

Isaiah 47- Revelation 18,19 Sept 23

Revelation 17:1-6 (NKJV)

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,

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."

³ So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast *which was* full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

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.

⁵ And on her forehead a name *was* written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

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.

Isaiah 46 painted a picture of Babylon for us as a land of idolatry. It told us about the punishment that is coming on Babylon for its idolatry.

Isaiah 47 painted a picture for us of the spoiled girl Babylon who had everything she wanted and could not imagine that any of it would be lost. Her attitude was encapsulated in the statement of her position. The statement was "I am and there is no one else besides me". We also see the statement,

Isaiah 47:7 (NKJV)

⁷ And you said, 'I shall be a lady forever,' and Isaiah 47:8 (NKJV)

⁸ "Therefore hear this now, you who are given to pleasures, Who dwell securely, Who say in your heart, 'I am, and there is no one else besides me; I shall not sit as a widow, Nor shall I know the loss of children';

Now, do you recall another place where Babylon is quoted as a woman?

Revelation 18:7 (NKJV)

⁷ In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, 'I sit *as* queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.'

The book of Revelation borrows from the imagery of Isaiah 46 and 47. In fact if we understand our texts in Isaiah we can much better understand this reference

in Revelation. So I thought it would be good this morning to take a look at it. We are going to cover a lot of material, so brace yourself.

In our Isaiah texts we have seen several things about Babylon.

We see the punishment she receives because of the **idolatrous practices** and the **trust in the advice and influence of the idols**. We see the punishment she receives for the **bad treatment of the weakest of the Jews, the old people**.

At this point I think it is good to back up and get a bigger picture.

We have seen over the years in our study in scripture, from the beginning of the Bible to the end, how **humanity casts aside its Maker** in order to pursue **that which they think is better**, that which **they think will make them happier**.

We start with Eve. She thought the fruit would give her benefits that were greater than what God would provide for her. She believed the deceiver when he told her **she could have more and she could have it right now**.

Then over time we see mankind come together **in a celebration of their humanity** to build themselves a tower to reach God.

[Gen 11:4 NKJV] 4 And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top [is] in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."

And the problem is that they were successful. They were pulling together the great worldwide rebellion too soon. So God confused the languages. But we see again man's propensity **to worship himself or the created thing** over the Creator. They are gathering together for prosperity and for unification. And when they do they are revolting against God.

Now in our Isaiah texts we have looked at Babylon. In it we see a mix of idolatry and self worship. There really isn't much difference. When we create a god it always looks like us in some way.

We have the idols of chapter 46 and the woman **"who is and there is no one else besides"** in chapter 47. It is the same idea. It is man revolting against God and coming together in unity for themselves and against God. The pride just oozes out of people in this position.

Now we need to fast forward. We have seen the garden, the tower of Babel, the nation of Babylon, now we see where it is all headed. We see in Revelation a Babylon in a purer form than it could ever reach earlier. Throughout history the restraints of God slowed the progress. God sent Cyrus to cut off the evil direction Babylon was headed. But He will not always stop the progress so soon. The actual literal geography of Babylon was only a one step in this devilish progression. Revelation looks back to some attributes of the actual Babylon and

brings them to completion in this figurative Babylon. We see what Babylon is at its heart. We see what Babylon always was and will be until its end. Let's see the end of the story.

Revelations 17

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,

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 physical geography of Babylon was a city on many waters. The intensive system of irrigation is what made Babylon a fertile food production area. And its ability to be reached by the Euphrates river made it a trade center.

Now look at the accusation made here against this prophetic Babylon.

The kings committed fornication and the whole world was involved in this process.

Now as we read this, the first thing that stands out is how many sexual references there are. Fornication is mentioned many times in these two chapters. So what are we to think? Is the primary sin here sexual sin? No. That is not the point.

The primary point is **idolatry**. The old testament, as well as Isaiah's writing is full of sexual references when describing idolatry. It is the picture of God's chosen bride giving herself willingly to another suitor. Jesus used the word adultery to describe this idolatry often. So did many of the New Testament writers. We learn that physical fornication is a big deal with God. It is mentioned in the list of sins for which they will burn in the lake of fire in Rev 21. But it is not nearly as dangerous to the soul as spiritual fornication.

And that is the sinful intent of Babylon the whore. She wants to seduce all people away from the one true God.

Now before we go any further, what is this Babylon? It is not the literal Babylon. That was long gone. The land was desolate by the time Revelation was written.

Again modern writers have said a great deal about identifying who the real Babylon is. And each one seems to be equally as sure as the other. David Wilkerson said it was New York City. Lots of people believe it to be the Catholic church. Some think it is the Muslim religion. There are lots of theories.

I have been reading a book by Dennis Johnson called Triumph of the Lamb.

Evidently Art Azurdia used it extensively in his Amillennial study of Revelation. As we have discussed before, I like this approach because it assumes the readers of

the letter of the Revelation would have known what John was talking about, and this view allows the Bible to interpret the Bible.

Let's take a look at her attributes and see if we can make sense of this. I will borrow from Mr Azurdia's outline here.

- 1- She has universal appeal.
- 2- She exerts universal influence 17:2
- 3- She functions in partnership with the beast 17:3
- 4- She pursues the annihilation of Christians 17:6
- 5- And I have added this- She represents all the things that culture offers
 - a. Commerce 18:11-16
 - b. Transportation 18:17-19
 - c. Music and the arts 18:22
 - d. Everyday domestic life 18:23

Now when we read Revelation 17-19 we need to understand something. This seductress seems wonderful to the world and holds even a seductive appeal to Christians. The imagery of verse 3 is probably intended to show that it was important that John **be carried to the wilderness**. The angel was going to show John the harlot Babylon, but not up close. He allowed John to gain distance, to gain perspective. Because this harlot is seductive. Harlots are dangerous because what they offer on the outside is what is so appealing. And unfortunately for us men, we can often see better than we can think. A man has to gain a perspective of what is at stake for him to make a wise choice. He has to see, not just what **appears** to be happening, but what is **really** happening, before he can make a wise choice. He needs some distance. He needs some time. So the angel takes John away.

The thing we need to see is that the Harlot is **appealing**, almost universally appealing. It is rare to find someone not enthralled with her, someone not seduced by her. She is one of the woman models that is strikingly beautiful. And the problem with what she offers is not that it looks so bad. No, the problem is that it **looks so good**. In fact, it looks so good that all the countries flock to her. That is the woman we are dealing with here. She is offering her wares to turn souls away from God and onto herself.

So she has universal appeal

The second point is that she exerts universal influence. We have already read this in verse 2.

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 kings and the inhabitants of the earth have bought into her system of idolatry. They have essentially sold their souls to her. So whoever this harlot is, the whole earth is influenced by her. This is not just an isolated market. She has an idolatrous influence over **everyone** that has the mark of the beast, or every non believer.

3- She functions in partnership with the beast 17:3

³ So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast *which was* full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

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.

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.

⁹ Here *is* the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits.

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition.

¹² 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.

¹³ These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast.

Now to make sense of this we have to know who the beast is. I do not have the time it would take to make a study of this. So I am going to present what many in the amillennial view believe it to be. I think there is a lot of proof. It fits the text and it fits ways that other scriptures interpret this passage.

The beast is most likely the destructive power of tyrannical totalitarian governments. These governments make open war on Christians. They make no apology for the fact. It is man's political power pulled together in enmity against God. We have seen such a thing over and over again in the world's history. It ebbs and flows and shifts from one country to another. But the beast has always existed to some degree in some fashion. But there have not been many governments controlling as much of the world as this final beast is.

At the time of the writing of the Revelation, the beast was probably represented by the Roman government. It was at war against believers in some of its regions. Now this woman, Ms Babylon, rides this system. That gives us some important clues. What influence could rest **upon** governments but not **be** a government? What seductive influence could these governments carry? What symbiotic relationship could be developed?

4- She pursues the annihilation of Christians 17:6

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.

¹⁴ 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."

18-²⁴ And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth."

Whatever this woman is, she hates believers. And she hates the very idea of a true God. She wages war. Now my guess is this would take discernment. She looks more like a seducer than a murderer. She is appealing to a dark motive, not using force. Yet somehow she is drunk with blood of the saints and martyrs. This woman is seducing people who call themselves believers to their spiritual death. She is appealing with all her economic appeal to avert any gaze on the face of Christ. On top of that she demands that for anyone **to buy and sell in her system**, they must be **part** of that system. They must have the devil's mark of ownership rather than God's stamp of ownership. And if they do not have the devil's mark, the mark of the beast, they will die. So one way or another, she gets the blood of believers on her hands.

5- She represents all the things that culture offers

a. Commerce 18:11-16

Revelation 18:11-16 (NKJV)

¹¹ And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore:

¹² merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble;

¹³ and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men.

¹⁴ The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which

are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all.

¹⁵ **The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,**

¹⁶ **and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls!**

Look at all the goods available at the hands of Babylon. Look what she had to offer. No wonder she was so seductive. Who doesn't want her wares. Notice in her list of products was human slavery. She was making a business of buying and selling people. Whether this is figurative or literal doesn't make much difference. And look at the commentary right in the middle.

¹⁴ **The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all.**

I think this is a huge clue as to what this woman Babylon is. The stuff that your soul longed for has gone from you. Isn't the stuff our soul longs for **either God or idols**? Isn't **what our souls long for** the core of her idolatry?

Look what else she offers.

b. Transportation 18:17-19

¹⁷ **For in one hour such great riches came to nothing.' Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance**

¹⁸ **and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What *is* like this great city?'**

¹⁹ **They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate.'**

Look at the travel available by this woman? Wasn't this the hub of world transportation.

c. Music and the arts 18:22

²² **The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore.**

d. Everyday domestic life 18:23

²³ **The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore. For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived.**

Ok. I think we have learned enough to guess what the harlot is. I believe that the Harlot is **the culture that offers all the things the world has to offer**. It offers the pursuit of money, all the enjoyments of the flesh. It is the world's allure. It is **fallen human society organized against God**. It sits on top of governments. It rides them. They serve each other. But they are not the same thing. One creates an environment for killing the saints. The other is the instrument to do so. One proves the platform for world commerce. But the other carries it out. No one is going to worship the idea of government. But they will worship what a culture and economic system have to offer.

This was no new concept for John. He addressed it in non-apocalyptic language in 1 John.

1 John 2:15-17 (NKJV)

¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

¹⁶ For all that *is* in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world.

¹⁷ And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

Now, what is going to happen to this final completed version of Babylon? How will she end? What is her fate?

Revelation 17:1-18 (NKJV)

¹⁵ Then he said to me, "The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues.

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.

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.

¹⁸ And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth."

Revelation 18:1-24 (NKJV)

¹ After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory.

² And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!

³ For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of

the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury."

⁴ And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.

⁵ For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.

⁶ Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her.

⁷ In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, 'I sit *as* queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.'

⁸ Therefore her plagues will come in one day--death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong *is* the Lord God who judges her.

⁹ "The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning,

¹⁰ standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.'

¹¹ And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore:

Something struck me as odd in all this. Why would the **beast hate the harlot**? They share the same goal. Why would the beast destroy the culture of commerce and transportation and arts? I thought it was odd until I thought about it a little bit. Think about most totalitarian regimes. Do you know of any of them that are known for **thriving economies**? Do you know any of them known for **cultural centers** where the arts arise from within their ranks? Power in the hands of humans always leads to the destruction of beauty and humanity. It tears down, but it does not build up anything that does not exalt itself. So it is not at all unusual that such a thing would happen. And so be it. The culture was not an aide to knowing God anyway. The only way John could even see it clearly was to be removed from it.

And look at the appeal of John.

⁴ And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.

⁵ For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.

What a wonderful thing it is when God forgets sins. Scripture says He remembers a believer's sins no more. Basically He does not hold them against us. He does not remember them in His case against us.

But what a horrible thing when sins are remembered. These sins will be used as evidence in the prosecution of the human soul. They are not covered because the person did not trust Christ to forgive him of his sin. They are remembered because they maintained the status of an enemy of God. That is where Babylon and all her children are headed. God is going to punish.

How much hold does Babylon have on us?

Are our hearts fixated on those things that any human can acquire? If we lost the things of Babylon, the positive things in this life, our health, our stuff, our entertainments, even the people we love, would we be lost? Would we have lost that which is most important to us? Would our faith in God be destroyed?

We are called to come out of Babylon. We are to wean ourselves from its loves and addictions and its necessities. We are not citizens. We are aliens here. It is vital that we work that into our mindsets. There is nothing this earth offers that is worth losing our souls over.

Now there was more that I did not have time to get into. But I wanted to mention it. **Revelation 19:19-20 (NKJV)**

¹⁹ And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.

²⁰ Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.

From what I can gather, Satan, the dragon is going to be allowed by God to amass all world governments to his side. He has been stopped from doing this in the past. But now God will lift the restraints. At first this will seem like a good thing for the inhabitants of the world. But as we saw, the culture, the things that are most enjoyable to human citizens will be destroyed. And then the beast will wage war against God. All the subtleties are gone. There is no more illusion. The true intent of the devil and the beast and all humanity apart from God will be seen. They hate the rule of God and want done with it.

There is nothing that says that believers won't be around as this progression comes about. I am not saying this to trouble you or to bum you out. But it is important that you know this. Sometime this is going to happen. And it will be hell on earth for believers. We need to always be prepared with the mindset that our God is worthy. To die for Christ is an honor. We are blessed when we suffer for Christ's name. We need to understand this is where the world culture and the

world governments are heading. They will unite with a common enemy. And that enemy will be Jesus Christ- the love of our soul.

Orient to that fact. Let it sink into our plans and our goals and our expectations. It is true.

But then remember this.

Revelation 20:11-15 (NKJV)

¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.

¹² And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

¹³ The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

¹⁵ And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

Revelation 21:1-8 (NKJV)

¹ Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.

² Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

³ And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God.

⁴ And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

⁵ Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

⁶ And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.

⁷ He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.

⁸ But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

I realize that I did not bring out a whole lot of application from this text. There is plenty there. But I wanted us to understand the heart of this lady Babylon, and why God expresses such anger. We need to guard our hearts from her. We cannot allow our enjoyment of things in our culture to seduce our hearts and minds until we worship her. She is a good looking harlot. But she is a harlot just the same.