

The Great Whore

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Bible Text: Revelation 17:1-6
Preached on: Tuesday, February 7, 2012

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All right. If you will, look with me in Revelation chapter 17. I realize that our reading in Jeremiah 51 was lengthy, but I trust a preparation for what we are about to read here in Revelation 17 where we see that Babylon is a description of false religion, the former city of Babylon, just like old Jerusalem is a type of that which is earthly. There is a heavenly Jerusalem. There is a spiritual Babylon of idolatry of which we are to beware. And we read these words here in Revelation 17.

And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns. The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition. And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which

have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.

These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful. And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.¹

So here you have a chapter that is representative of those things that had been previously revealed concerning the wickedness and the ruin of this anti Christ spirit, government, religion, all that opposes Christ. And before, as we saw, it had been represented as a beast. Now it is here described as a great whore.

So the symbolism is not different things that are being taught, but different representations. It is much like we teach children in education using different examples to bring home the severity of certain things and more. And even as the idea of a beast that devours is a God given illustration of what false religion does. When Paul said, "Beware of dogs," it was language that he used of vicious dogs. Religion has no true care for men's souls. I know that it appears to. A lot of talk about love and loving your neighbor and watching out for, you know, the humanity. And yet when such organizations or institutions are not exalting the Lord Jesus Christ it is a devour to men's souls and here we see that these join with the whore, the great whore. And there is reason why that language is used, because there is a deception. There is a drawing aside, just as a whore would draw aside men and bring them to destruction. So it is an apt description of false religion.

And so as we break this down and certainly we will probably not be able to get through it all, but I would have you see, you know, how the apostle John is summonsed to see a view of this vile woman in verses one and two and in it, in verses three through six he gives us the description of how she was, how she appeared. There is significance, I believe, in similarity, because when you read there in verse four, for example that she was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, are these not colors that in the Old Testament as we considered them pertained to those things that had to do with the temple, had to do with sacrifices. And so even the description here is pretty vile, yet we are reminded that the subtlety of false religion isn't in how apparent false doctrine is to people, but how close it is to the truth.

Satan is a wise, fallen creature and he is one of imitation. In fact, Paul writing to the

¹ Revelation 17:1-18.

Corinthians warned them of being drawn aside from the simplicity that is in Christ and spoke of even Satan being a minister of righteousness, transforming himself into a minister of light. Not true light, but imitation, one that would appear close. And so as you read this description in verse four it makes the warning all the more important. Much as you would warn your children to beware of strangers that pull up in a car and open a door and act kind and show you candy and pretend to want to help you and yet they have evil devices at heart. Such is false religion and it is decked with gold and precious stone and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand, but what is in the cup? It is full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication. So John gives us that description there in verses three through six.

And then, lest we be left simply to wonder in verses seven through 12, we see the mystery explained. You know, it is interesting the language that is used there in verse six where John expresses:

“I wondered with great admiration.”²

That word admiration isn't in the sense of being drawn to it, but just wonderment, wondering about what it all signified.

“And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman.”³

So it is clear here, just like the word mystery is used up in verse five we are dealing with something spiritual, we are dealing with something that requires wisdom and verse nine expresses that. The Spirit specifically puts these in to warn natural men not just to assume, well, I know what that means. But it takes a discerning, he says.

“And here is the mind which hath wisdom.”⁴

And the same with regard to the number 666 that we saw. It speaks, back there of if one will have this wisdom, have discernment to understand that it has to do with the number of man. It has to do with something that is figurative. How many natural minds read through the book of Revelation and always want to come up with some natural interpretation. And, because of that, I believe, are blinded. But, ultimately, in verse 13 and following and really on in to chapter 18 we are going to see two chapters dedicated to the ruin and destruction of Babylon.

Now the actual city of Babylon, as we read in Jeremiah was to be destroyed and it was. The Medes and the Persians came and destroyed it and then the Greeks came in and took over those two nations and then the Romans came in and took over and conquered the Greeks. These were different empires leading up to the time of Christ's coming.

² Revelation 17:6.

³ Revelation 17:7.

⁴ Revelation 17:9.

So when it is speaking here of the desolation of Babylon, it is not talking about physical Babylon, but it is talking about spiritual Babylon. It is talking about all that represents false worship. And so if we can keep that before us, I believe it will give us some understand as we go through these next two chapters.

But the fact that two chapters are dedicated to it—actually more, because we have seen this already in the vials of God’s wrath being poured out. We have seen it in previous chapters of God bringing to an end in a day false religion, all that is false. There is a day marked of judgment that is coming where all that is false will be destroyed. But here, I believe, the emphasis in these two chapters shows God’s disdain for what men take lightly. You know, you can take people and put them in a beautiful ornate building that is massive and when people walk in it makes them feel as if they are close to God. You look up. The ceilings are just so high and all about it just is ... it... it ... it moves natural men to feel as if they are close to God’s presence. And add to it music, ok? Add to it the kinds of things that move men in the flesh and it is hard for them to believe or to think that all of that God’s anger is upon and that he will most certainly destroy, but it is so.

And so let’s look, first of all, in Revelation 17 to the summons in verse one that is given to the apostle to see what is represented. We see those words:

“Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore.”⁵

So we are given the name. A whore, in this passage is one that is married and has been false to her husband’s bed, has forsaken the husband of her youth and broken the covenant of God. And she has been a prostitute to the kings of the earth whom it says there that she intoxicated with the wine of her fornication.

You talk about the extent of false religion. It is throughout the world. And so the deviation here from the truth, the mixture of truth and error that is propagated.

I have been recently listening to a radio station that is so extreme it is a 24/7 and I realize that it was up and running, but it is out of Mansfield. And when I started listening to it they were singing psalms and hymns. And I thought this is just beautiful, glued to it, listening to it. And then they started putting preachers in at different times and, you know, it has been a long time since I have actually sat and listened to some other men to preach and I thought, I will just sit and listen and see what they have to say. And it is so subtle, because there is a lot of truth in what men say, because if they read the Bible they are stating some truth. But it is in their commentary. And every one of them as you listen to them, puts a condition upon man to do something in the matter of salvation. You can hear it if you have ears to hear, but I think of the thousands and millions that are being deceived and saying, “Well, it is the Word of God. You know, they preach Christ.” But they make you believe. In other words, the key is in your hand. God has done all he can do. I can’t tell you how many times I have started hearing some of these old clichés that I hadn’t heard for years and it is passed down from generation to generation. I remember

⁵ Revelation 17:1.

hearing it back when I was a young man and nothing has changed. It is like a soap opera. It doesn't matter where you shut it off and turn it back on, you haven't missed anything. It is going to be the same plot. It is just a different character, but it is the same, you know, material. And this is how the whore is described.

So John is summoned to see it. There is times when it is good. And I don't mean that we have to put ourselves in those situations, but it was... I would say it was good for me to sit and listen for a while, to appreciate how the Lord has taught me in the difference that it has made and to realize that this isn't just something that I came to. You know, it is the Lord that separated me out. It is the Lord that has so taught this soul. Otherwise I would be right in there with them. And just as we read in Jeremiah 51 where the Lord told Israel to prepare to run out of Babylon, that when he delivers they are to run. They are to distinguish themselves, separate themselves. And so it is with the Lord's people.

But, secondly, that is the summons in verse one. We also see here her apparel that I mentioned already, arrayed in purple and scarlet decked with gold and precious stones and pearls. These are all imitations, if you will, of the true gospel. But even as with a whore, used for alluring. That is really what it is about, to allure the simple minded, just as proverbs talks about the strange woman which, again, is a representative of false religion, alluring people to their death, but doing it with things that are similar in type to what the gospel... what describes the gospel, you know, purple being royalty, scarlet being representative of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not that false religion doesn't talk about these things.

As I have mentioned before, you can read in books or hear preachers. They talk about redemption. They talk about grace. They talk about faith. They talk about Christ. They talk about salvation. But it is, again, designed to draw men to a decision that this is what God has done, but now unless you furnish the key you will remain outside of his work, his kingdom. That is that alluring, I believe, of the whore. We know that in salvation it is the Lord from beginning to end. And if it were not him from the beginning to the end, none would be saved.

When we get on here in Revelation 17 you can see that in verse 14.

“These shall make war with the Lamb.”⁶

You know, they may appear to be nice, neighborly. They might be very social minded in programs and in things that they do and appear to be good before men, but they are at war with the Lamb.”

“...and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.”⁷

⁶ Revelation 17:14.

⁷ Ibid.

Called in the sense of the Lord doing the calling, the Lord doing the summoning. And the reason that they are called is that they are chosen. There has been a distinct choosing out from among fallen humanity, but those that God will be pleased to save and faithful having... the word might better be described full of faith, full of the faith, full of the revelation of Christ and him crucified. And that is the only reason they are what they are. Other than that, we would be just like any of them.

So we see the summons. We see the appearance that is made of her, but, thirdly, we see her throne. It is interesting that in everything pertaining to Christ and the gospel, Satan has his imitations, even down to the throne. And we read there where it says upon the beast that had seven heads and ten horns. That is where this particular woman sat. And when you stop and think about seven heads and 10 horns, you know, when the angel here gets into a description of what this is, particularly down in verse seven:

“...the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.”⁸

Here we see the marriage between government, antichrist government and antichrist religion. And when it describes there the seven heads and 10 horns, verse nine, again, when it talks about:

“And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.”⁹

To any reading this in John's day they would have immediately thought of Rome. That was, indeed, the power that was in place at the time. The city sits upon seven hills and when you study a little bit of the history of Rome and particularly the persecution in the early century, it was brought against the believers. It was Rome. It was different ones as they raised up, one died, another came over a period of time. And I believe that is what is being described there in verse 10. There are seven kings, five are fallen. At the time that John wrote this, five emperors had already come and gone. And he says:

“...and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.”¹⁰

Some say that that was Domitian who was probably one of the worst persecutors even beyond what Nero did in his day. And so all these things the Lord foretold, but Rome then and for this reason a lot of your reformers, if you go back and read about them and what they thought, they saw very singularly that all of this pertained to the church of Rome and certainly there is an awful lot that could be said about popish idolatry, tyranny, blasphemy. I got some interesting emails from some people that one of my messages in Revelation was transcribed. There was somebody that transcribed it and put it out there. But it talks not only about Rome in some of the persecution of Rome against believers,

⁸ Revelation 17:7.

⁹ Revelation 17:9.

¹⁰ Revelation 17:10.

but even Protestant groups and congregations. And, you know, they wanted proof. Well, there is plenty. You can go back and read the history books. And one that I recommend people read with this regard of how even Protestants, caught up with their traditions and defending their churches or organizations that persecuted little groups of believers even such as we meet here that had no particular name or denomination because that wasn't their purpose. They met outside of these organizations in the days of John Bunyan would be an example, where they put him in prison because he refused a letter from the organized church of the day of England in order to preach. And they held him prisoner for 12 years. But there is example after example of these that have been persecuted and maligned and pursued by other than the Roman Catholics. I have heard a lot of preachers just preach up against the Roman Catholic Church and yet their own organizations are just as culpable, just as guilty, being in idolatry and so I believe that is why, you know, in verse nine it says:

“And here is the mind which hath wisdom...”¹¹

Rome, yes. That would have been significant in John's day, but any religion, denomination that is cookie cut out of the same pattern, having the same mind as Rome, you know, is in danger. And I believe the descriptions that we have here are fair warning to that end. It says her name which was written on her forehead, you know, it was the custom of some of the harlots of the day to actually hang out signs with their names on it so that they would be known. That is how proud they were of their industry. And I am sure it may be the same today, different ones with their various calling cards. But here very clearly the name which is written on her forehead is one of blasphemy.

When you stop and think of blasphemy, you know, again, certain statements that men hear you would... natural men would listen to and say, “Well, that is blasphemy.” You know, I have mentioned that to some as I have told them about this controversy over Christ being made a sinner. And you will get some people that may not agree with you on his death and what he accomplished who are going to say, “Well, that is blasphemy, the very thought or idea that somehow Christ was ever made a sinner. That is blasphemy.” Some of those things are readily identifiable. But what is difficult for some to discern is when the mixture of truth and error is so slight that to their eyes they don't see it as blasphemy. And, you know, I find it in people that talk about certain messages they have heard that are such a blessing to them and how God blessed them with it and they want you to listen to it and they give you a CD or they give you a tape or something to listen to and you begin to listen and all it is is conditional preaching. It is, you know, God has done what he can do and now it is up to you or it is a cooperation, salvation is a cooperation. This is what God does. This is what you must do. And I have heard some even break it down with regard to the new birth, as if this is something we contribute to.

There is are reason when Christ was talking to Nicodemus that, you know, he spoke of the new birth being... and that is what it is. Born again means born from above. The Spirit, like the wind, blows where it listeth and no man knows where it is coming, where it is going. I no more contribute to my new birth than I did to my physical birth. I had

¹¹ Revelation 17:9.

nothing to do with it. And yet people will sit and listen to these messages with a little checklist. Ok, check, check, I did this, as to what they must do to be born again. And if you were to tell them that was blasphemy, they would look at you as if you were an alien coming from another world. But it is blasphemy. Anything with regard to salvation that man is said to contribute to, man putting his hand to, no matter how good it looks is the religion of Cain. I am sure he brought the best works of his hand before the Lord, but the Lord would not accept his sacrifice, because it was not the God ordained sacrifice.

And so we see this name which is written on her forehead and it is one of blasphemy. That is what she is named here for a place of residence, called Babylon the Great, but the mother of harlots in verse five and abominations of the earth. Again, not the old Babylon literally, because her name is said to be a mystery that we see here, but she represents all that is deceptive. She represents all that is false. There it says that she satiated herself with the very blood of the martyrs. In other words, again, a picture of the hatred that there is, the stand, you know, verse six:

“And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.”¹²

Such is her enmity. And I truly believe that there would be such a warfare even today. I have seen it in my lifetime. I haven't had so much the opportunity here in the States to preach in various denominations and congregations like I did in Africa when I was invited in, but I saw the enmity. I have had people gnash their teeth and threaten over simple exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ. And maybe we forget about that when we sit here within our four walls and rejoice in what we hear. But this is not the message that is what the majority of Christendom wants to hear today. And if you don't believe it, just start talking to some people. And get bold with them. And even to the point of saying, “That is not a god I worship, the one that you are describing.” And you will see the enmity. You will see the anger. You will see the anger. You will experience the isolation. And if it weren't for the restraining hand of God, they would drink your blood. They would have your blood. Such is the greediness that they have for their own defense and their own self righteousness.

We are going to stop there for today and I will pick this up next time, but as we read it, I think the key is where we get down into verse 14 and beyond where this is all about the glory of the Lamb. You know, the same sort of distinction that was made way back there between Abel and Cain is all about the glory of the Lamb. You know, some that don't see it that clearly say, “Wait, you know, it wasn't really about the sacrifice and the offering. It was about their attitude. You know, it was Cain's attitude.”

No. Scripture very clearly says that attitude he did have. There is no question. There was a rebellion. But it was a rebellion against what God ordained as the one means of sacrifice, of salvation, of justification before a holy God. And, you know, if the Lord has so delivered us because until he showed us Christ we were in that... this false religion.

¹² Revelation 17:6.

We were worshipping ourselves. And such is the idolatry. It is in the heart. It is in the heart until the Lord is pleased to do his work.

But we will pick up with verse seven next time.