

The Revelation of Jesus Christ – Message #21

Revelation 17 – The Doom of Religious Babylon (1/24/2010 PM)

After 7th Bowl Judgment is poured out Jesus Christ will return in His glorious second coming to the earth seen in Chapter 19. Chapters 17 & 18 add more detail to the doom of the final world system of the Antichrist. The destruction of Babylon that was foretold in Revelation 14:8 is now described. Chapter 17 uses the imagery of a harlot to reveal the doom of the religious aspect of the kingdom of the Antichrist.

1. The Image of the Harlot (1-2)

How God Views False Religion

(1) “Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, “Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters”

This connects the seven last judgments with the destruction of the Antichrist’s kingdom. The harlotry here is spiritual not sexual.

- **The worldwide domination of false religion**

The imagery of the “many waters” is revealed in (15) “The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues.” False religion will dominate the entire world in the last days.

(2) with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.”

The earth dwellers and their rulers will be deceived by Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet. The terrible judgments of the Tribulation will cause men to turn to the supernatural. This will prepare them for the massive demonic assault they will be deceived by. The imagery John uses comes from

Jeremiah 51:7, “Babylon was a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that made all the earth drunk. The nations drank her wine; therefore the nations are deranged.”

False Religion Promises to Appease Man’s Spiritual Longing without Coming under God’s Authority

2. The Picture of the Harlot (3-4)

John Is Transported to a Desolate Place

(3) “So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness.”

John remained on the island of Patmos but the scenes of the vision before him change.

(3) “And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.”

This is the great harlot the angel has just described.

- **The beast represents the Antichrist and His kingdom**

This is the same beast John saw rising up out of the sea in Chapter 13 which represents both the king and the kingdom. The woman is sitting on the beast which indicates that the beast is supporting her. The promise of one world religion will be the unifying factor of Antichrist’s kingdom at the beginning.

As the judgments of the Tribulation begin to fall the earth dwellers will be desperate for a deliverer. The False Prophet will capitalize upon men’s fears promising them hope through unified worship.

(4) “The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication.”

Her colors symbolize royalty and the gold and precious stones show her to be wealthy. God's views her as a filthy abomination.

The Antichrist Will Use False Religion to Gain Political Power

3. The Identification of the Harlot (5-6)

Connected to the Source of All False Religion

Added to the imagery of the beast she is identified by her name and her deeds.

- **Her title identifies her as synonymous with false religion**

“MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”

The abominations are primarily spiritual although the worship of Antichrist will most likely involve immoral practices as did the ancient Babylonian religion.

Babylon is the name for the great system of religious error that has always dominated the world. In ancient times Satan appeared to make Babylon the center of false worship. Babylon is first mentioned in [Genesis 10:10](#) as “Babel” a city built by Nimrod “in the land of Shiner”. It was there in [Genesis 11](#) that the tower of Babel was built. When God “scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth” they took their false religion with them.

Many of the false religions that swept the ancient world found their origins in Nimrod and his queen, Semiranis. Many of the pagan religions included worship of the mother and the son. The son was killed and supernaturally brought back to life. Jeremiah condemned the women of Judah who “knead dough, to make cakes for the queen of heaven; and they pour out drink offerings to other gods”, [Jeremiah 7:18](#).

The Roman Catholic Church calls Mary, the queen of heaven. The Persians under Cyrus expelled this cult from Babylon. The priests fled to Pergamos. They were later brought to Rome by Julius Caesar. Rome became identified with the Babylonian mystery religions. Many of the practices of Roman Catholicism find their origins in pagan Babylonian religion.

(6) “I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.”

False religion has also been the greatest enemy true faith down through history. As we have already seen the Antichrist and the False Prophet will persecute and kill multitudes of true believers. The harlot depicts the final form of false religion that will unify the nations and persecute God's people under the Antichrist.

All False Religion Ultimately Originates from the Same Source: Satan

John's reaction to this vision was “great amazement” (6).

4. The Explanation of the Vision (7-18)

The Explanation Is Inspired Scripture

(7) “But the angel said to me, “Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns.”

There is much debate as to the exact meaning of the following passages of scripture. The angel begins by describing the beast. The beast is clearly the Antichrist and His kingdom which begins as a ten nation confederacy.

(8) “The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are

not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.”

Earlier John revealed that the False Prophet will lead the earth dwellers to worship the Antichrist. He will imitate Christ’s resurrection by supposedly coming back to life “was, and is not, and yet is” after a deadly head wound. This will occur at the midpoint of the Tribulation when the image of the beast is set up in the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem. The ultimate destination of the Antichrist and the False Prophet is “perdition” which is the Lake of Fire.

Daniel 7:11, “I watched till the beast was slain...and given to the burning flame.”
Revelation 19:20, “These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.”

- **Rome may be the seat of ecclesiastical power**

(9-11) “Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time. The beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition.

The word “mountains” can also be translated hills. Rome has long been known as the City of Seven Hills.

(18) “And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.”

Prophetic literature often involves dual reference.

The woman symbolizes both false religion and a literal city. This is similar to our use of Wall Street which is a real street but also stands for America’s economic system. The ESV translates verse 10 as “they are also seven kings” which is the correct rendering. Kings are synonymous with kingdoms and could refer to Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome which existed in John’s day. The one that had “not yet come” would be the Antichrist’s final human kingdom. Daniel revealed that the Antichrist will arise out of the final ten nation form of the Roman Empire. “The beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven and is going to perdition”. This description does fit the Antichrist.

- **The ten horns are the same as prophesied by Daniel**

(12-14) “The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.”

From John’s perspective and from ours the final form of world government has not yet come into reality.

Daniel 7:24-25, “The ten horns are ten kings who shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them; he shall be different from the first ones, and shall subdue three kings. He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time.”

This chapter is focusing upon the religious aspect of Antichrist’s kingdom.

- **The Antichrist will destroy the one world church**

(16) “And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire.”

He will use the false religious system to gain power.

In the middle of the Tribulation he will deceive the earth dwellers and demand their worship. He will turn on the ecclesiastical rulers and plunder their accumulated wealth. Verse 18 may indicate that the Antichrist will plunder the city of Rome or it may refer to another city.

(17) “For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.”

All of these events are according to God’s plan and purpose.

The Exact Interpretation Will Probably Not Be Known Until the Time of Fulfillment