

Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots

Revelation 17:1-6

This morning we return to our study of Revelation. We are in Revelation chapter 17, turning once again to this magnificent apocalypse of Jesus Christ, this unveiling of the end of human history and the glorious return of our Lord and our Savior.

Dear friends, there is no grander theme in all the world than the study of Christ and his gospel. I fear that too often Christians tend to trivialize the gospel of grace replacing it sometimes unwittingly with some type of works righteousness system. Do this. Don't do that. And every group has its list. We even see evidence of this found in some of the apparel that became popular a few years ago with our youth. The little phrase, "What would Jesus do?"

Beloved, the better question is, "What has Jesus done?" Therein lies the transcendent glory of the gospel of grace that should never be far removed from our thoughts, from the preoccupations of our heart. Indeed, what has Jesus done? He has satisfied the wrath of God by shedding his innocent blood on our behalf. He is the one that has paid fully the price of our sins. The wages of our sin is death, ultimately eternal death. But God the Father "made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in him." And, as a result, we have victory over everlasting death.

Moreover, we enjoy the riches of fellowship with God, fellowship with one another. Once we were enemies. Once we were aliens. Once we were dead in our sins. Once we were strangers. But now because of Christ we have been brought together, we have been adopted as his children. We are now joint heirs with Jesus.

So grasp this, dear friends, as we come together to study more of the Lord of glory. Grasp the gospel of grace, to think what Jesus has done, to think that the second person of the triune godhead, the Lord Jesus Christ, our creator, the sovereign Lord of the universe voluntarily emptied himself of the prerogatives and the power that were his eternally by virtue of his divine attributes and he took upon himself the form of a human slave and became obedient unto death, death on the cross as our substitute. Therefore the apostle Paul said, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory."¹

This is the gospel. Beloved, never lose the wonder of the gospel of grace even as we come now to a study of what will be the culmination of human history and the glorious return of our Lord.

Charles Spurgeon said, and I quote, "Study Christ. The most excellent of all the sciences is the knowledge of a crucified Savior. He is most learned in the university of heaven who knows most of Christ. He who hath known most of him still says that his love surpasseth knowledge. Behold him then with wonder and behold him with thankfulness," end quote.

So, once again, we return to a study of Christ as we examine the marvels of his prophetic Word.

¹ 1 Corinthians 15:54.

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Now bear in mind, here in Revelation the Lord is disclosing to us his plans to judge sin, to judge the people's of the world and to establish his earthly kingdom which will ultimately be the consummating bridge between human history and the eternal state.

The last time we were together we concluded chapter 16 that described the final bowl judgments that will be poured out upon the earth, concluding with the slaughter that will occur at Armageddon. And at that moment the Lord will return in power and great glory, but the chronological flow of all of that will not resume until chapter 19 where the Lord reveals his glorious Second Coming.

So here beginning in chapter 17 as well as chapter 18 you have an insertion. Inserted at this point is an important digression that details the nature of Satan's world system that we already see emerging today and gaining momentum, a one-world government that will be ruled by Satan's apes, the antichrist and the false prophet. The Lord calls this coming empire "Babylon" which he also uses to describe the name of an actual city that will serve as the headquarters of the antichrist. And, of course, this is an appropriate name given the exceedingly vile history of Babylon that ancient kingdom.

But, as we will see today, this will be a mystery, "a mystery, Babylon the great." It will be a system of government and religion that has not yet been revealed. We see glimpses of it now, but it will not be fully known until the time of the antichrist during the tribulation. This is something, my friends, that is not to be confined to a particular geographic region of the past or even of the present. But this will be a system that exceeds anything that the world has ever witnessed, a system that was originally spawned at the tower of Babel and later evolved into the Babylonian Empire.

So Babylon should be understood as a symbolic name for Satan's coming world system. We will learn that this empire will possess both a military to enforce its policies as well as a religious system. It will also have an economic system. It will be committed to the extermination of Christians, especially Jewish Christians who have come to Christ who will refuse to worship the Antichrist and whose promised kingdom Satan seeks to prevent at all costs.

To be sure, true Christians are despised today. But, my friends, as we learn from the Word of God they will be hated beyond anything we can imagine during the coming time of Babylon the Great. The world will hate God during that time because, first of all, it will see how he slaughtered the Russian and Arab alliance that came down on Israel as we have studied the battle of Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 38 and 39. They will also hate him because of the destruction that much of the world will have experienced by that time through the seal and the trumpet and even the bowl judgments.

According to Revelation six verses 16 through 17 even early on in the tribulation, in the first half of the tribulation, the world will be terrified of the triune God. Yet they will still refuse to worship the Lamb choosing instead to worship the beast, the antichrist.

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So the satanically controlled antichrist and his false prophet will cause the nations of the world to believe in some kind of religious deception that will satisfy their demand for a supernatural explanation of all that is occurring and also offer them some kind of hope without any need to repent, without any need to submit to the authority of God. They will need some type of a religious system that will allow them to continue to satisfy their insatiable appetites for sexual immorality, materialism, idolatry and so forth. And, again, already we see the shadows of Bible prophecy casting themselves forward as we look at the world in which we live today.

So in chapter 17 the Lord will give us further insight into the character and eventually the judgment of the spiritual or religious facet of the kingdom that will be led primarily by the false prophet. And then in chapter 18 he will describe the political economic aspect of the kingdom led by the antichrist and God's judgment upon him.

Now I wish to read to you the entire chapter here in chapter 17, 18 verses, so that you get a grasp of the Lord's intentions here in this stunning description. And then we are going to focus exclusively this morning on the first six verses where we will see the character, the clout and the contempt of the final world religion that is depicted as a harlot. So follow along as I read Revelation 17.

And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I shall show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed acts of immorality, and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality."

And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality, and upon her forehead a name was written, a mystery, "BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. And when I saw her, I wondered greatly.

And the angel said to me, "Why do you wonder? I shall 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 is about to come up out of the abyss and to go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth will wonder, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come. Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits, and they are seven kings; five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and

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when he comes, he must remain a little while. And the beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is one of the seven, and he goes to destruction. And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings, who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour. These have one purpose and they give their power and authority to the beast. These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful."

And he said to me, "The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues. And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire. For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God should be fulfilled. And the woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth."²

Now it is important for you to understand the history of ancient Babylon in order to grasp what the Lord is telling us here with respect to mystery Babylon to come. That which, according to verse five, is called "the mother of harlots," not just a harlot, but the mother of harlots, the one that actually birthed the blasphemous idolatries that will ultimately characterize this false religious system, this final mystery Babylon. So much of what I have to share with you this morning will be introductory.

First of all, bear in mind that this final world religious system will be thoroughly demonic, therefore irresistibly appealing to man. It will be so vile and so blasphemous that the Lord describes Babylon's sins as being "piled up as high as heaven,"³ in chapter 18 verse five. This, I might add, will be the unholy counterpart to the bride of Christ.

Now allow me to trace the history of Babylon for a few moments. 1,656 years after God created Adam he judged man by a world wide flood. All except eight people were killed in that flood. Those who, according to the Word of God, found favor in the eyes of the Lord. Of course that was Noah and his wife and his three sons and their wives. And we know, according to Genesis chapter 10 verses eight through 10 that one of Noah's sons, Ham, had a descendent named Nimrod and that Nimrod tried, according to Scripture, to build a kingdom called Babel, the Hebrew from of which is Babylon. And he did this in the land of Shinar according to verse 10 of Genesis 10. That, by the way, is the region of Iraq today, the same region as was originally the place of the Garden of Eden, the land of Mesopotamia.

And, according to Genesis chapter 11 and verse one we read, "Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words."⁴ Obviously they were of the same family, the

² Revelation 17:1-18.

³ Revelation 18:5.

⁴ Genesis 11:1.

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family of Noah. They all spoke the same language. And in verse two we read that “they journeyed east to the land of Shinar and they settled there.” So, basically what we see happening in the biblical record is 100 years after the flood Satan tries to establish an earthly kingdom through a wicked man named Nimrod, Noah’s great grandson, Nimrod being a foreshadow of the antichrist.

We learn more about their motivation in verse four of Genesis 11. “And they said, ‘Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name; lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.’”⁵

Now this is commonly called the Tower of Babel. It was a ziggurat or a staged tower erected to facilitate idolatry. History reveals that on top of these ziggurats were the sign of the zodiac where priests would go to chart the course of the stars to determine the future. It should be no surprise that we still have this satanic practice with us today, one that is absolutely forbidden for Christians to participate in, just another ploy to distract man from worshipping the one true God who has actually ordained the end from the beginning.

Now, we know that God was displeased with their idolatrous practice and their rebellion. He knew that it was thoroughly satanic. So, according to verse seven we read the Lord saying this.

"Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech."

So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth.⁶

Now, being confused, the people had to coalesce or unite around those that spoke their language. Imagine if all of the sudden you couldn’t speak the language of anybody around you and then finally you heard someone that you could understand and that is what they did. They gathered together and they went their separate ways to find a region upon the earth that could support their particular group.

But, dear friends, they took with them all of their idolatries, much of which historians have discovered was an ancient form of mother son fertility worship.

As we study a combination of myth, legend and history and archaeological finds and so forth, all of this points to a woman originally named Semiramis who was believed to be

⁵ Genesis 11:4.

⁶ Genesis 11:7-9.

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the wife of Nimrod. But regardless of the veracity of the name, as many as 180 shrines dedicated to the goddess Ishtar were documented in ancient Babylon. So the idolatrous mother son fertility cult worship can be seen today in virtually every aspect of the globe because it was all spawned there and spread around the world.

In Greece she became Aphrodite, Artemis, Athena, Demeter, Gaia. In Rome she was Venus, Dianai, Minerva, Tera. In India she became the goddess Divaki with the infant Krishna as well as the goddess Isi and the infant Isuara. In Egypt she was the goddess Isis with the son Horace. In Asia she was known as Sybil and Iosis. The Scandanavians called her Desa. She is often pictured with a child. The ancient Germans worshipped the virgin Hertha with a child in her arms and on it goes.

And as we see even biblically this “queen of heaven” also had a son named Tamuz. Even Israel was later rebuked for worshipping the queen of heaven, the goddess Ishtar. We read of this in Jeremiah chapter 44. And they even were rebuked for worshipping her son Tamuz in Ezekiel chapter 8:14 which included forms of idol worship that involved the lowest, most vile and abominable forms of immorality, things that are unspeakable, idolatrous practices that they refused to abandon therefore God judged them.

Now it should be no surprise that the name “queen of heaven, mother of God” is still used by Roman Catholics to describe the virgin Mary. In fact, any honest student of Roman Catholicism will quickly see that the papacy and the Roman Catholic system is far more Babylonish and Jewish than it is Christian.

Historically we can see this Babylonish mother of harlots eventually settled in Rome and when Constantine conquered Rome around 300 AD he mixed a perverted form of Christianity with the pagan Babylonish myths of Rome, mixed them together, all of that paganism to form the Roman Catholic Church. They also mixed much of Judaism with it. Therefore the altars and the robes and all the things of the Pharisees can be easily traced to various facets of Judaism.

And during that time the famous historian Eusebius, which was a follower of the Church Father Origen, taught that the Church which is now the Roman Catholic or Roman universal Church was the new Israel, that it had permanently replaced the Jew. In fact, Constantine even made it a crime to convert to Judaism. And, ultimately Constantine united the new Roman Empire with the new Roman Catholic Church in an effort to promote loyalty and unity among the citizens.

So this mixture of Babylonian paganism and aspects of Judaism and a distorted form of Christianity became the Roman Catholic Church. It literally became the glue that held the early Roman Empire... the Holy Roman Empire together. And to this day Roman Catholics ultimately worship Mary, the holy mother called the “queen of heaven.” In fact, the coat of arms of Pope John Paul II bears the letter “M” which stands for Mary and embroidered on the inside of his robes is the Latin phrase “*totus tuos sum Maria*” which means “Mary, I am all yours.”

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History is replete with documented evidence of popes who were notoriously evil. And, of course, this is all thoroughly pagan. It is rooted, once again, in ancient Babylon and these popes are in many ways prototypes of the antichrist. If you want to read some of this, read *Vicar's of Christ: The Dark Side of the Papacy* by Peter De Rosa who was a former Jesuit. The same type of vileness can be seen even in the recent scandals of the Roman Catholic priesthood. Again, the Roman Catholic Church is Babylonish at its core. It will continue to be a major player in the religious system of the antichrist and the false prophet.

I might add that it is staggering to me to see how many evangelicals who claim to be Bible believing Christians are trying to get people to believe that somehow the Roman Catholic Church is just another brand of Christianity. People who are desperate to see us all just kind of get along. "Let's just set aside these minor doctrinal differences." Maybe you have read of this movement, "Evangelicals and Catholics Together."

It is astounding to me. It is beyond the purview of our study here today for me to elaborate on the difference, but, dear friends, they are vast. They are vast. Have you not studied the five solas of the Reformation? Have you not studied the Reformation?

At their famous Council of Trent in 1543 they said this, quote, "If anyone says that after the reception of justification the guilt is so remitted and the debt of eternal punishment so blotted out to every repentant sinner that no debt of temporal punishment remains to be discharged by the person's own suffering either in this world or in purgatory before the gates of heaven can be opened, let him be anathema," which means let him be damned.

Well, beloved, then if you believe the gospel you are damned according to that. People say, "Well, they don't still believe that." Oh, wrong. This was once again affirmed at Vatican II in 1965.

Beloved, grace is at the very core of the gospel. The Roman Catholic system utterly eviscerates grace. It says that it is faith plus works. It is grace plus works. It is not Scripture alone. It is Scripture plus tradition. And on and on it goes.

It should be no surprise that the Roman Catholic Church is positioning itself today at the very center of the current movement towards globalization and an emerging world government. In fact, as I mentioned to you in an earlier exposition, in a recent papal treatise called "Charity and Truth" given by Pope Benedict XVI just prior to the meeting at the G8 nations in Italy this July he stated that there is an urgent need for a, quote, "True world political authority to manage world affairs," end quote.

In fact, the *New York Times* picked up on this and noted in their July seventh edition that the Pope's controversial statement clearly endorsed a new world economic order. The Pope did warn, however, that such an order could, quote, "produce a dangerous universal power of a tyrannical nature," end quote. Boy, he got that right. It will produce that, that

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of the antichrist and the false prophet. So, once again, beloved, we see the events of prophecy casting their shadows forward.

So out of the Tower of Babel, out of that complex of all these pagan religions we find all of the religions today that are apostate, whether it is Hinduism, Buddhism, Shamanism that I ran into so much in Siberia, Islam, whatever it is. They were all birthed by the “mother of harlots and the abominations of the earth” of ancient Babylon.

After Babel, you may remember, that the great empire of Babylon was built by Nebuchadnezzar right there in Iraq, the cradle of civilization. It is interesting how it all began there and it will all end there. This remains the most hostile region in the world in its vicious hatred of God’s covenant people the Jews and certainly the true Church.

So here in Revelation 17 the world or the Lord warns that just before the end of time, before he returns history is going to come full circle. He is telling us here that all of these false religious systems will have, shall we say, a family reunion. They are all going to come home to momma. They will all be rolled into one religion (which will ultimately be the worship of the beast) that is personified as a harlot.

Now this also helps explain why politicians and world leaders today are united in trying to come up with a political system as well as a religious system that brings us all together. We see this in the sad historical progression of the Billy Graham crusades. I have been studying that of late because I have been so disappointed with where this has ended up. After years of trying to appease the liberals and the Catholics and unite them in some kind of grand church evangelical unity, Graham and his people finally succumbed to the very liberalism that he sought to influence. By the way, we should always remember, dear friends, that a little leaven leavens the whole lump. It is never vice versa.

A few years ago Graham said to Robert Schuler, and I quote, “I think that everybody that loves Christ or knows Christ whether they are conscious of it or not, they are members of the body of Christ whether they come from the Muslim world or the Buddhist world or the Christian world or the non believing world, they are members of the body of Christ because they have been called by God. They may not even know the name of Jesus, but they know in their hearts they need something that they don’t have and they turn to the only light that they have and I think they are saved and they are going to be with us in heaven.”

To which Dr. Schuler replied, quote, “What I hear you saying is that it is possible for Jesus Christ to come into a human heart and soul and life even if they have been born in darkness and have never had exposure to the Bible. Is that a correct interpretation of what you are saying?”

Dr. Graham replied, “Yes, it is because I believe that.”

Well, examples such as this abound today. Indeed, the world is being prepared, beloved, for a Babylonish whore, an apostate religious system that will promise to bring all of the

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world's religions together under one monolithic banner of ecumenism, a demonic system that will eventually lead to the sole worship of the antichrist.

Now let's examine the text where we will discover three things the Lord reveals about this religious harlot. Again, keep in mind that harlotry is a biblical metaphor used to describe a false religion or those who commit spiritual fornication with some kind of apostate religious system.

First let's notice *her character*, her intoxicating seduction in verse one. "And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, 'Come here, I shall show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters.'"⁷

"Sits on many waters." What does that mean? Verse 15 explains it. "The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues."⁸ So, in other words, this is emblematic of the vast universal influence she will have on the people of the world which will also include the rulers of the world, verse two. "...with whom the kings of the earth committed acts of immorality, and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality."⁹ "Those who dwell on the earth" is a description that John uses throughout Revelation to describe unbelievers.

So the world will become inebriated, if you will, with her deceptions. This imagery of her intoxicating effect upon the world is drawn from Jeremiah's description of ancient Babylon as we read in Jeremiah 51 verse seven. "Babylon has been a golden cup in the hand of the LORD, Intoxicating all the earth. The nations have drunk of her wine; Therefore the nations are going mad."¹⁰ So this coming religious system will be so seductive that she will enjoy world wide popularity encompassing all of the social strata of the nations, transcending all of the cultural and ethnic and language barriers.

Now, like all apostate churches down through history she will align herself with the political power brokers of the nations who will need her as much as she will need them. Jump down to verse four. We will see more of this. We learn more of her character. "And the woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls."¹¹

So here we see her depicted in the robes of royalty. She is adorned with all of the trappings of luxury and wealth. Here she is flaunting the success of her whoredom as an expensive prostitute would do.

Beloved, I might add that these are always the trappings of a ritualistic apostate church. As I think about it, what a contrast to the attire of the bride of the Lamb that is given to her by God in chapter 19 verse eight where we read she is given these garments, "to

⁷ Revelation 17:1.

⁸ Revelation 17:15.

⁹ Revelation 17:2.

¹⁰ Jeremiah 51:7.

¹¹ Revelation 17:4.

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clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.”¹²

Now her repulsive arrogance and wickedness are also displayed in what she holds in her hand, verse four. “...having in her hand a gold cup.”¹³ Here like all prostitutes she is depicted as intoxicating her victims with the wine of pleasure and debauchery. But like the woman described in Proverbs 7:10 as the one, “Dressed as a harlot and cunning of heart,”¹⁴ we know that all who will fall victim to her seduction will perish even, again, as Proverbs seven verse 26 says:

For many are the victims she has cast down, And numerous are all her slain. Her house is the way to Sheol, Descending to the chambers of death.¹⁵

Now, it is for this reason that the Lord describes the deadly contents of her cup in verse four. He says that it is, “...full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality.”¹⁶ The Holy Spirit has used the word “abominations” in other places in Scripture, especially in the Old Testament and there it is used to describe the blasphemous practices of idolatry that are reprehensible to God. Yet what we see here in the prophecy is that this will be the formula of the brew that the world will guzzle as they fall prey to the harlot church.

And for this reason she has a name on her forehead. And this is probably, probably what John sees. We can't be dogmatic here. But probably what he sees is this name written across a headband because in those days the prostitutes wore a large headband scarf around their forehead. In verse five we read that, “Upon her forehead a name was written, a mystery, ‘BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.’”¹⁷

Once again, I stress. This is a mystery yet to be revealed that will eventually reveal her true identity, an identity associated not only with a great city as we read in verse 18 of chapter 17, but also this immense false religious system inspired by Satan and utterly opposed to Christ and all who belong to him.

So this is an idolatrous system first birthed at Babel. This is the character of the woman. But notice what happens next in John's vision. In verse three we read that, “He carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness,”¹⁸ literally a place of desolation, probably symbolic of her eventual demise. And he says, “And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet

¹² Revelation 19:8.

¹³ Revelation 17:4.

¹⁴ Proverbs 7:10.

¹⁵ Proverbs 7:26-27.

¹⁶ Revelation 17:4.

¹⁷ Revelation 17:5.

¹⁸ Revelation 17:3.

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beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns.”¹⁹ And here, secondly, we see *her clout*, her intriguing power and influence.

Now the imagery is most insightful here. Won't you notice that the woman is on top of the scarlet beast, which is the antichrist according to chapter 13 verse one. And scarlet is symbolic of royalty. Recall how the wicked men around Jesus placed a scarlet robe on him at his crucifixion mocking him as King of the Jews. But scarlet is not only a symbol of royalty in the Bible, but also of luxury. It is also a symbol of sin and blood.

So we also see that this woman is riding the beast, symbolic of her clout, her influence on him as well as his support of her; albeit temporary because we know that the antichrist and the false prophet will need each other for a while.

But remember. The beast will need to offer a desperate, a confused world some kind of supernatural explanation for all that is happening, all the cataclysmic judgments. They are seeing the invincible power of the two witnesses. They are seeing the angelic preachers preaching the gospel flying in mid heaven. They are seeing the miraculous deliverance of many of the Jews into the wilderness and obviously they are seeing the cataclysmic judgments upon the world so they need an explanation and this church will give it to them.

So the beast will support the harlot till he no longer has any use for her and then he will discard her as men do with prostitutes. And then he will demand that the world worship him alone as we read in verse 16. “And the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire.”²⁰

Now, notice also in verse three the scarlet beast or the antichrist is “full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns.”²¹ These blasphemous names on the beast are titles of self-deification that he has attached to himself, titles that oppose the true Christ, that demands that the world used to worship him. And, again, this underscores the depths of his blasphemy. And “the seven heads” represent seven consecutive world empires in history. We will study this more when we look at verses nine through 11. But these will include that of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome and then the final empire of the antichrist.

And the text also demonstrates this symbiotic relationship between these satanic empires and their religious harlots that have been used down through history to oppose Christ and all who belong to him. And we have seen similar alliances in our lifetime. You can recall even with Japan and the emperor worship that bolstered that whole political movement. You can see it today with Islam in Iran and so forth. So the future alliance between the woman and the beast will be nothing new.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Revelation 17:16.

²¹ Revelation 17:3.

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And the “10 horns,” according to verse 12, represent “ten kings, who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour.”²²

So these will be political leaders, probably of various countries that will be a part of the confederacy of the antichrist. These will be kings who will be subordinate rulers with him for only a short period of time at the end of the tribulation just prior to their demise at Armageddon.

So the Lord reveals to John the *character* and the *clout* of the woman and then finally her *contempt*, verse six. “And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. And when I saw her, I wondered greatly.”²³

The idea of being drunk with blood was a concept used by ancient people that we all still understand to this day. It describes a person that is utterly intoxicated with violence. It describes one who is consumed with the shedding of blood like a drunkard who is out of his mind. And this will characterize the final apostate Church, their utter contempt for Christ, their hatred for all who belong to him. And the whole spectacle was so powerful, so staggering that John says, “When I saw her I wondered greatly.”²⁴ In the original language it literally says, “I marveled a marvel.” It is an overwhelming scene.

Well, while any of us would equally marvel at such a spectacle, we are not really that surprised because of what we see in the world today. We can already see the political, economic and military components of a satanic Babylon beginning to emerge. The world’s economies are teetering on collapse. I saw that first hand in Russia. That is why they are so desperate to do business with Iran. That is why they hate the United States and Israel.

And, of course, the only answer is going to be a one world monetary system leading to a one world government. The nations of the world today are either plotting some kind of violence upon another nation or they are cowering in retreat like the United States. The people of the world are afraid. They are confused. They are angry. They are immoral. They are materialistic. They are idolatrous. They are haters of Christ. And they are fundamentally opposed to the gospel. They are poised to follow a charismatic leader who will offer them change they can believe in.

We have already seen that today, people will believe absolutely anything. We can also see the seduction of “the mother of harlots” gaining influence in all of the religions of the world. We now have what Michael Horton has aptly labeled in his recent book, a “Christless Christianity, the alternative gospel of the American church.”

Today we have an American church that is more about moral and political crusades than proclaiming the gospel of grace. The Church today is being inundated with various

²² Revelation 17:12.

²³ Revelation 17:6.

²⁴ Ibid.

Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots

Revelation 17:1-6

forms of contemporary evangelicalism that is utterly bereft of Bible doctrine. Not just in liberal camps, but also in conservative camps.

You can go today, dear friends, into virtually any Christian bookstore and as you walk in they will have the best sellers right there in front of you. And I challenge you to do this because I did this just recently and I saw this. You can go in and you will find the man-centered gospel of the purpose driven church. If you don't like that you can look over and you can also find the blasphemous gospel of prosperity theology. And if you don't like that you can find the utterly eviscerated gospel of the emergent church all on one shelf. But you will be hard pressed to find in our Christian book stores today books that are truly, biblically, doctrinally sound that uphold the gospel of grace. In fact, many times when I call the larger bookstores to look for books that I want to read, they say, "Well, that is on the B or the C list. We don't carry those, but we can order that for you."

And Christians who believe the gospel are being shouted down, are being marginalized and being called narrow minded. They want us all to come together whether we are Muslim or Jew or Buddhist, whatever it is. "We all worship the same God. We are all people of faith."

And one day soon, dear friends, this will be accomplished in mystery Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth.

Let's pray together.

Father, we thank you for your Word. It gives us such insight, but it also overwhelms us not only with the apostasies that we see gathering all around us, but also with the grace that you have given us because, Lord, we know that were it not for grace we would be numbered among the apostates, numbered among the naïve and the damned. So, Lord, we praise you. And I cry out on behalf of anyone who does not know you, Lord, that today would be the day that they confess their sin and come running to the Savior for the grace that you will so instantly give them. Lord, thank you for your Word. Cause it to bear much fruit in our life I ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Transcript Explanation: Each transcript is a rough approximation of the message preached and may occasionally misstate certain portions of the sermon and even misspell certain words. It should in no way be considered an edited document ready for print. Moreover, as in any transcription of the spoken word, the full intention and passion of the speaker cannot be fully captured and will in no way reflect the same style of a written document.

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