and was quickly included in other idolatrous religious practices worldwide

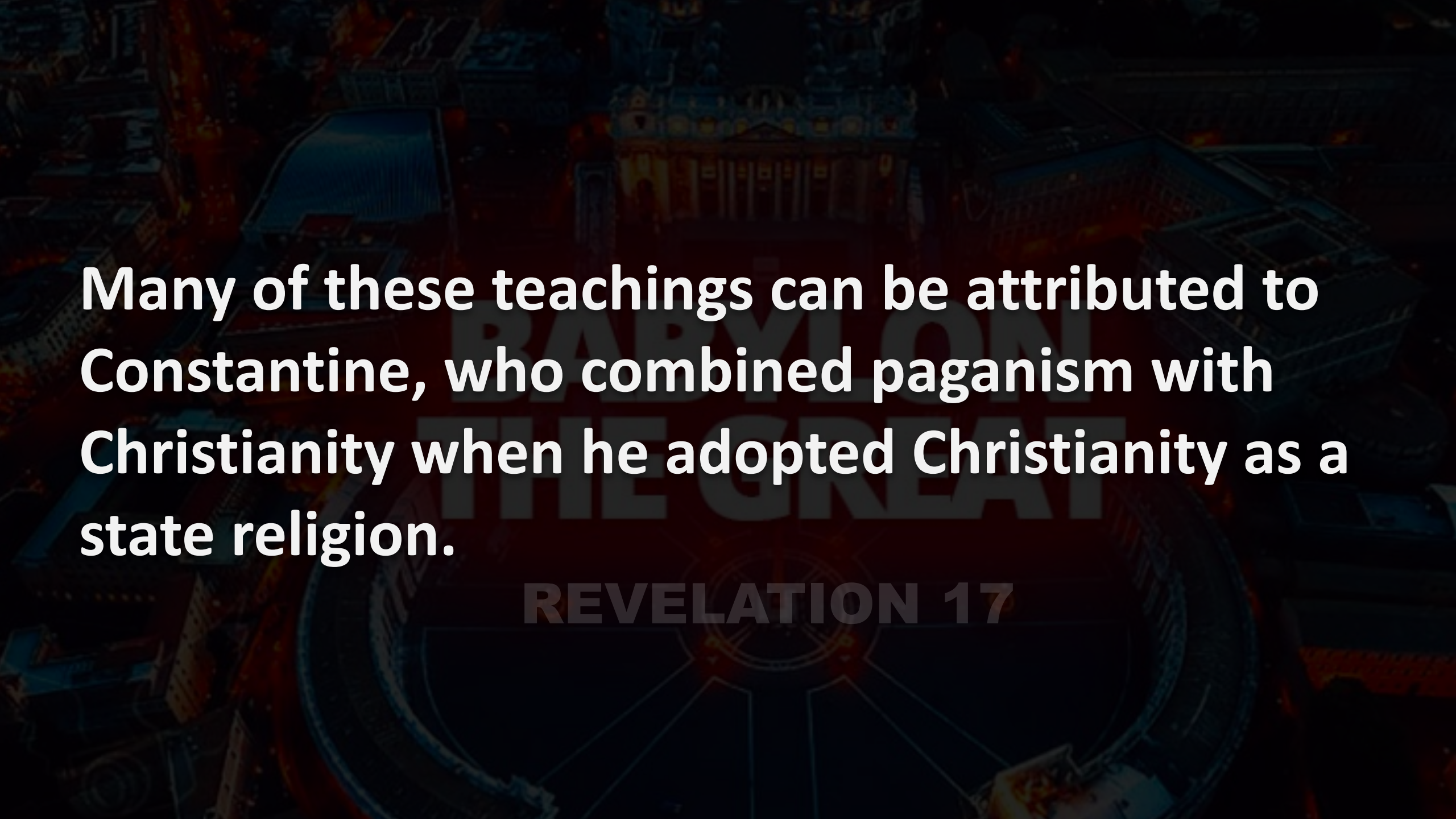
The mother-son cult was headed by a priesthood that promoted salvation by means of sprinkling holy water, ceremonial cleansing, and purgatorial cleansing after death. Semiramis established an order of virgins dedicated to religious prostitution. She became known and worshipped as the “queen of heaven.”

Ezekiel condemned the practice of Jewish “women weeping for Tammuz” (Ezek. 8:14). Jeremiah condemned Judah for offering cakes and burning incense to the “queen of heaven” (Jer. 7:18; 44:17-19, 25). Zechariah personified wickedness as a woman who will be reestablished in the land of Shinar (Babylon) in the latter days (Zech. 5:6-11).

After the Medo-Persian Empire took over Babylon, the city and temples were eventually destroyed. However, the Babylonian cult survived and found a new home in Pergamos of Asia Minor. It thrived and eventually was headquartered in Rome. The chief priests wore miters shaped like the head of a fish, in honor of Dagon, the fish-god, the lord of life – another form of the Tammuz mystery.

In Rome the chief priest took the title Pontifex Maximus. When Julius Caesar became head of the Roman Empire, he took the name Pontifex Maximus, a title held by all of the Roman emperors down to Constantine the Great, who became head of both church and state. The title was later adopted by the Bishop of Rome.

Over time, the church in Rome absorbed many of the Babylonian practices and idolatrous teachings, obscuring the true meaning of Scripture – such teachings as worship of the virgin Mary and various festivals such as Easter, or Ishtar, one of the titles of the Babylonian queen of heaven, to name only two.



Many of these teachings can be attributed to Constantine, who combined paganism with Christianity when he adopted Christianity as a state religion.

REVELATION 17

The vision of the Great Harlot and the revelation of her as Babylon is perhaps the most enigmatic of the visions of the Apocalypse. John himself registers considerable astonishment (v. 6). Nor is he able to comprehend the mystery. Idolatry began in Babylon or Babel with Nimrod (cf. Gen. 11:1-9). The cult of mother and child, Semiramis and Tammuz, was there initiated.

This cult, along with other constituent elements of the Babylonian mysteries, was conserved by Roman and Greek religious systems. By the end of the first century, elements of the mysteries had also been adopted by some advocates of the Christian faith.

Constantine's actions between 313 and 323 A.D. brought about the marriage of church and state, and with this union came undiluted doses of those ancient idolatrous faiths. By the time of the Reformation, those ancient myths and mysteries had been thoroughly assimilated into the Christian faith.

The scarlet woman of this chapter is, in effect, a resurgence of those same erroneous doctrines. The difference seems to be that the ecumenicity of this latter-day system embraces virtually all religious faiths. Few still comprehend the nature of genuine Christianity, and they suffer at the hands of the drunken harlot as in eras past.

Thus Babylon here does not refer to any actual city, past or present. She is a symbol or portrait of all that stands against the true and living God. At the end of history, she will gather all her children into one grand oneworld faith. The seeds of her empire are being sown even today.

Revelation 17:7 (CSB) Then the angel said to me, “Why are you astonished? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast...

In verse 7 the angel promises to explain more fully the vision of the beast and the harlot and their relationship to each other. Interestingly, the angel begins with a further description of the beast on whom the harlot rides.

Revelation 17:7 (CSB) ...I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast, with the **seven heads and the ten horns**, that carries her.

7 heads and 10 horns connects with 13:1 (same beast).

Revelation 17:8 (CSB) The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up from the abyss and go to destruction...

Was, is not, will ascend – 1) parody of Christ's resurrection (by Antichrist?) 2) reference to Roman Empire.

Revelation 17:9 (CSB) This calls for a mind that has wisdom. “The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated.

They are also seven kings:

Rome was a great empire. She ceased to be a great empire. In the future she will again be a great empire. 7 heads = 7 mountains – Rome 7 heads also = 7 kings



Rome was described as a city on seven hills, and the Roman emperor Vespasian, who ruled from AD 69–79, issued this coin that depicted the goddess Roma seated on the seven hills of Rome.

Revelation 17:9 (CSB) ...They are also seven kings:

- 1) 7 Roman emperors – Julius Caesar, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Domitian, and Antichrist; or Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Vespasian & Titus.**
- 2) 7 is simply symbolic of world power in opposition to God.**

3) 7 world empires with particular significance to Israel: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece [**5 have fallen, one is** [Rome of John's day and the other has not yet come [revived Rome].

Revelation 17:10 (CSB) **Five have fallen, one is,** the other has not yet come, and when he comes, he must remain for only a little while.

Hence the beast embodies the strength, wickedness, brutality, greatness and splendor of these great world empires. What a Man! What a Machine! For a time, the harlot, false religion will rest in good hands, in powerful hands.

REVELATION 17

Revelation 17:11 (CSB) The beast that was and is not, is itself an eighth king, but it belongs to the seven and is going to destruction.

Revived Rome lasts, unlike ancient Rome, for a very short period, 3 ½ years most likely. The 7th king (revived Rome) grows into (at the mid-point of the Tribulation) an 8th. What is its nature?

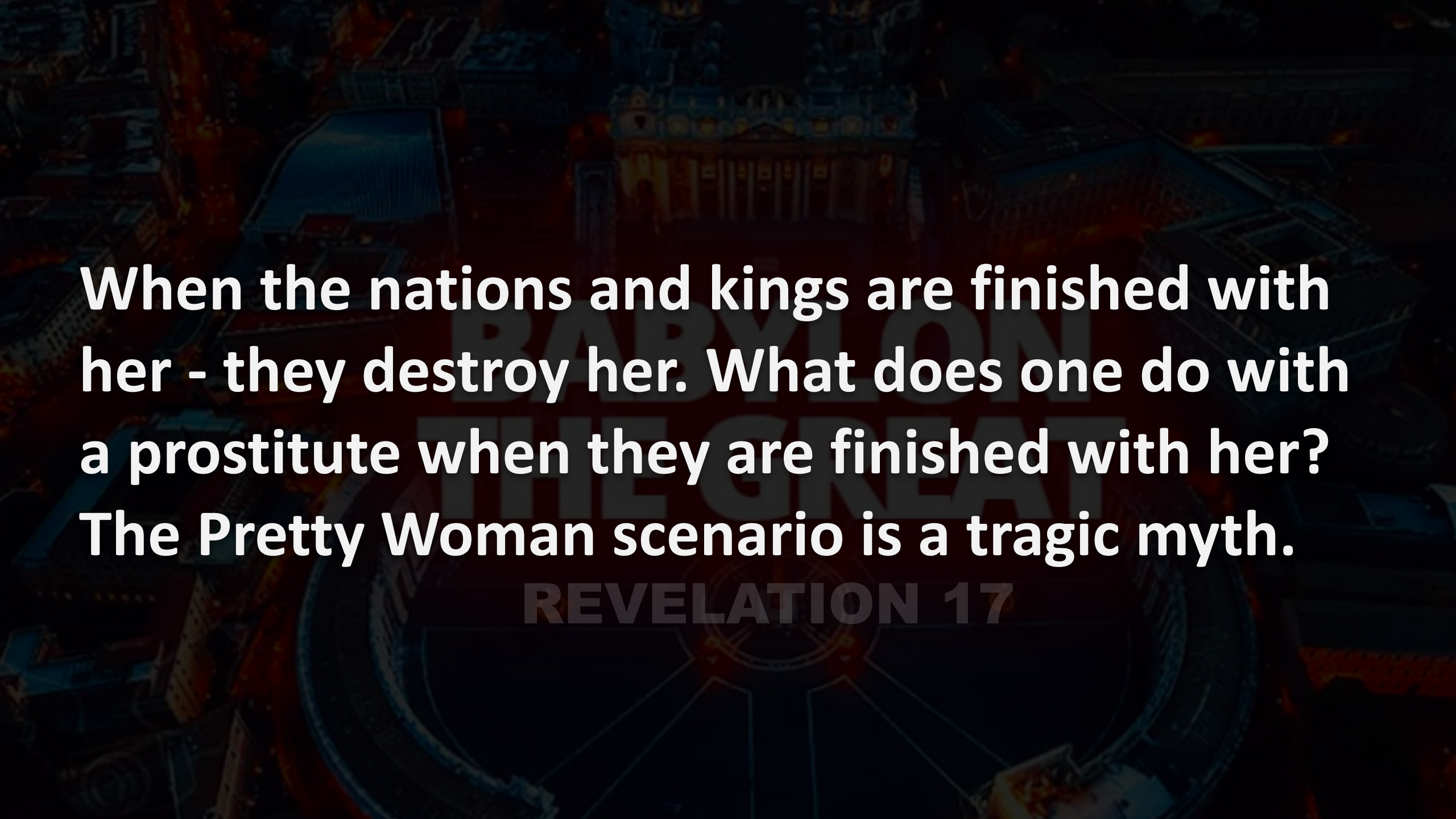
Revelation 17:12 (CSB) The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they will receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour.

10 future kings will give Antichrist their loyalty enabling him to gain worldwide control (cf. 13:7). The reign of the 10 kings will be brief (v. 12b).

Revelation 17:13–14 (CSB) These have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast. These will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will conquer them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings. Those with him are called, chosen, and faithful.”

Revelation 17:14 (CSB) These will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will conquer them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings. Those with him are called, chosen, and faithful.”

They choose the wrong opponent.(Looks to 19:11-21). We who are the called, chosen (God’s part) and faithful (our part) will be with Him (cf. 19:14).

The background features a dark, stylized illustration of a city with various buildings and structures. A large, semi-transparent 'X' is overlaid on the image, with the words 'BABYLON' and 'THE GREAT' written across it in a bold, sans-serif font. The text is white and centered on the page.

**When the nations and kings are finished with her - they destroy her. What does one do with a prostitute when they are finished with her?
The Pretty Woman scenario is a tragic myth.**

REVELATION 17

Revelation 17:16 (CSB) The ten horns you saw, and the beast, will hate the prostitute...

An abrupt turnabout will be made by the “ten horns” (v. 16). The language recalls the words of Ezekiel 23:11-35. They will awaken from their drunken stupor with the woman, whose charm and seduction will have lost their lure.

Revelation 17:16 (CSB) ...will hate the prostitute. They will make her desolate and naked, devour her flesh, and burn her up with fire.

Love for the woman will turn to “hate” They will strip her of all the wealth she has confiscated throughout the world. They will make her “naked” (v. 16), tear away her personal support, position, power, and prestige, and expose her moral corruption.

Revelation 17:16 (CSB) ...devour her flesh, and burn her up with fire.

They “shall devour her flesh” (v. 16) like dogs devoured the corpse of Jezebel (cf. 1 Kings 21:23, 2 Kings 9:30-37). They will “burn her with fire” (v. 16), or totally eliminate any identity of the woman’s false religious system.

Revelation 17:17 (CSB) For God has put it into their hearts to carry out his plan by having one purpose and to give their kingdom to the beast until the words of God are fulfilled.

This hostile action, her destruction, will be initiated by God: “For God hath put in their hearts to fulfill his will” (v. 17); that is, to rid the world of this pseudo-religious system.

Revelation 17:17 (CSB) For God has put it into their hearts to carry out his plan by having one purpose and to give their kingdom to the beast until the words of God are fulfilled.

The kings mentioned above will believe that they are carrying out their own program for conquest, but actually they will accomplish God's providential program.

Revelation 17:17 (CSB) ...and to give their kingdom to the beast until the words of God are fulfilled.

Having destroyed the woman, the Antichrist will unite the world's religious and political systems under his control. The 10 nations will agree to "give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled" (v. 17).

Revelation 17:17 (CSB) ...and to give their kingdom to the beast until the words of God are fulfilled.

God's prophetic program will reach its intended goal as He sovereignly allows the kingdoms of this world to come under the beast's control until the end of the Tribulation

Revelation 17:18 (CSB) And the woman you saw is the great city that has royal power over the kings of the earth.”

The angel concludes his revelation by identifying the woman simply as “that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth” (v. 18).

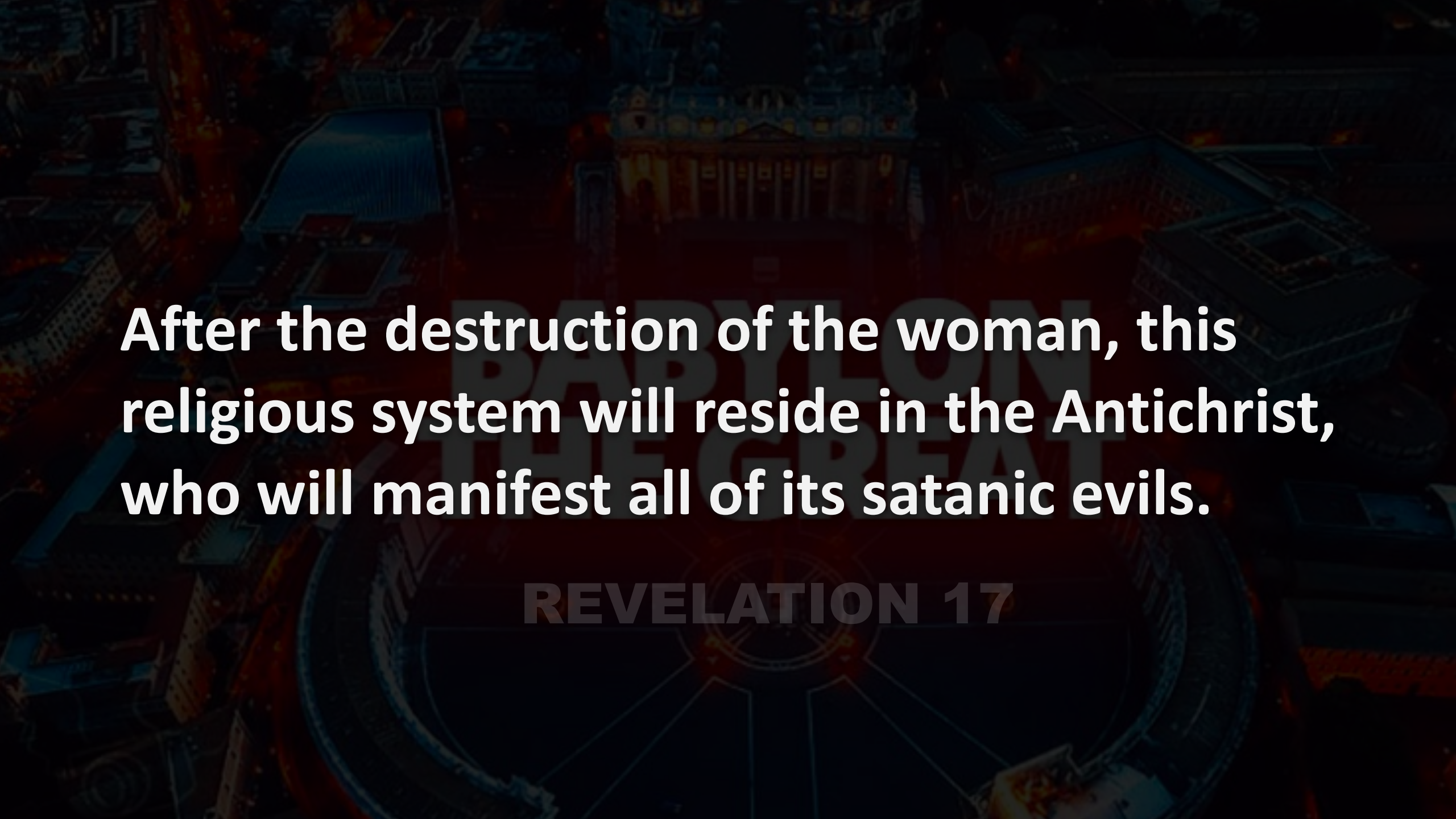
Revelation 17:18 (CSB) And the woman you saw is the great city that has royal power over the kings of the earth.”

The early church believed the verse was speaking of Rome. Many scholars today identify the city with Rome because of her dress (v. 4), reference to the “seven mountains” (v. 9), and belief that Rome will be the religious center of the world during the Tribulation.

Still others believe that John was anticipating the woman's fall and the religious emphasis shifting from the woman to the beast. Thus, this great anti-God system will continue, both as power (political) and cult (religion), united in one figure - Antichrist. Some teach that the verse is not referring to the woman as a religious system but as the literal city of Babylon yet to be built on the Euphrates River.

This city will become the center for a religious system that opposes true Christianity. A better interpretation teaches that the woman is identified with the “great city” Babylon in its religious, not historical, significance. According to verse 5, “BABYLON THE GREAT” is not referring to the literal city of ancient Babylon but to its diabolical religious system.

As Babylon conquered cities politically, its religion dominated political states. Thus, the meaning cannot be confined to a city in the past or future, such as Rome or Babylon. This verse refers to a trans-historical system of satanic evil, which is an extension of ancient Babylon, forming the one-world religious system during the Tribulation.




After the destruction of the woman, this religious system will reside in the Antichrist, who will manifest all of its satanic evils.

REVELATION 17

An aerial night view of a city, likely Rome, featuring the illuminated Colosseum in the foreground. A large, glowing red circular graphic is overlaid on the image, centered on the Colosseum. The text "BABYLON THE GREAT" is written in large, bold, white capital letters across the center of the red circle. The background shows various city buildings and streets, some illuminated with blue and orange lights.

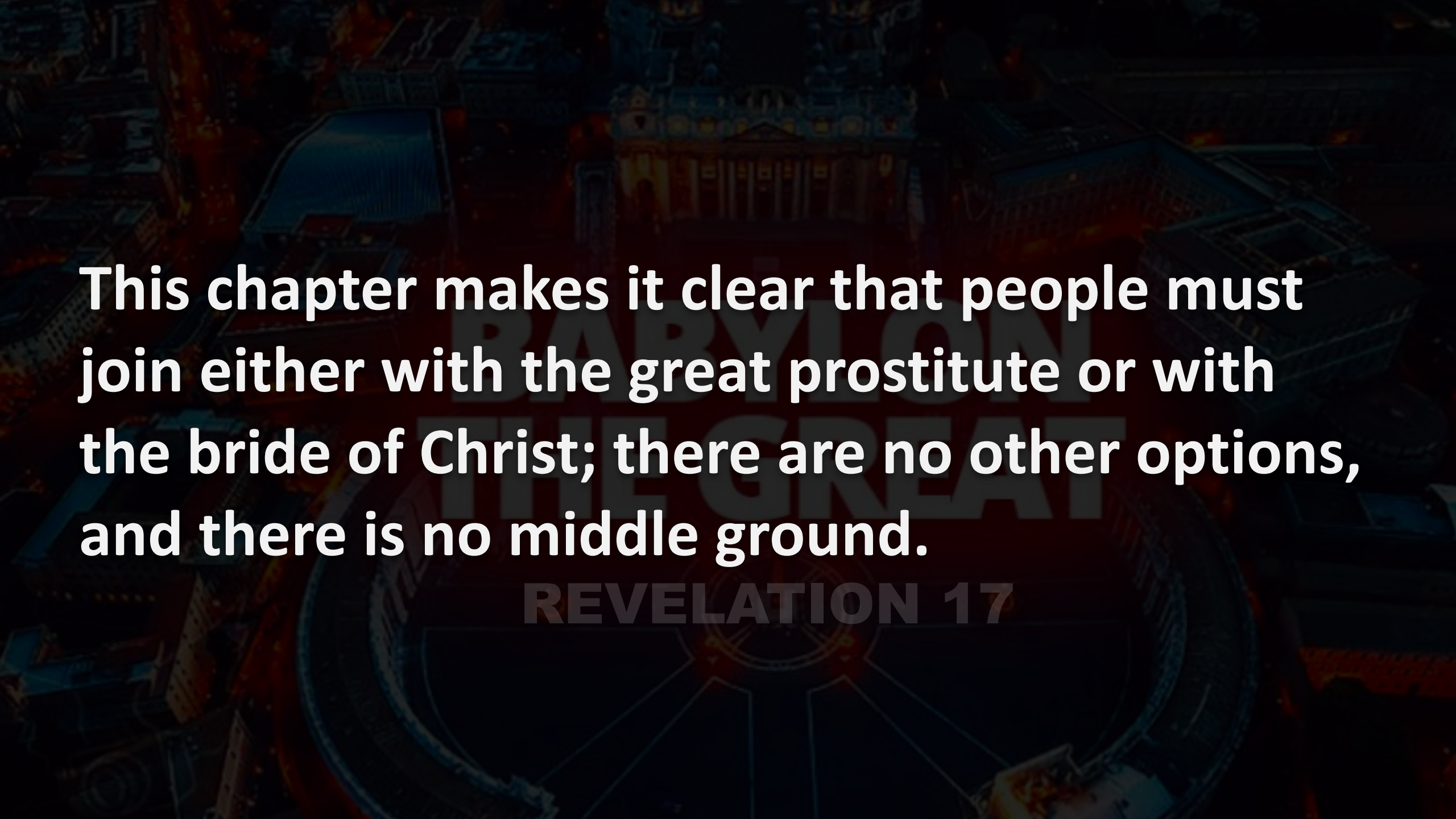
BABYLON THE GREAT

MODERN APPLICATIONS



**1. We should resist the temptation to merge
Christianity with the prevailing culture.**

REVELATION 17



This chapter makes it clear that people must join either with the great prostitute or with the bride of Christ; there are no other options, and there is no middle ground.

REVELATION 17

But, as Resseguie notes, “The contrast between the good and evil woman is made not because the reader’s choices are obvious but because the choices are subtle. Evil appears good....

Some at Pergamum (2:14), Thyatira (2:20–22), and Sardis (3:4) thought they could merge

Christianity with the contemporary culture but were awakened to the need to repent.”⁴

Resseguie, Revelation, 217–18.

Believers are under constant pressure to attempt this merger, especially along economic lines. This passage provides an opportunity to define “the world” and discuss how Christians can relate to the world wisely and compassionately but refuse to “love the world” (1 John 2:15–17).

2. What's so bad about Babylon? When we come to the lists of goods consumed by Babylon in Revelation 18, it will sound eerily familiar to many who have grown up in the West. We may be tempted to ask, what's so bad about Babylon anyway?

The background features a dark, stylized illustration of a city. In the center, there is a prominent temple with a pediment and columns. Below the temple is a large circular structure, possibly a well or a fountain, with a central spire. The city is surrounded by various buildings and structures, all rendered in a dark, muted color palette with some highlights. The overall atmosphere is mysterious and ancient.

This passage identifies four specific sins of Babylon. First, she rejects God through idolatry. How captivated are we by the idols of our culture (e.g., sports and entertainment)?

REVELATION 17



Second, she promotes sexual immorality. How discerning are we about what we watch and listen to and laugh at?

REVELATION 17

Third, she uses people and nations to indulge her passion for economic prosperity and luxury. Do we amass wealth for selfish purposes, or do we give generously and sacrificially?

REVELATION 17

Fourth, she abuses and murders those who follow Jesus Christ. How do we talk about and treat fellow believers (e.g., Jesus makes this a criterion of judgment in Matt. 25:40, 45)? Any element within a society, be it religious or not, that reproduces these traits could rightly be called part of Babylon.

We live in a world where the sins of Babylon are alive and well

A culture rewards what it values. In ancient Rome, military victory was valued, and victorious generals were given grand parades. What is it that makes us celebrate?

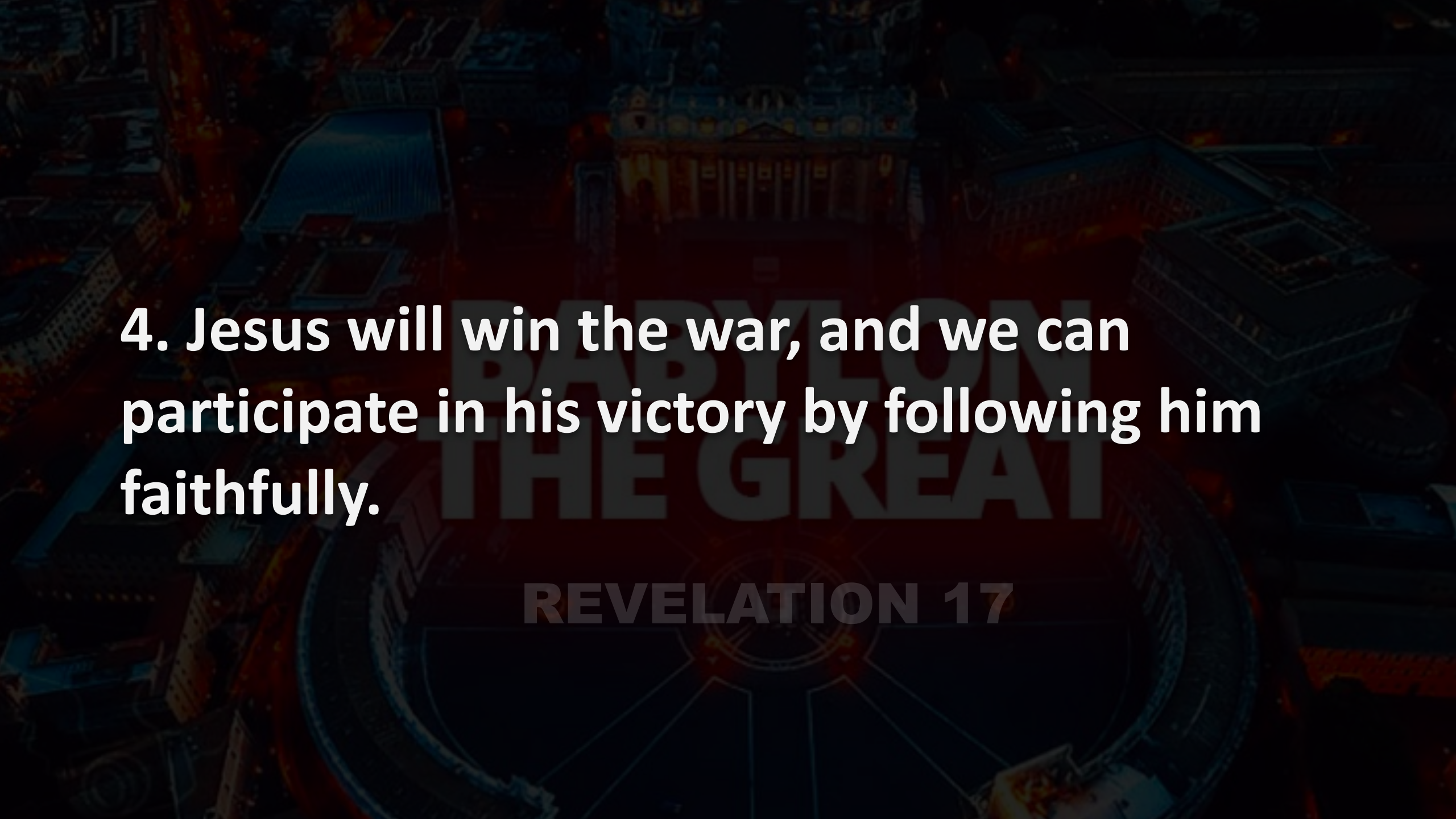
A look at our annual awards shows gives a clue. Our culture is increasingly a place that celebrates the wrong things: celebrity, sensuality, and so on. Like Babylon before us, we celebrate what Scripture often censors.

REVELATION 17

3. Although Babylon may appear to be winning now, she is headed for certain destruction. Perhaps John devotes such a large amount of space to the downfall of Babylon (17:1–19:5) because she appears at present to be all-powerful and invincibly sovereign. In time, however, she will be destroyed and overshadowed by the glorious bride of the Lamb

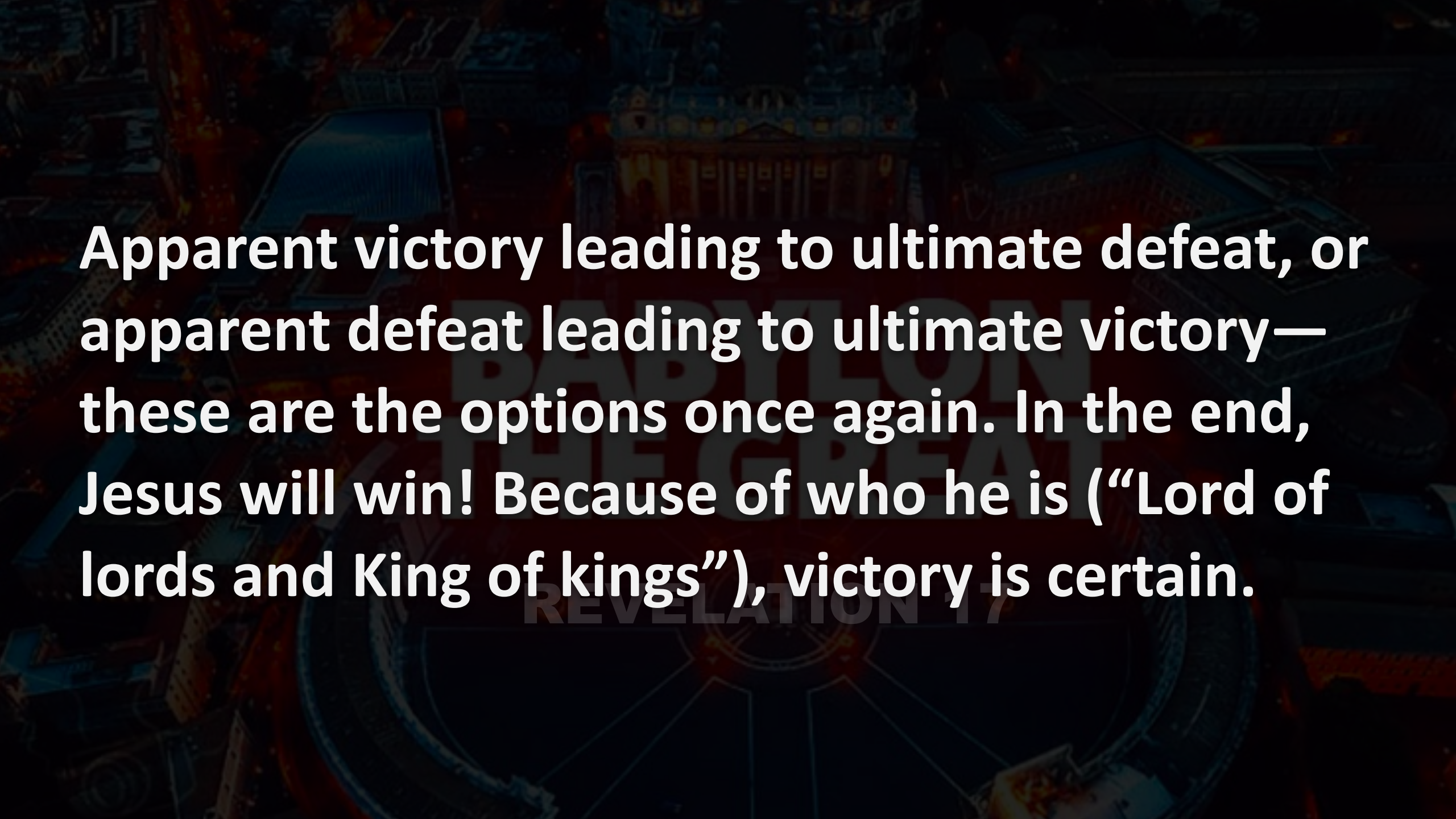
Persevering in the midst of materialism, injustice, political corruption, false religion, and so on becomes easier when we realize that Babylon-like systems never last. In the end, they will oppose the Lamb and suffer his wrath, a fact announced ahead of time by God (17:14).

Our faithfulness flourishes when we take the long view and see the ultimate outcome. We need perspective to side with the winner. We need the eyes of faith to see that God's plans are permanent. Most of us will confront this issue when deciding how to use our time, money, and possessions. Jesus's words not to store up treasures on earth but to store up treasures in heaven echo in the background (Matt. 6:19–24).



4. Jesus will win the war, and we can participate in his victory by following him faithfully.

REVELATION 17



Apparent victory leading to ultimate defeat, or apparent defeat leading to ultimate victory—these are the options once again. In the end, Jesus will win! Because of who he is (“Lord of lords and King of kings”), victory is certain.

To participate with Jesus in his victory calls for more than a declaration of our past experience with God (“I was saved when I was ten”); it demands our present obedience and our future perseverance. The called and chosen follow Jesus faithfully (2:10; 12:11, 17; 13:10; 14:12; 16:15; 17:14).



The loftiness of apocalyptic literature gives way to the ordinary grind of daily discipleship. We fight the enemy by following Jesus.

REVELATION 17



BABYLON THE GREAT

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS

Revelation 17:1 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me: “Come, I will show you the judgment of the notorious prostitute who is seated on many waters.

Jeremiah 51:13 You who reside by abundant water, rich in treasures, your end has come, your life thread is cut.

Revelation 17:2 The kings of the earth committed sexual immorality with her, and those who live on the earth became drunk on the wine of her sexual immorality.”

Isaiah 23:17 And at the end of the seventy years, the Lord will restore Tyre and she will go back into business, prostituting herself with all the kingdoms of the world throughout the earth.

Revelation 17:2 The kings of the earth committed sexual immorality with her, and those who live on the earth became drunk on the wine of her sexual immorality.”

Jeremiah 51:7 Babylon was a gold cup in the Lord’s hand, making the whole earth drunk. The nations drank her wine; therefore, the nations go mad.

Revelation 17:4 The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold, jewels, and pearls. She had a golden cup in her hand filled with everything detestable and with the impurities of her prostitution.

Jeremiah 51:7 Babylon was a gold cup in the Lord's hand, making the whole earth drunk. The nations drank her wine; therefore, the nations go mad.

Ezekiel 28:13 You were in Eden, the garden of God. Every kind of precious stone covered you: carnelian, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, lapis lazuli, turquoise and emerald. Your mountings and settings were crafted in gold; they were prepared on the day you were created.

Revelation 17:8 The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up from the abyss and go to destruction. Those who live on the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast that was, and is not, and is to come.

REVELATION 17

Psalm 69:28 Let them be erased from the book of life and not be recorded with the righteous.

Exodus 32:32–33 Now if you would only forgive their sin. But if not, please erase me from the book you have written.” 33The Lord replied to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against me I will erase from my book.

Daniel 12:1 At that time Michael, the great prince who stands watch over your people, will rise up. There will be a time of distress such as never has occurred since nations came into being until that time. But at that time all your people who are found written in the book will escape.

REVELATION 17

Daniel 7:3 Four huge beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other.

Revelation 17:12 The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they will receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour.

Daniel 7:24 The ten horns are ten kings who will rise from this kingdom. Another king, different from the previous ones, will rise after them and subdue three kings.

Revelation 17:14 These will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will conquer them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings. Those with him are called, chosen, and faithful.”

Daniel 2:47 The king said to Daniel, “Your God is indeed God of gods, Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, since you were able to reveal this mystery.”

Revelation 17:16 The ten horns you saw, and the beast, will hate the prostitute. They will make her desolate and naked, devour her flesh, and burn her up with fire.

Leviticus 21:9 If a priest's daughter defiles herself by promiscuity, she defiles her father; she must be burned to death

An aerial night view of a city, likely Rome, featuring a large circular arena in the foreground and a grand building with a portico in the background. The scene is illuminated with a mix of blue and red lights, creating a dramatic atmosphere. The arena has a glowing red circular pattern on its floor. The text "BABYLON THE GREAT" is overlaid in large, bold, white letters across the center of the image.

BABYLON THE GREAT

SUMMARY

Key Themes of Revelation 17:1–6

- **The great prostitute stands in contrast to the Lamb's bride of Revelation 21 so that everyone must choose between the two.**
- **The prostitute has widespread economic influence over the nations and uses her power to promote idolatry and immorality.**

Key Themes of Revelation 17:1–6

- **The prostitute blasphemes God and persecutes God's people.**
- **Although the harlot seems invincible now, she will eventually come to ruin when God destroys her.**

REVELATION 17

Key Themes of Revelation 17:7–18

- **Although wicked power systems and their diabolical rulers will succeed for a time, they are ultimately doomed to destruction.**
- **According to God's plan, evil will eventually turn inward and self-destruct.**

Key Themes of Revelation 17:7–18

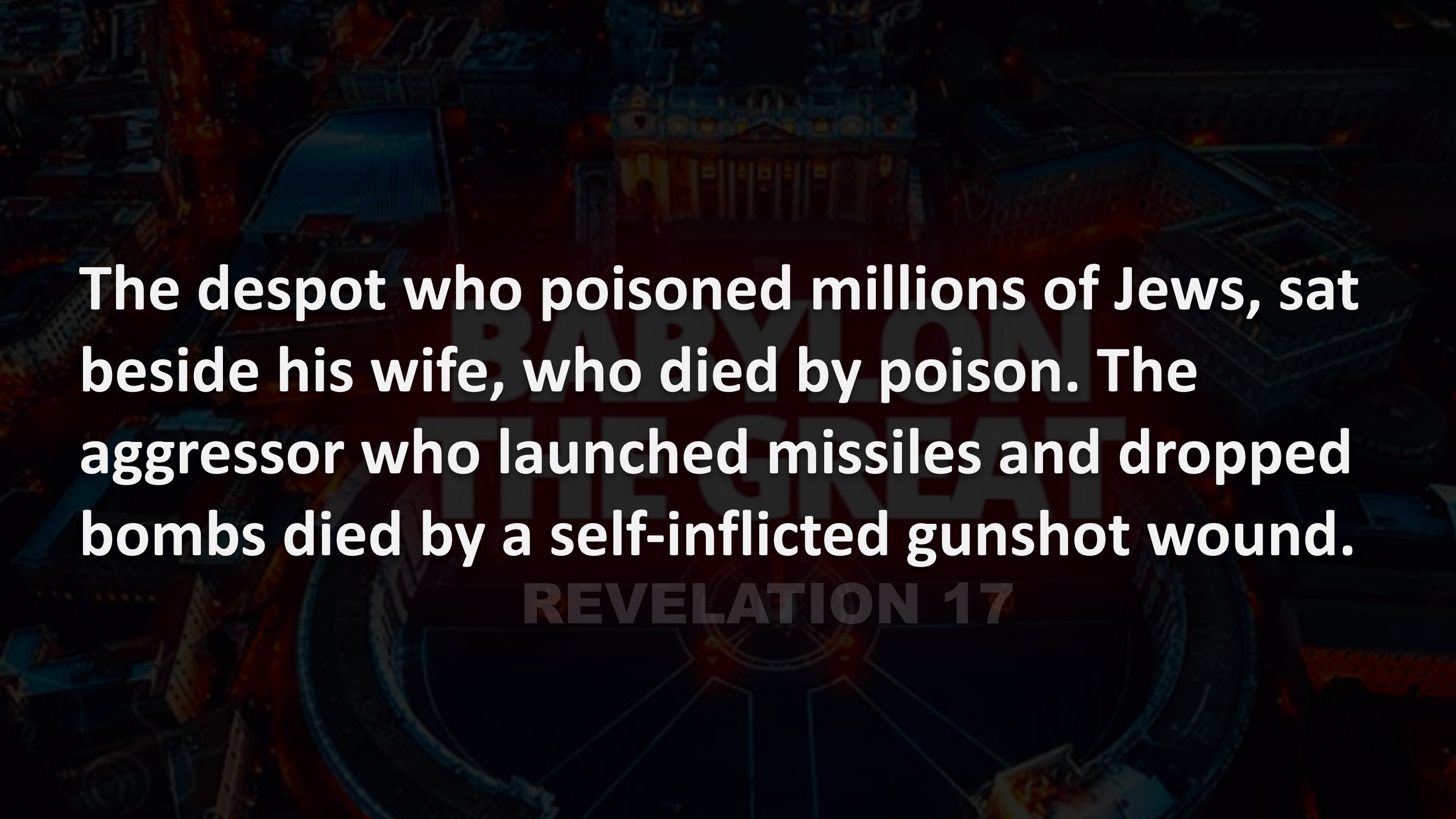
- **Jesus will triumph because he is the only legitimate King of kings and Lord of lords.**
- **The saints participate in the Lamb's army by following him faithfully.**

An aerial night view of a city, likely Rome, featuring a large circular arena (the Colosseum) in the foreground and a prominent classical building with a portico (the Forum of Trajan) in the background. The scene is illuminated with a mix of warm orange and cool blue lights, creating a dramatic atmosphere. The text "BABYLON THE GREAT" is overlaid in large, bold, white capital letters across the center of the image.

BABYLON THE GREAT

CONCLUSION

It is striking to see how many evil men ended life impaled on their own sword. Undoubtedly, one of the most stark examples is Adolf Hitler. The man who had proclaimed war against the world ended his days in a bunker, with the world closing in on him.



**The despot who poisoned millions of Jews, sat
beside his wife, who died by poison. The
aggressor who launched missiles and dropped
bombs died by a self-inflicted gunshot wound.**

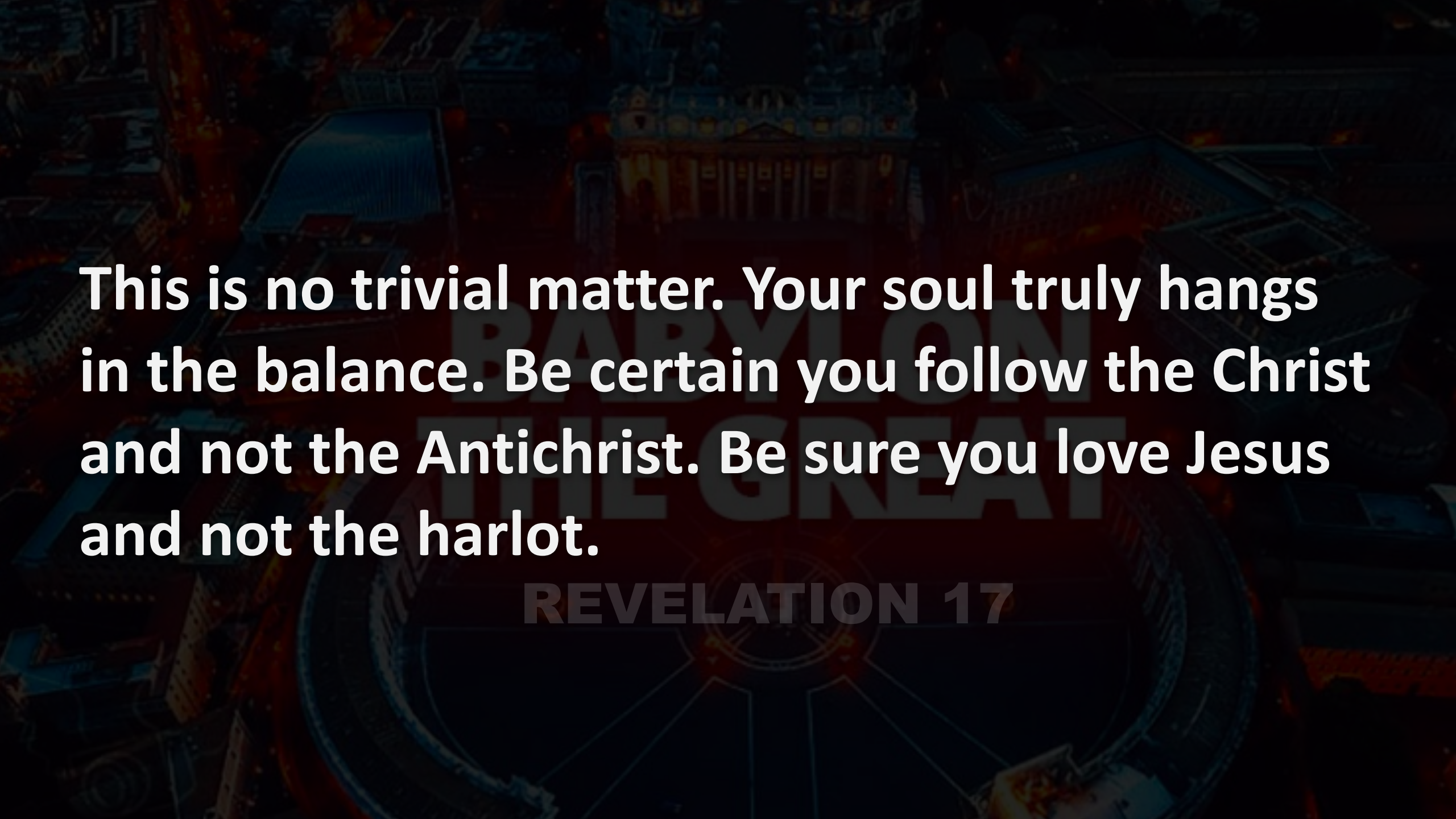
REVELATION 17

Hitler, the man who had ordered bodies burned in the furnaces of Auschwitz-Birkenau, Belzec, Chelmno, and Dachau, was carried outside his bunker in a rolled-up rug and burned on the ground. Evil always consumes itself.

REVELATION 17

While evil will always end in defeat, victory is always found in Jesus Christ.

What we believe really matters. Who we follow is crucial. Who our spiritual lover is, is decisive. 1) Is your name written in the Book of Life? (v. 8) 2) Are you one of the called, chosen and faithful? (v. 14)



This is no trivial matter. Your soul truly hangs in the balance. Be certain you follow the Christ and not the Antichrist. Be sure you love Jesus and not the harlot.

REVELATION 17

An aerial night view of a city, likely Jerusalem, with a prominent glowing red overlay. The city is illuminated with blue and white lights, and a large, glowing red circular pattern is visible in the foreground. The text "BABYLON THE GREAT" is overlaid in large, bold, white capital letters.

BABYLON THE GREAT

REVELATION 17