

The Destruction of the Final World Religion, Part 2

Revelation 17:1–6

We have had a great adventure going through the book of Revelation. Its practicality and Christian living is unquestioned because the promise at the beginning of the book says, “***Blessed is the one who reads and understands.***” Its impact on our understanding of human history, the present, the future is profound. We know where the world is going, and we know how it will all fall out in the end.

There are so many specific prophecies, so many general things we have seen that have made us aware of Satan’s great power escalating as we get closer to the end. And we’ve tried to, all the way through this book, give you a fair, clear, sound interpretation of these passages without running into the sensational.

I want to avoid that because I don’t want to go beyond the interpretation that Scripture allows.

And so, I want you to understand that in interpreting the book of Revelation we cannot be sensational; we cannot identify any current human being. It’s very difficult for us to go beyond the Scripture without feeling that we have somehow pressed the Word of God beyond its intention. And frankly, there’s enough here anyway that gives us specificity so that we can sense and feel that we are certainly living in a day that is nearer to the coming of Christ, probably, than any of us believe.

You don't need to sensationalize chapter 17 to have it shock you and leave a tremendous impact. You don't need to particularize it. You don't need to identify a given individual or a given religion by its name to feel the tremendous impact of this chapter.

Revelation 17 tells us the story – the future account – of the destruction of the final form of false religion. As we have been learning, the end of man's day of ruling this world under satanic influence will come to an end. We have been studying the ending. That's what Revelation is; it's the events surrounding the end of man's day and the return of Jesus Christ.

We have learned very much about the end. We've seen it from God's standpoint, the standpoint of Christ. We've seen it from the standpoint of the Church. We've seen it from the standpoint of Israel. We've seen it from the standpoint of the unredeemed people in the world. We've seen it from the standpoint of Satan. We've seen it from the standpoint of demons. We've crisscrossed it every way that the book of Revelation indicates.

One of the most fascinating, one of the most important developments of the end will be a one world religion which certainly seems to me to be an agenda in our current world religious culture.

And the book of Revelation indicates to us here, in the seventeenth chapter, that there will be a one world religion in existence, dominating the whole kingdom of Satan and Antichrist at the end. That kingdom, that religion will be destroyed by Christ when He returns and destroys Satan.

Now, the name of that final world religion is given to us in verse 5. This is not necessarily going to be its official worldly name, but this is its descriptive name, and the name is **“Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and of the Abominations of the Earth.”**

We went into that last time, and I just want to pick up the pieces of what we didn't say and maybe give you a brief review.

This final form of world religion, described here in chapter 17, is, first of all, called a mystery. That is, it is more than physical; it is more than geographical; it is more than human; it is more than that which is devised by men. It is mystical; it is supernatural; it is deep; it is demonic. And as yet, that final form of world religion has not yet been revealed. So, it is still a mystery.

It is also called Babylon the Great. Because it is the final form of religion, when all forms of religion roll into one. And as we described to you in our last lesson, all world religions have come out of one initiating religion, namely the religion of Babel or Babylon.

When the Lord scattered all of those people who had erected a religion to other than the true God, when the Lord scattered them and changed their language, He scattered their false religion into many languages and cultures all over the face of earth so that all false religion finds its birth in Babylon, and in the end, all of those children will come back to mother, and the final form of Babylonish religion will be Babylon the Great.

All the religions originally spawned out of Babel will recollect themselves as the final world religion, Babylon the Great.

It is further described as the Mother of Harlots. And I told you that all false religion and all idolatry is characterized in Scripture as harlotry, as prostitution, being intimate with other than the true God, a kind of spiritual fornication or spiritual adultery. And the system in Babylon gave birth to all of it.

Babylon originally was the mother of all harlot religions, all false religions. And additionally, it is called not just the Mother of Harlots, but the Mother of the Abominations of the Earth. She is the source of every blasphemous, abominable religious system on the face of the earth. They all came from Babel, and they'll all come home to Mother Babylon.

This, then, will be the world religion of the last days. This system that falls into its final form will be the spiritual side of Satan's world empire. The material side will be the economic system described in chapter 18. The leader of the spiritual side is the false prophet; the leader of the material side is the Antichrist. The spiritual side is the twin of the material side or the political economic kingdom. Both will be destroyed when Christ returns.

So, our apparently, increasingly irreligious culture – we are living in a culture when we feel it getting less and less religious is not at all becoming less and less religious; it is becoming less and less Christian, but more and more pagan in its belief.

Our seemingly irreligious world will become utterly religious, totally religious, not atheistic. It will fall under Satan's power, under the leadership of Antichrist, and under the influence of the false prophet during the time of the tribulation, and it will become increasingly religious.

It will turn to the supernatural, according to Revelation 13, only it won't worship God; it'll worship Satan, and it'll worship the beast, and it'll worship the demons.

And all the harlot religions all over the world will come together. And that final form of world religion will gather probably initially motivated by social action, by existential religious experience - that is that which cannot be defined by dogma, by emotion- a sort of an ethereal sentimentality and by mysticism. Mainly it will not be humanly engineered.

We can look at the human side and say, "What will draw these parts of religion all over the globe together?" Social action, existentialism, emotion, and mysticism may be on the human level, but the reality of what pulls them together is the influence of Satan, the doctrines of demons, and seducing spirits.

We already learned that the great kings of the East are going to come to the battle of Armageddon, and they're all going to be slaughtered there. We ask the question, "What in the world would ever make all the great empires of the East march across the Middle East, across a dried up Euphrates that God sovereignty and supernaturally dries up, and march over to the land of Palestine, in the end time, to be destroyed by Christ. And the only answer that you could find in the Scripture is that they are deceived by Satan and his demons. The same kind of deception will form up the final world religion.

So, it's fine to look at some of the current components in anti-Christian, non-Christian pagan religion, and to assume what will make men get together, what's going to be the common ground, social action experience or whatever. But in the end, it's going to be a satanic process.

Now, the entire empire of Antichrist that will exist in the time of the tribulation, just before Christ returns, will be called Babylon the Great. I believe there will be a literal city most likely. There will be a literal rebuilt Babylon. But the city is not really in view here. What is in view here, in chapter 17, is the religious part of the system of Babylon. And what is in view in chapter 18 is the material side or the economic/political side of it.

The papacy and the worship of Mary are not Christian; they are Babylonish. On February 15, 1926, Catholic dogma tells us that the child Jesus came and urged Catholics – quote – ***“To spend this devotion of and reparation to the immaculate heart of the holy mother Mary.”*** And the child Jesus declared, ***“Reparation must be made to the immaculate heart of Mary in order for mankind to be saved.”***

And I remind you that in that system, Jesus serves, in some ways, to bring the world to Mary. Catholicism persists, even today, in depicting Jesus as a helpless babe or a small child dependent on His mother Mary, who is still called the queen of heaven.

So, the Christianity of the Roman Empire, which became known as Roman Catholicism and of which the pope is the head today, is never to be assumed to be the same as biblical Christianity. It is not the biblical Christianity of the early Church.

It is the old paganism of Rome, surviving under a thin veneer of Christian terminology and form. No less than the great historian **Will Durant** writes, “***When Christianity conquered Rome, the ecclesiastical structure of the pagan church, the title investments of the Pontifex Maximus, the worship of the great mother, and a multitude of comforting divinities, the sense of supersensible presences everywhere, the joy or solemnity of old festivals, and the pageantry of immemorial ceremony passed like maternal blood into the new religion and captive Rome captured her conqueror. While Christianity converted the world, the world converted Christianity.***” So says Will Durant.

Many of the lives of the popes exemplified antichrist-type evil. More than one pope vacated when killed by a furious husband who caught him in bed with his wife. Even Catholic historians admit that many of the popes were among the most inhuman monsters to walk the earth. In *Vicars of Christ*, a book by **Jesuit Peter De Rosa**, he reminds us that, “***Pope after pope engaged habitually on a grand scale in wholesale mayhem and murder, pillage, rape, incest, simony, and corruption of the worst sort. Their evil lives,***” he said, “***are a blot on the pages of history.***”

So, the Mother of all Harlots found her way to Rome and will find her way back to Rome again and the final form of world religion may well be centered there. It should further be noted that the Roman religious system also confuses salvation by grace, as do all other false religions, and also confuses the work of Christ. That is precisely why there was a reformation.

There had to be a reformation to sort out true Christianity from the unholy mix. Sadly, if Martin Luther were alive today in the United States of America, he would be considered by many evangelicals a troublemaker, unloving, and arrogant. Roman Catholicism opposes the true gospel by imposing works and confounding the true work of Christ.

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones explained the cause of confusion among so many Protestants when he wrote this, ***“In one sense, you might well think that the Roman Catholic Church is the most orthodox church in the world. It believes that Jesus of Nazareth was the eternal Son of God. It believes in the virgin birth. It believes in the incarnation. It believes in His miracles. It believes in His substitutionary work on the cross and His resurrection, etcetera. But at this point, the subtlety comes in and the difficulty arises. To all that orthodox truth, she adds with a damnable plus things which are utterly unscriptural, and which indeed become a denial of the Scripture. So, she lands us eventually in a position in which, if we accept her teaching, we are believing a lie.”*** End quote.

For example, to the confession that Christ died for our sins, Romanism adds dogmas whose effect is to deny that his death was sufficient. One’s own good deeds, obedience to the church, participation in the sacraments must be added to what Christ was done. The rosary, confession to a priest, baptism in the church, and indulgences earned are also required. In addition to Christ suffering on the cross, the individual must also suffer for his own sins in purgatory, where the soul, throughout – I should say where the soul, though cleansed by the blood of Christ, must be more thoroughly purged.

Then there is the endless list of alms and good deeds and masses that others must engage in after one is dead in order to obtain his or her release from purgatory and finally an entrance into heaven.

The Council of Trent came up with a lot of this, lest you think that antiquated council no longer stands, it was affirmed by *Vatican II*. This is what they said, ***“If anyone says that after the reception of the grace 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 eternally damned.

In other words, if you say that there is complete and total forgiveness through faith in Christ, and there’s no requirement to suffer in this life and in purgatory, you be damned.

Further, the *Vatican II* said, ***“We affirm that there is a purgatory, and that the souls there detained are aided by the suffrage of the faithful, and that the bishop shall see to it that the suffrages of the living – that is the sacrifice of the mass, prayers, alms, and other works of piety which they have been accustomed to perform to the faithful departed – be piously and devoutly discharged in accordance with the laws of the church.”*** End quote.

In other words, those people can’t get out of there unless you’re doing stuff that somehow is going to expiate their sin. Rejection of the simplicity and comprehensiveness of the biblical gospel could not be more clearly stated. How in the world, then, can Protestants join along with Catholics in evangelizing the world?

Martyn Lloyd-Jones protested. Again he writes, “**There are movements afoot which are trying to bring a kind of rapprochement between Roman**” – that’s a coming together – “**between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. The Roman Catholic system is altogether more dangerous,**” said Lloyd-Jones, “**than is Communism. Roman Catholicism is the devil’s greatest masterpiece. It is such a departure from the Christian faith and the New Testament teaching, that her dogma is a counterfeit. She is, as the Scripture puts it, the whore. Let me warn you very solemnly that if you rejoice in these ecumenical approaches to Rome, you’re denying the blood of the martyrs. There are innocent people who are being deluded by this kind of falsity, and it is your business and mine to open their eyes.**”

It just shakes me to the core when the host and hostess of the popular Christian TV show, the largest Christian television network which we have here – we see it all the time – frequently give viewers the impression that Roman Catholic doctrine is no different than that of evangelicals. On one program, while interviewing three Catholic leaders, the host declared that, “**The difference between Protestant and Catholic doctrine is merely a matter of semantics.**” Quote.

As for transubstantiation, a heresy so great that thousands have died at the stake, through the years, rather than accept it, the host said, “**Well, we Protestants believe the same thing. We were really meaning the same thing, but just saying it a little differently. I’m eradicating the word ‘Protestant’ even out of my vocabulary. I’m not protesting anything. It’s time for Catholics and non-Catholics to come together as one in the Spirit and one in the Lord.**” End quote.

Transubstantiation was the belief – is the belief of the Roman Church that the priest literally turns the cup and the bread into the actual blood and body of Christ, and when they eat, they're eating Christ. As I said, thousands have died fighting that heresy. To just erase it as a matter of semantics and push it aside? Foolish.

Furthermore, the Roman system always has absorbed its dissidence. You may read about dissident Roman priests. You may have heard or read of people like Hans Küng and others who dissent. The system never throws them out; it just keeps absorbing and embracing so that it never divides; it always conquers. It just keeps getting wider and wider. You have, for example, Mother Teresa, whose place for the dying – sick and dying was right next to the most gross, unimaginable worship place in all of Hindu India. It is so gross it's not even worth describing. And they're still offering blood sacrifice there and worshiping in a perverted and deviated way. She is right next door.

This is what ***Mother Teresa*** said in her book – the book about her, I should say, called *Mother Teresa: Her People and Her Work*, published in 1976, “***If in coming face to face with God, we accept Him in our lives, then we become a better Hindu, a better Muslim, a better Catholic, a better whatever we are. What God is in your mind you must accept.***” Now, that is an all-embracing and all-encompassing kind of statement.

The famous Roman Catholic mystical monk, who's became very popular even with some evangelical people, by the name of ***Thomas Merton***, told an ecumenical gathering of representatives from many religions, who were gathering in Calcutta – and I'm quoting –

“My dear brothers, we are already one, but we imagine that we are not, and what we have to discover is our original unity.” Let’s go back to Mother Babylon.

So, I’m not saying this to be unkind to people who are Roman Catholic. I am bound, in dealing with the Word of God, to speak the truth. There are many Protestants who are lost and on their way to hell and will be a very large part of the final form of world religion. But Rome will also bear much of its foundation. The Roman Catholic hierarchy is courting Buddhists. Global religious unity is on the agenda.

So, the final form of world religion will not be atheism, but sweeping supernaturalism involving Satan, the beast the false prophet. And the one who deceived the people at Babel and started it all will deceive them again and bring them back to where they started.

That gets us to verse 1 of Revelation 17. Let’s look at the text. The destruction of this final world religion is the theme of the chapter, and **I’m going to give you three points, one of them tonight. The exposure of this religion, the explanation of it, and the extermination of it.** The exposure, the explanation, and the extermination. Here is the vision of the judgment on the final Babylonian religion, the exposure of the harlot.

Verse 1, “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.’”

“One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke to me.” Now, this connects this judgment, here in chapter 17, with the last seven plagues being poured out. Remember there were seven angels that poured out the seven bowls described in chapter 16? One of those angels comes and tells him about this great harlot religion.

This connects, as I said, the judgment with the last seven plagues being poured out. It is not some additional event. It is not in addition to. *This is just the angel who steps out and says, “I’ve told you about the destruction; now let me tell you what it is that’s going to be destroyed.”* It is a religious system, chapter 17; it is an economic or material system, chapter 18.

He is no longer describing the judgments as in the seals and the trumpets and the bowls, but he is describing what and who is being destroyed by those judgments.

And here you have, in these two chapters, the most comprehensive description of the final system of Satan in the book of Revelation or, for that matter, anywhere else. The bowl judgments are going to be the last judgments. Chapter 16 described them. They end, in verse 21, with these hundred-pound hailstones crushing people. And whoever survives that, of course, is going to be destroyed when Christ returns to Armageddon and destroys the gathered armies of the world.

So, chapter 16 really ends just before Christ returns. But Christ doesn’t return until chapter 19.

So, we have chapter 17 and 18 inserted to describe for us the system that is going on in the world that will be destroyed by the bowls and by the return of Christ. Chronology halts; the scene goes back, looks carefully at the kingdom being destroyed.

So, one of the seven angels, then, says, **“Come here, I shall show you.”** This is a wonderful invitation to a great insight, not only for John, but for all of us. The angel says, **“Come here, “I’ll show you a harlot.”**

Look at chapter 21, verse 9, just for an interesting comparison.

Chapter 21, verse 9, same introduction, **“One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, ‘Come here, I shall show you’”** – not a harlot, but what? – **“the bride, the wife of the Lamb.”** **There it is – the bride, the wife of the Lamb, the true Church, cleansed from every stain, from all defilement by the shed blood of the Lamb. The bridegroom of the Lord – pure, holy, virtuous, magnificent, glorious forever.**

But here it is the harlot, mother of all harlotries and abominations and filthiness of idolatry. Before I show you the bride, I have to show you the harlot. I’m going to show you the jut of the great harlot. The theme in the chapter is judgment.

It takes us a while to get to it, but that’s the theme. When that judgment falls, by the way, heaven rejoices. **Chapter 19, verse 3, they’re shouting hallelujah because the smoke of the destroyed Babylon rises up forever and ever.**

As I told you, the great harlot is really a metaphor for spiritual false religion, spiritual defection, idolatry, religious apostasy? And prophetic language, prostitution, fornication, adultery equals idolatry or apostasy.

And we've noted last week that in the Old Testament several cities are called harlot cities because their population was involved in idol worship. In *Nahum, chapter 3, verses 1 and 4* Nineveh is described as a harlot city. In *Isaiah 23*, Tyre is described as a harlot city. And sadly, in *Isaiah 1:21*, Jerusalem is described as a harlot city. "***How is the faithful city become a harlot?***" says Isaiah. **Any city that has prostituted itself, committing spiritual fornication, is a harlot city.**

One commentator says, "***All the harlot city societies mentioned in Scriptures have certain common characteristics that are also reflected in John's description of the great Babylon in which he merges the descriptions of ancient Babylonian and Jerusalem into one composite.***" What are those characteristics? Royal dignity and splendor combined with prosperity, overabundance, and luxury; self-trust, boastfulness, power and violence, especially against God's people; oppression and injustice; and most of all, idolatry. Wherever and whenever these characteristics have been manifested historically, there is the appearance of a Babylonian. But here is the worst harlot, the great harlot, as noted in verse 1.

So, the harlot is now to be exposed. First of all, let's look at the authority of the harlot. The authority of the harlot. This religion will be authoritative in the world. Notice the little phrase "the great harlot who sits on many waters."

“Who sits” – sitting is the mark of distinction. And I remind you sitting is what kings did. They sat on their throne. It was a position of sovereignty; it was a position of authority.

By the way, some archeological material from Egypt and the Near East and the Greek world affirms the fact that sitting was to be always seen as the distinctive posture of deity. Of deity. It symbolizes rule. It symbolizes sovereignty, taking one’s place on a throne.

Notice what it says as well, “Sitting on many waters,” and this metaphor continues. Cities were located seated by water. Isn’t that true? In ancient times, water supply was everything. And no great city like Babylon could ever have existed apart from water. So, great cities were built by waters, either a sea, rivers, lakes, springs. Babylon of old was built by the banks of the Euphrates. In fact, **Jeremiah 51:13** says, **“O thou” – speaking of Babylon – “O thou that dwellest upon many waters.”** Babylon had canals, trenches, marshes. In fact, they tell us that one of the Seven Wonders of the World was the city of Babylon because they had developed a sophisticated – can you believe this? – air conditioning system using dripping waters through which the wind passed.

And as Babylon was built by many waters, taking its seat there, so this great harlot is depicted in the imagery as seated by many waters. What does that mean? Verse 15 of the chapter tells you.

“And he said to me, ‘The waters which you saw where the harlot it’s, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.’ And so, it was in ancient times when a city was built by a great waterway, what did that bring? Trade from everyplace. It meant peoples and nations and tribes and tongues would come to that place.

And here is Babylon, and Babylon has a seat of authority, and the great harlot has sovereignty, and the great harlot sits, as it were, in the position of commanding all kinds of people, all kinds of multitudes, all kinds of nations and tongues. And that, again, is that fourfold description of the unregenerate world in the future. The authority of Babylon is immense. This world religion will sit in the commanding position over all the peoples of the world. They all will come to worship the Babylonian system.

Secondly, not only the authority of Babylon is revealed here, as the exposed harlot is seen, but the alliances of the harlot. The authority and, secondly, the alliances. Look at **verses 2 and 3**. And there are several alliances. First of all, **“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.”** **Those two verses introduce us to the alliances of the harlot, the associations.**

First of all, this harlot religion is associated with the kings of the earth. In this vision, John sees that the harlot is engaged in committing acts of immorality with the kings of the earth. The scope of this influence is immense. The harlot becomes the ally of the whole world on the highest level of leadership: the kings, the sovereigns, the presidents, the emperors, the dictators, the premiers, the prime ministers, whatever they’re called. Everybody comes to Mother Babylon, and their intercourse is described as *eporneusan*; fornication – *porneía*.

Very important note for me to give you here. The symbolism of spiritual adultery is not used, because adultery is a word used to define sexual sin on the part of someone who is – what? – married. And these heathen nations do not, nor have they ever known God; they are not His. They never were His bride or His wife. And so, what they did is not, in the technical sense, adultery - though that's what it was in the case of what nation? – Israel.

But not pagan nations. It is fornication. It is idolatry, but it is clearly indicated here that it is “fornication,” and that term is always used of people who worship other deities - people who may name the name of the true God, but prostitute themselves to another deity.

The concept of spiritual adultery is used in describing Israel's apostasy. You can see that in *Ezekiel 16*, *Ezekiel 23*, other places.

John sees these kings, the kings from all over the world, committing fornication with the harlot. That is becoming absorbed in this religious power. Deceived by the false prophet, the demon seducers, Satan, the Antichrist, all the leaders of the world come together, prostituting themselves for one solitary religion. They go to bed with the same harlot, end up with her infectious disease, and are killed. It's amazing that the whole world is going to come together on this basis.

Well, we've proven – haven't we? – that it can't come together on a political basis. Have you watched the United Nations or any other of those groups? It can never come together at that – at that vast level of cultures on a political, economic basis.

But mark yourself – will you? – the same power rules every false system of religion in the world. Right? So, when his day comes to pull it together, together it comes.

But the alliance is not just with rulers. It says also, in **verse 2, **“And those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality.”** **“Those who dwell on the earth”** is another one of those terms in the book of Revelation, and it refers to **unbelievers. Those who dwell on the earth are unbelievers.****

The same folks described in verse 15 - the people, multitudes, nations, and tongues, the unregenerate - they all fall in; they are all victimized.

Back in **chapter 13**, when the religion of Antichrist was being introduced, and they were worshiping the dragon who is Satan, and they were worshiping the beast. It says in **verse 8**, ***“All who dwell on the earth will worship him.”*** All of them fall into it. Over in **verse 14** of **chapter 13**, ***“He deceives those who dwell on the earth”*** – that is the false prophet deceives them. They all come; they all worship the beast who has had a false, counterfeit resurrection. Everybody is sucked in on this deception, and they are all – notice the imagery – ***“they were all made drunk with the wine of her immorality.”***

He’s not talking about real wine, and he’s not talking about real sexual immorality. He is talking about becoming a part of the false form of religion. They all get drunk with it; they are all intoxicated with passion for this religion.

Totally, passionately, intensely they give their hearts to this abominable Babylonianism. Satan orchestrates the whole thing. All the people and all the leaders come together in this great world religion.

And there is yet another component in the alliances of the harlot. Look at **verse 3, “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.”**

Now, we don't want to get carried away. We often use that expression and say, “Well, you don't want to get carried away,” but every time John got carried away, something pretty spectacular happened. He was getting used to being carried away. It happened to him in **chapter 1, and chapter 4**. It'll happen again in **chapter 21**. The Holy Spirit just picked him up and took him out and showed him something else to give more richness and more comprehension. Took him into the erēmon, took him into the desert place, the lonely place, a place of desolation. Took him into the wasteland. Surely the kind of place where the city of Babylon is today.

And in that wasteland place somewhere, where he took him by means of vision. The vision came. The Holy Spirit had removed him from the conversation with the angel, taken him into this wilderness place. He said, **“I saw a woman.”** Guess who that is? It's the harlot Babylon. **And there's a nuance being added to the vision he's already seen, “And I saw her sitting on a scarlet beast.”** Well, we know who the beast is, don't we? The Antichrist. She is sitting on the beast. **What's the significance of that?**

Well, some say it means that the beast was supporting her. That's true. Some say it means she was in charge, because the rider is in charge of whatever he rides or she rides. Perhaps both are true. The beast supports her and at first is controlled by her.

In other words, it is the religious system that really captures the world. It is the religious system that pulls the whole world together. It is initially the religious system that is in control in those last days.

Religious power is the controlling power. In the end, the world will turn to religion because economics and military might and politics are crumbling all around them at such a rapid rate. When all the powers of the heaven and the earth are shaking, the religious system begins to take charge.

And while the beast certainly supports the religious system, it is the religious system that is the controlling influence. They coexist for a while, but only for a while.

Only for a while, because in **verse 16** it says, **"The beast will hate the harlot and make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her up with fire."** **Do you know what's going to happen in the end? The beast is going to rise up and devour the religious system and absorb it into one.**

And what is that? I believe that's when the worship of the world turns toward Antichrist, and he becomes the one the whole world worships.

And we find that back in *chapter 13*, when the false prophet, who must have headed up this world religion now demands that the whole world worship Antichrist. He is the god of the new religion. He falsifies a resurrection to make him credible and does signs and wonders, and the worship of the world turns to the beast.

And in that way, the beast swallows up and devours the coexisting religious system, and you now have the one system which involves the material side and the worship of the Antichrist in one great Babylonish system.

The beast further is described in **verse 3 as a scarlet beast**, the color of luxury, the color of splendor, the color of royalty. Isaiah would tell you the color of sin, and some would say the color of blood. We could conclude a luxurious, splendorous, royal, sinful, bloody beast.

And it says further of the beast that he was full of blasphemous names. Why? Because the world is now identifying him as whom? God. They're identifying him as god, and he's – back in *chapter 13, verse 1* – ***“On his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names.”*** It says, “On his heads were blasphemous names.” **Here it says, “Full of blasphemous names.” They were all over him everywhere. Self-deification. Identifying himself as god by every name that God would have, perhaps calling himself the Almighty, the Sovereign, the Creator, the Giver of Life. Who knows what is “blasphemous names?” He'll take every name that belongs to God and wear it himself.**

Daniel certainly saw something of this incredible blasphemy. Chapter 7 of *Daniel*, **verse 25**, **“He will speak out against the Most High”** – in other words, he blasphemes God by what he says, and he blasphemes God by what he claims for himself. **Chapter 11 of Daniel, verse 36**, **“He will do as he pleases; he will exalt and magnify himself above every God. He will speak monstrous things against the God of gods.”** That is his blasphemy: self-deification. And the self-deified Antichrist coexists, riding along as it were, bearing on his back this system that has been used by Satan to pull the world under His control.

It further describes this scarlet beast as having seven heads.

Having seven heads – if you want to know what that means, all you have to do is go down to **verse 9**, **“The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits, and they are seven kings; five are fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while.”** We’ll get into the study of that when we get there. But the seven heads represents seven mountains and also seven kings: five who are fallen, one who exists, and another yet to come. **So, it refers to past and present governments at that time.**

And then the beast also has ten horns. Ten horns. **Over in verse 12, ten horns are ten kings. Verse 13 says those ten kings have one purpose and give their power and authority to the beast.**

So, this beast is sort of the fulfillment of all the past empires of the world and is the combination of the final ten powers that come together to form the future government. We’ll say more about that when we get there. There’s so much in this chapter; we have to let it unfold as we come to it.

What this does show us is that his alliances are comprehensive. He is allied with all the rulers of the world. The harlot is allied with – the false religious system is allied with all the rulers of the world, all the people of the world, and is the culmination of all the governments of the past and is the culmination and the affirmation and the summation of all the governments of the future. **In other words, this is a world-dominating religious system in every sense. One great world system to be crushed by Satan when he says, “No more religion apart from the beast.”**

And then he devours that system, makes the whole world worship the Antichrist, which they willingly do because they are deceived to do it, and then Christ comes and destroys that system. **One world religion is coming.**

Prostitutes, I guess historically, have generally adorned themselves in finery to attract attention, to allure with supposed beauty. And the harlot Babylon is no different. Let’s look at her apparel in **verse 4**. Her authority, her alliances, her apparel. Let’s see how she was dressed. **“The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, 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.”**

We’ll just take the first part of that verse. **“She was clothed in purple and scarlet.”** **What is that? Royalty, prosperity, nobility, wealth.** This prostitute is going to be a prosperous prostitute. This is a high-class prostitute, if there is and there isn’t such a thing. This is one who has plied her trade well and become extremely wealthy. This is one who has adorned herself.

Ezekiel 16, “Thus you were adorned” – verse 13 – “with gold and silver, and your dress was of fine linen, silk, and embroidered cloth. You ate fine flour, honey, and oil; so you were exceedingly beautiful and advanced to royalty. Then your fame went forth among the nations on account of your beauty, for it was perfect because of My splendor which I bestowed on you,’ declares the Lord God. ‘But you trusted in your beauty and you played the harlot because of your fame, and you poured out your harlotries on every passer-by who might be willing.’”

The story goes on to say, “You took some of your clothes; you made for yourself high place of various colors; you played the harlot on them. You took your beautiful jewels made of My gold and My silver, which I had given you, and made for yourselves male images that you might play the harlot with them. You took your embroidered cloth, you covered them, and offered My oil and My incense before them.”

And He goes on to indict them, and He’s talking about Jerusalem. “You had wealth and prosperity, and I gave it to you, and you prostituted all of it.” **The woman is clothed in purple and scarlet.**

By the way, scarlet has always been the color used by popes and cardinals. In fact, Pope Paul II made it illegal for anyone but a cardinal to wear a scarlet hat. A Roman ceremony goes back 300 years ago by Marcellus, a Roman archbishop, enunciated five articles of dress for popes and cardinals; all must be scarlet. They include a vest of pearl, gold, and precious stones.

The harlot here is adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls. How interesting. Very wealthy. Tremendous wealth this harlot has.

And so does the Roman system today – hundreds and hundreds of billions of dollars. And it's not just Rome, but I just see the parallels here so clearly. It's more than that; it includes apostate Protestantism as well.

John sees her having in her hand a gold cup. And that, too, takes us back to *Jeremiah 51, verses 7 and 8*. **Another evidence of wealth is this golden cup, but out of it come abominations and the unclean things of her immorality. That is just so graphic.**

Dr. Barnhouse said, ***“It is also highly significant that the abominations and filthiness should be spoken of as coming from a golden cup. ‘Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord’s hand that made all the earth drunken. The nations have drunken of her wine. Therefore, the nations are mad,’ Jeremiah 51:7 says.”***

Barnhouse says, ***“To those who are acquainted with the history of ancient religions. This significance is heightened by comparisons with the rights of the pagan religious mysteries. A French scholar, Salverte, writing on the occult sciences tells of the drinking in connection with these demon ceremonies. He said, ‘To drink of mysterious beverages was indispensable on the part of all who sought initiation in these mysteries. These mysterious beverages were composed of wine, honey, water, and flour, with various other ingredients used locally. From the nature of the ingredients avowedly used, and from the nature of others not avowed but certainly used, there can be no doubt that they were of an intoxicating nature. Until the aspirants had come under their power, till their understandings had been dimmed and their passions excited by the medicated draft, they were not duly prepared for what they were either to hear or see.’”*** End quote.

The harlot, before she makes love to the victim wants to make the victim drunk. She brings out the golden cup that's so inviting, and it's filled with abominations and the unclean things of her immorality. You're drinking filth. And the apparel is very deceptive.

That leads to a fourth aspect of her exposure: authority, alliances, apparel, the abominations of the harlot. There at the end of verse 4 we read them. The cup, as beautiful as it is, is full of filth. When the cup is offered in the ceremony, it defiles. It makes dirty – filthy. It contains nothing but wickedness, abomination. All idolatry is abominable to God. All of it.

In fact, in *chapter 18, it speaks of Babylon as having sins piled up as high as heaven. This system is wicked, vile, abominable, full of idolatrous obscenities. And the cup is full of unclean things of her immorality. That's a very graphic phrase. The cup is filled with a residue of her porneía. And the abominations continue in verse 5, and we've already discussed it, "And on her forehead a name was written, 'Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlotries and of the Abominations of the Earth.'" A name on the head.*

From Seneca to Juvenal, two ancient Roman writers, we learn that it was customary for Roman prostitutes to wear a band with their name on it. *Jeremiah 3:3* even notes a harlot's forehead. "*Parading their harlotry and their wretchedness without shame for everybody to see, they wore the name of harlotry.*" And so does this prostitute, and the name we've already seen. The source of all evil, giving birth to all false religion and idolatry, and now they all come home to mother.

Well, lastly, we've seen her authority, her alliances, her apparel, her abominations, now her accusation in verse 6. Here is the indictment against her, the epitome of her crimes, **“And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus.”**

Like most harlots, this one is drunk. Only this one is drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. Is there a difference in those two? Certainly the witnesses of Jesus are saints, and the saints are witnesses of Jesus. Some would see the first as Old Testament saints and the latter as New Testament saints. Some would see it just two ways to speak of the same. The distinction really isn't important.

The point is the harlot is a murderer. And her murder began in the Old Testament, there's no question about it, and proceeded from the beginning right on through to the very end. From those Old Testament saints through to those who gave testimony to Jesus. False religion, born at Babylon, has always been the murderer of the true saints. Always.

While the world becomes drunk with lust for her, she becomes drunk, too, with the blood of God's people. She's getting drunk on something else. You can look back; the best estimates are that just the Roman system itself has killed 50 million through the centuries, 1 million in the inquisition alone. I was reading this last week about the massacre at St. Bartholomew's where Protestants were butchered. And the pope, in response to the butchering of the Protestants at St. Bartholomew's, appointed a religious thanksgiving service and struck commemorative medals.

It's not just that religion, though, that has murdered the saints. All false religions, through the centuries, have hated the truth, and many of them have had occasion to slaughter the saints.

So, this is her exposure, and this is some vision. And we read at the end of verse 6, "When I saw her, I wondered greatly." Shock, astonishment, fright – what other reaction can there be. This is where religion is headed. Before this all comes to place, we believe the Church will be taken out.

Then comes the time of tribulation. As the time of tribulation comes, the false prophet rallies the world, coexisting with the beast and his material kingdom. Somewhere around the middle of that time, they merge into one great system. It has a spiritual side and a material side, and both will be destroyed at the return of Christ. That's the exposure. Next time the explanation and the extermination.

Lord, as we close tonight, our minds are just overwhelmed by all of this. Father, we know there are many people who are trapped in these false religions who will just blindly, blissfully, under the deception of Satan, go on their way to hell. Lord, how it behooves us to call them to the truth, to speak the truth, to preach the truth, and to draw people out of these damning false religions so that they may escape that ultimate and frighteningly powerful deception of the end times.

Father, we pray that You'll lead us to many, with prepared hearts to hear and believe and be saved, who will escape the satanic deception that captivates the whole world and will reign and rule with the Lord Jesus Christ in glory. Make us faithful. You've committed to us this ministry of reconciliation, and we want to discharge it. Empower and enable us, give us opportunity, for Christ's sake, amen.

