

Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots – Part 2

Revelation 17:7-17

What a tremendous joy it is to hear the saints sing, to be able to sing the songs of redemption.

This morning we come again to the study of the Word of God and we are in Revelation chapter 17. We continue our study of the false religious system that will one day dominate the world. We are studying Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots. This is the second part in this series.

Before I read the text and we examine it, I wish to remind you of some very important truths that I believe are especially important in these days of mounting apostasy in our country and, indeed, in our world. In the opening paragraph of his book *Christless Christianity*, Michael Horton reminded me of a sermon that I heard a number of years ago.

And here is what Horton had to say, quote, “What would things look like if Satan really took control of a city? Over half a century ago Presbyterian minister Donald Grey Barnhouse offered his own scenario in his weekly sermon that was also broadcast nationwide on CBS radio. Barnhouse speculated that if Satan took over Philadelphia all of the bars would be closed, pornography banished and pristine streets would be filled with tidy pedestrians who smiled at each other. There would be no swearing. The children would say, “Yes, sir,” and “No, ma’am,” and the churches would be full every Sunday *where Christ is not preached,*” end quote.

Dear friends, the vast majority of evangelical churches are meeting together today around this country and, frankly, in other places around the world and they will hear a message where Christ is not preached. After all, today’s sermons must be relevant. They must be entertaining, certainly non-offensive. They must focus on things like our great enemy, liberalism or some moral crusade like abortion or homosexuality or whatever. The focus will be primarily on our needs, our desires, our purpose in life, our self-esteem, our experience, our psychological health. The pastor will sound more like Dr. Phil than the apostle Paul. He will sound more like a late night comedian than “a man of sorrows acquainted with grief.”

Today if Christ is mentioned at all in many churches he will typically be portrayed more as a personal trainer to help us be all that we can be rather than the Son of God who came to die as a substitute for our sin.

You see, the new gospel is all about what we need to do for God in order for us to be happy, not what he has done for us so that we can be holy. So people are asked to make decisions, to ask Jesus into their heart, to submit to certain rules. People either use the stick or the carrot. Some churches will choose the stick of endless rules that must be obeyed in order to find favor with God while others prefer the carrot of discovering certain spiritual principles that will guarantee a successful life, both of which are equally enemies of grace.

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It should be no surprise that although 80 percent of America calls itself Christian, Christianity is having virtually no impact on our culture. The Church has largely become irrelevant. Most of what we hear in pulpits is as shallow as water on a plate. Christians are theologically illiterate these days. Sermons are both trite and in many cases as you can tell on television, downright stupid.

Horton says, and I quote, “It is not heresy as much as silliness that is killing us softly. God is not denied, but trivialized, used for our life programs rather than received, worshipped and enjoyed,” end quote.

One of George Barna’s conclusions in his research about American spirituality says this, quote, “To increasing millions of Americans God—if we even believe in a supernatural deity—exists for the pleasure of humankind. He resides in the heavenly realm solely for our utility and benefit. Although we are too clever to voice it, we live by the notion that true power is accessed not by looking upward, but by turning in inward,” end quote.

Now theologically much of this is rooted in old Pelagianism. You may recall Pelagius was a fourth century heretic that denied original sin, that believed that man was basically good and that he by obeying the law could save himself. And today we have in evangelicalism kind of a new brand of that which many theologians call semi Pelagianism where they would say that not so much is man basically good, but man is just sick. Whereas the Bible tells us that he is dead.

And since man is sick many people see that salvation is basically a synergism between man; a process made available by God, but ultimately initiated by man’s free will and consummated by man’s decision to accept Jesus into his heart. And so, dear friends, subtly what has happened over the years is man begins to move up on the stage with God and share it with him; God gradually is diminished and man is gradually elevated.

So conversion to many today is basically this collaborative effort between man and God where we can have a personal relationship with Christ which is ultimately translated into a concept of being self fulfilled. As a result, a variety of additional distortions have arisen out of this over the years, but they all share a common bond. And, beloved, that bond is basically this. Today Christians fail to see God as the transcendent, holy, merciful God who has condescended to save helpless sinners who are utterly unable to help themselves. But, rather, they see God as this invisible friend that is willing to help us find out potential in life if we just learn the secrets of how to enlist his help.

For many Christians today sin is merely making mistakes. It is merely doing stupid things that prevent us from living up to our potential and finding our purpose in life, things that rob us of our happiness. That it is a condition is not an understood concept, that sin is a condition. People don’t see that. They don’t see that sin is that which has rendered us guilty before a holy God, that we are—as we read this morning—children of wrath, dead in our trespasses and sin, spiritually blind the Bible tells us, deaf, deceived, utterly incapable of even responding to the gospel apart from the regenerating power of the

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Spirit of God. And, therefore, we are in desperate need of mercy and a salvation that we cannot secure on our own.

But, beloved, I would submit to you that unless people understand these essential truths of the gospel the gospel will never be as exceedingly glorious as it is. The truth of the gospel will never be understood as something that is absolutely mind boggling, that is utterly ineffable and therefore the good news that is good news beyond our comprehension.

The modern evangelical church wants to be seen more like Disneyland, a place where the whole family can come together and have fun and escape all of the stuff of life. So it is little wonder that the new gospel message seems to reflect the mythical optimism of Disney's Jiminy Cricket. Do you remember him? "If you wish upon a star all your dreams will come true." That seems to be the essence of the new gospel rather than understanding that we are hopeless sinners utterly unable to help ourselves.

Rather than understanding that we need to come face to face with a holy God and admit that we are guilty, eternally damned. That we need to come face to face with the reigning, sovereign Savior, the incarnate Christ crucified, the one who died and rose again and has ascended into heaven, the one who bore our condemnation in our place. We need to understand that we are in constant need of grace. People need to understand that even our righteousness is like a filthy rag in God's eyes.

Indeed, most Christians today fail to understand that sin is far more than just actions, but it is a condition in which we were born, one so devastating that it renders all men guilty before a holy God.

Beloved, for this reason Christ must be preached. For this reason sin must be exposed. For this reason the offense of the cross must never be diminished. Apart from the transforming power of the gospel man will continue to indulge in every whim of his flesh without restraint. But when the centrality of Christ is obscured and ignored he cannot be saved. It is as simple as that. And man will remain utterly self-centered, though very religious and eternally damned.

Barna summarized a large study on American spirituality and religion and he put it this way. And I found this so true in what I am experiencing today as a pastor. He said, quote, "In short, the spirituality of America is Christian in name only. We desire experience more than knowledge. We prefer choices to absolutes. We embrace preferences rather than truths. We see comfort rather than growth. Faith must come on our terms or we reject it. We have enthroned ourselves as the final arbiters of righteousness, the ultimate rulers of our own experience and destiny. We are the Pharisees of the new millennium," end quote.

So, beloved, whenever we gather to hear the Word of God preached we must do so with a heart of humility and a heart of anticipation, longing to worship in spirit and in truth. Moreover this needs to be a time when we come together to celebrate the gospel of

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Christ, the fact that God has saved us when we were unable to save ourselves. So whenever we approach the Word of God we must remember that this is a time when we are confronted with the depths of our own sin and our eternal need for mercy and grace that is found only in the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are also confronted with the character and the attributes of God even as we come to a study of the prophetic Word. Here we see his holiness in his hatred of sin. As we come to the prophetic Word we see his sovereignty as he rules his creation. We see his divine providence as he orchestrates all of the events in history to ultimately bring to fruition that which he has decreed in eternity past. We see his mercy and his love and his grace in salvation. We see his faithful, committed covenant love that endures forever. We see his majesty and his glory even in his wrath. I might even add: especially in his wrath. We see his plan of redemption. We see his glory in his second coming and the establishment of his earthly kingdom.

So I pray that as you prepare your heart to hear the Word of truth this morning, to hear it explained as best I can, that you will be quick to spot these truths and allow them to ignite your heart with deep praise. Once again we want Christ not only to be central, beloved, but we want him to be exclusive. And, as a result, we will glorify him and he will bless us. In fact, you will recall that at the beginning of Revelation in our study of Bible prophecy in Revelation 1:3 the Lord tells us, “Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.”¹

Why would that person be blessed? Because when we read and we hear the words of these prophecies and we heed that which God would have us to do, then God is glorified and, as a result, we are blessed and we enjoy him more deeply.

Now, last week we examined the intoxicating seductive character of the harlot church that will one day dominate the world during the time of the tribulation. We also examined her power and her influence, that which I called her clout, and also the utter contempt that she will have for Christ and all who will belong to him. And keep in mind that she will be an ecumenical mixture of all of the religious systems today, ingeniously arranged by Satan himself to accommodate any and all beliefs, except one, biblical Christianity. “We can’t have that” because, beloved, biblical Christianity mixes with nothing.

We see this mindset again today growing in our culture, don’t we? I don’t know how I get some of these things, but in my email I keep getting this thing called belief net dot com. And it had some interesting things about spirituality on it and I thought, I wonder what this is about. I clicked on it and I will give you a sample of what they have on their website.

There you can get your cosmic profile, and read your horoscope. They have Bible readings. They have a saint of the day. They have angel wisdom where angels can be

¹ Revelation 1:3.

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your guide. They have Jewish wisdom, Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu, B'hai, Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Seventh day Adventism, Shintoism, Sikhism, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, pagan and earth based religions, Scientology and on it goes. And they even have Heloise's hints for your home and life, health and holistic living, chicken soup for the soul and on it goes. Everything except biblical Christianity. Those who believe what Jesus said when he said, "I am the way and the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father, except through me."

Well, when you mix all these doctrines of demons together you, indeed, you get a "christless Christianity" that would cause our former president to say, quote, "I believe that all the world, whether they be Muslim, Christian or any other religion, prays to the same God. That is what I believe," end quote.

So the world is already being prepared to embrace this coming harlot that will serve the beast, the antichrist. In fact, in 1 John 4:3 John tells us that, "spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world,"² he tells us.

So now in verses seven through 17 the Lord provides more insight concerning this religious harlot, beyond her character and clout and contempt. He goes on to describe two more things that we will examine this morning, her coconspirator and her calamity. Let me read verse seven through the end of the chapter here.

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 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.

² 1 John 4:3.

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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.”³

So, first, the angelic messenger here speaks of the woman’s co conspirator, the antichrist, Satan’s pawn in this spiritual chess match. Now, it is interesting that John sees this woman in the beginning of the chapter riding this scarlet beast full of blasphemous names and having seven heads and 10 horns. And then he sees that on her forehead she has a name, “a mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth.” And so in verse six we read that he says. “And when I saw her, I wondered greatly.”⁴

Now, obviously he did not understand the relationship between the woman and the beast. He had been informed earlier in chapter 13 that ultimately the world would worship the antichrist and worship him alone. So, in verse seven, the angel clarifies this and says, “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.”⁵

Now before the angel explains the relationship between the harlot church and the political empire of the antichrist, he offers a very important digression in verses eight through 14 that, frankly, expands upon chapters 11 and chapter 13 of Revelation in describing more fully the beast and how his kingdom and his wicked empires that Satan has raised up all relate together.

Notice in verse eight he says, “The beast that you saw was and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and to go to destruction.”⁶ Here the angel uses this phrase “...was and is not and is about to come up out of the abyss,”⁷ to refer back to chapter 13 where, you will recall, the beast suffers a death wound. This happens in the middle of the tribulation. Then to the astonishment of the earth dwellers he is supposedly resurrected from the dead, a counterfeit resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. And bear in mind, now, that that particular scenario bridges his human and super human career because at the point of his fake resurrection we know that he is indwelt by one of the demons, one of the most vile demons out of the pit.

It is interesting, too, that this phrase describing the beast as the one “who was and is not and is about to come up,” is really a parody on the name of God as the One “who is and who was and who is to come,” a description that is used on several occasions in Revelation.

³ Revelation 17:7-18.

⁴ Revelation 17:6.

⁵ Revelation 17:7.

⁶ Revelation 17:8.

⁷ Ibid.

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So the angel here now is restating the chronology of the career of the antichrist who will support the harlot church as her co conspirator, but eventually turn on her as we will see.

Now bear in mind, during the middle of the tribulation the antichrist, again, will fake his death. The false prophet who will be leading the harlot church who is supporting the beast will use this phony resurrection to galvanize the world to ultimately worship him alone. And ultimately the angel here reminds John that the beast will go “to destruction.” You will recall that the apostle Paul called the antichrist in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 the “son of destruction.”⁸

So ultimately he is going to destruction. He is going to hell. He is going to the place prepared for the devil and his angels where Satan and the false prophet will join him where, according to Revelation 20 and verse 10 “they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”

Now because of all of this we read in verse eight that those who dwell on the earth will wonder. And, again, you will recall in chapter 13 and verse three “they marveled.” Those who reject the Lamb will be amazed at the beast, amazed at his supposed resurrection and they will worship him. And then these earth dwellers, the ones that reject God and his provision of grace through faith in the Lamb, are then further described in verse eight. He said, “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.”⁹

This is an interesting text. You will recall that in the New Testament the phrase, “The foundation of the world” is a synonym for the Greek concept of “before time began” or what we might call at times “eternity past.” This is the same concept that was used in Revelation 13:8.

And bear in mind that seven times in the New Testament believers are described as “those whose names have been written in the book of life.” This refers to a divine registry of those whom God has chosen to be reconciled unto himself by his uninfluenced choice. This is a registry that was written in eternity past before the foundations of the world. Paul speaks of this in several places, for example, Titus one verses one and two we read of how that we were chosen of God, “in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago...”¹⁰ Again, literally, “before time began.” When did he promise that? Before time began. In Ephesians 1:4 we read that, “He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world.”¹¹

But we see here in verse eight that these are people whose names are not recorded in this book of life. These will be the ones that will be deceived. You will recall that Jesus made it clear that these deceptions during this time will be exceedingly powerful. Remember in Matthew 24 and verse 24 he tells us that they will be as powerful, “as to mislead, if

⁸ 2 Thessalonians 2:3.

⁹ Revelation 17:8.

¹⁰ Titus 1:2.

¹¹ Ephesians 1:4.

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possible, even the elect.”¹² And Mark describes them in Mark 13:20 as “the elect whom he chose.”

And then the angelic messenger gives even deeper insight here in verses nine through 11. And these verses literally are an exposition of verse three, explaining the seven heads and the 10 horns of the beast. And so here the angel is encouraging John, and anyone examining this text: “pay close attention, think very clearly.” Verse nine he said, “Here is the mind which has wisdom.”¹³ In other words, “Listen up here. I am going to explain this to you.” As my teachers used to say when I was a little boy, “Put your thinking cap on, ok?”

He says, “The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits, and they are seven kings.”¹⁴ Now, in order to interpret the Bible you must let the Bible interpret itself. And as we look at other passages of Scripture, especially in the Old Testament we learn that mountains and hills are commonly used metaphorically to describe the great kingdoms and the dominance of their rulers and so forth. So the seven mountains refer to seven successive world empires each having a king personified by the seven heads.

Now this is described further in verse 10. It says, “And they are seven kings; five have fallen.”¹⁵ Indeed, by John’s day five powerful, influential Gentile kingdoms that were all birthed in ancient Babel by the mother of harlots all were kingdoms who opposed the God of Israel and his covenant people. These five kingdoms, by this time, had all come and gone. Five have fallen: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo Persia and Greece.

And then he says, “And one is.”¹⁶ Naturally, this is a reference to Rome where Domitian was currently ruling and reigning, a foreshadow of the antichrist.

And then he says, “The other has not yet come,”¹⁷ referring to the reign of the antichrist and his empire.

And then he says, “And when he comes he must remain a little while.”¹⁸ How long is a little while? Well, according to chapter 13 verse five he will be given, “authority to act for forty-two months,”¹⁹ which is the last three and a half years of the tribulation.

And then in verse 11 he goes on and says, “And the beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is one of the seven, and he goes to destruction.”²⁰

Now we know as we piece all of this together that in the first half of the tribulation, prior

¹² Matthew 24:24.

¹³ Revelation 17:9.

¹⁴ Revelation 17:9-10.

¹⁵ Revelation 17:10.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Revelation 13:5.

²⁰ Revelation 17:11.

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to his counterfeit death and resurrection the rule of the antichrist will be the seventh kingdom in the succession of these Gentile nations, these Gentile kingdoms birthed by the harlot.

And then upon his counterfeit resurrection and subsequent empowering by Satan he will then rule over the eighth and the final empire during the last half of the tribulation just prior to going to destruction. So it is as if there is the seventh in the first part of the tribulation and the eighth empire in the second half. In the first one there is an indication that while he may believe doctrines of demons, he will not be possessed to the degree that he will in the second half when he demands that the world worship him.

The angel goes on to explain this in verse 12 to John and to all of us. “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.”²¹ For one hour is just a figure of speech denoting a very brief period of time. This will be a time shorter than the reign of the beast himself because he will be the one who begins to reign and then appoints them. So here the angel’s prophecy adds more details explaining the beast’s 10 horns in verses 12 and 14.

And these, bear in mind, will be 10 subordinate rulers of 10 lesser kingdoms who will join in a confederacy with the antichrist and become a part of his empire. In fact, the prophet Daniel speaks about this in Daniel chapter seven verse seven and verses 24.

Verse 13, he goes on and says, “These have one purpose and they give their power and authority to the beast.”²² Indeed, as we study this, they will be united in their allegiance to the beast as together they oppose the Lamb and oppose all who belong to him. And then also they will turn on the woman, on this apostate religious system who is, interestingly enough, ruling over them, referring to those other 10 kings according to verse 18, and ultimately they will join the beast in hating and destroying the harlot, that harlot church as we read in verse 16.

Then the angel digresses briefly to underscore the level of animosity that the beast and these 10 kings will have against the Lamb, against all who belong to him. Verse 14. “These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them [I love this], because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful.”²³

Now, the defeat that is here anticipated will occur at the battle of Armageddon. It is also called “the battle of the great day of God almighty,”²⁴ in chapter 16 and verse 14. This will be described in much more detail in chapter 19.

²¹ Revelation 17:12.

²² Revelation 17:13.

²³ Revelation 17:14.

²⁴ Revelation 16:14.

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But bear in mind, my friends, that this will not even really be a battle. This will be a slaughter. This will be what we would call a total rout. This will be a time where the staggering foolishness of waging war against the Lamb of God will be vividly exposed. Why? Because “He is Lord of lords, because he is King of kings.”

Beloved, again, this is why we preach Christ and him crucified. This is why he must be central to the gospel presentation. This is why Christ must be the very force of gravity around which our lives must orbit as he alone is our Savior and our Lord, our coming king.

Now notice how the angel describes those who will triumph with him at his second coming, namely us. This is where it gets really exciting. Verse 14. “And those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful.”²⁵

Chosen in Greek is **ΕΚΛΕΚΤΟΙ** (ek-lek-toy’) we get our word “elect” from that. Obviously this a reference to believers. And, dear, friends, what a great summary of our unmerited and uninfluenced salvation. You see, Scripture makes it clear that salvation ultimately begins with divine election in eternity past. Again, Paul said in Ephesians 1:4, “He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world.”²⁶

And, as I mentioned earlier, seven times in the New Testament believers are described as those whose names have been written in the book of life, referring to that divine registry of those whom God has chosen to reconcile unto himself by his uninfluenced choice through absolutely no merit of their own.

And then we know, as we study the Word of God, that at a divinely appointed time in our lives our heavenly Father called us. I remember when that happened in my life. Jesus said in John 6:44, “No one can come to Me, unless...”²⁷ What? “Unless the Father when sent Me draws him.”²⁸ The word **ΕΛΚΩ** (hel’-ko) in the original language, it literally means to irresistibly compel, to drag, to seize and drag. In fact, the same word is used in other places in the New Testament, for example, in Acts 16:19. It is used to describe Paul and Silas who were seized and dragged. That is what the Father does when we are saved.

So we are elected. We are eventually called and, as a result of that, we are born again. We are regenerated the Bible tells us. We are transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light and we are also transformed into new creatures. The old things pass away. The new things come. And the evidence of genuine saving faith is Spirit empowered faithfulness to the God who has saved us unto his Word.

Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 5:24, “Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.”²⁹

²⁵ Revelation 17:14.

²⁶ Ephesians 1:4.

²⁷ John 6:44.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ 1 Thessalonians 5:24.

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I am so thankful that he is the one who will bring it to pass because if it was left up to me it would never happen. Peter also tells us in 1 Peter 1:5, “We are protected,” referring to our salvation, “[We] are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last [day].”³⁰

So here in verse 14 we are assured of Christ’s victory over his enemies when he returns with the ones whom he has called and chosen, the faithful. He will also come with the holy angels. Jesus describes this in Matthew 24 verse 30, 31.

Here is what the Lord said:

They will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.³¹

Oh, child of God, what a triumph we will one day behold.

Adding even more explanation to ease the apostle’s bewilderment, the angel gives further insight regarding the extent of the harlot’s influence as she intoxicates the world with her spiritual seductions prior to her destruction—that which we studied some in verses one and two. Verse 15 he said, “The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.”³² Again, a phrase describing the world wide popularity of this false religious system that the world will enjoy regardless of social, cultural, ethnic or language barriers. The whole world is going to get sucked into it.

And then having explained now more fully the history of the beast in an effort to help John understand the relationship between the harlot and her coconspirator who, again, will temporarily support her until he has used her for his means and then he will discard her.

Now, finally, the angel describes, number five, *her calamity*. Verse 16. “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.”³³

And we know, again, that the “abomination of desolation” in the temple when the antichrist demands that the world worship him and him alone that there will be no more need for the harlot church to help him advance his agenda. And like all religious systems this particular religious whore will have amassed enormous wealth that the antichrist will

³⁰ 1 Peter 1:5.

³¹ Matthew 24:30-31.

³² Revelation 17:15.

³³ Revelation 17:16.

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obviously want for his coffers. In fact, if you jump to verse 18 we are told that, “The woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth.”³⁴

So here she is linked with the headquarters of the antichrist, his capital city, which, we will discover in chapter 18, will be totally destroyed.

Now, we cannot be dogmatic about the exact location of this city. As I have said before some believe it might be Dubai, but we don’t know. But because there are numerous passages in Isaiah as well as Jeremiah that tend to link Babylon of the Euphrates with the Babylon of Revelation 17 and 18 the evidence seems to favor that that will be the actual spot. But we don’t know.

For example, one scholar commentator named Seiss believes that Babylon of the Euphrates has a location that fits this description politically, geographically and in all the qualities of accessibility, commercial facilities, remoteness of interference of church and state and yet centrality in regard to the trade of the whole world.

Another scholar Henry Morris offers additional insights. Quote, “Babylon, indeed, will be permanently destroyed as recorded in the very next chapter, 18:21. But this has not happened yet. The prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah also refer to this future destruction, not merely to Babylon’s present condition as is evident from the following considerations among others.

“Number one,” he says, “the destruction will take place in the time that the stars and sun are darkened, Isaiah 13:1,9 and 10.

“Number two, the city will become as desolate as Sodom and Gomorrah, burned completely with no remains whatever, Isaiah 13:19 and Jeremiah 50 verse 40.

“Number three, it shall become desolate forever with neither man nor beast entering it anymore, Isaiah 13:20 and Jeremiah 51:62.

“Number four, it will be a time of judgment not only for Babylon, but for all nations, Isaiah 13:11-13 and Jeremiah 51:49.

“Number five, its destruction will be followed by universal rest and peace according to Isaiah 14:7-8.

“Number six, its destruction is directly associated also with the casting of Lucifer into Sheol, Isaiah 14:12-15.”

And finally he says, “Number seven, Babylon’s stone will never be used in future construction elsewhere whereas the present day ruins of Babylon have been frequently plundered and reused in later construction as Jeremiah 51:26,” end quote.

³⁴ Revelation 17:18.

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Revelation 17:7-17

My friends, whenever I think of this all I can see is Saddam Hussein crawling out from that pit there in what was ancient Babylon.

Well, to be sure, wherever the city is located it will be the headquarters of the antichrist and the harlot will be there as well. She will be as wealthy as she is wicked and, as verse 16 says, “[They] will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire.”³⁵ Graphic language describing her violent end.

And while we are not told the historical reasons they will turn against their ally, we are given the ultimate reason. This is so precious. Verse 17. “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.”³⁶

Beloved, once again, we are reminded that all of these events are ultimately consistent with the purposes of a sovereign God who will one day glorify himself in his wrath and his ultimate deliverance of Israel when he reconciles them once and for all unto himself and establishes his glorious millennial kingdom.

Men may think that they chart their own destinies. Men may think that they are in control of their own lives and that they order their own plans and steps, but in reality it is a sovereign God who oversees them all to accomplish his purposes. And this is what we see here.

Dear Christian, what a contrast we have witnessed today, what an infinite chasm there is between the bride of Christ and the harlot church.

When Paul told Timothy that the Church was, “the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth,”³⁷ don’t you know that had to cause Timothy to tear up with excitement. It does me.

Beloved, let me close with this thought. The Church is the household of God as Paul said in 1 Timothy 3:15, “which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.”³⁸ Beloved, it is his house because he is the architect that has designed it. It is his house because he is the builder that is building it. So may we leave here this morning rejoicing in the reality that Christ is the head of this body, the Church of the living God. We are a part of his glorious bride solely by his grace.

Let’s pray together.

Father, we rejoice in these exhilarating truths. Cause them to bear much fruit in our hearts, I pray, and bring conviction to those who do not know you as Savior. Oh God,

³⁵ Revelation 17:16.

³⁶ Revelation 17:17.

³⁷ 1 Timothy 3:15.

³⁸ Ibid.

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how I plead for a special moving of your Spirit upon those who are lost. Lord, may they see the glorious truths of the gospel today, the holiness of God, the fulfillment of the law in Christ and may they cry out to him this day for his mercy and grace. I ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

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