

BOOK OF REVELATION

Part 25 – Parenthesis Four - Religious Babylon: Chapter 17

I. INTRODUCTION

REVIEW: In Chapter 15, we saw once again the sea of glass, representing the saints of all the ages, with their status being stable and fixed in God. Seven angels, whose identity is not known unto us as the scripture does not tell us, came into the temple in Heaven, the doors were closed and they given seven vials and the judgments of God were poured into these vials. Then the doors to the temple in Heaven opened and the angels came out with their seven vials. In Chapter 16, we saw these seven angels pour out their seven vials one at a time and in rapid succession with only a brief pause one time.

Now we are entering the fourth and final parenthetical passage in the book of Revelation. The chronological flow of events is paused while the Apostle John is showed the distinct visions of the two Babylons. The two Babylons are referred to in Chapter 14 by one of the three angelic messengers of God. One of the two Babylons is mentioned during the seventh vial judgment near the end of Chapter 16. Now we will study in detail in the two Babylons: The religious Babylon in Chapter 17 and the political and economic Babylon in Chapter 18.

II. EXEGESIS - The Religious Babylon

A. VERSES 1-6: VISION OF THE GREAT WHORE.

*VERSE 1: 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:*

We now see the vision change focus once again, as is frequent in the book of the Revelation. The Apostle John had witnessed the seven angels pouring out the seven vials of the final wrath of God before the Tribulation time period comes to an end. Now we see the chronological flow of events pause once again. The Apostle John is approached by one of the seven angels who poured out one of the seven vials of God's judgment. The scriptures does not tells us which of the seven angels it is, only that it is one of the seven.

The angel proceeds to at first tell the Apostle John, about the "Great Whore" and her impending judgment by God. This prostitute is described by the angel with the phrase, "the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:". Frequently throughout the book of the Revelation, the word "waters" or "seas" is a word used to refer to a large group or number of people. The word "sitteth" carries the connotation of authority or control. This prostitute will have considerable control or influence over the peoples on the earth. This is made very clear later in the chapter in Verse 15. It is important to recognize, ahead of time, that much of the imagery that the Apostle John saw in the following description is symbolic in nature and this will become clear in the interpretation of the dream given by the angel beginning in verse 7.

*VERSE 2: 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.*

This "woman" is not faithful or committed to any one ruler on the earth but has relationships with many of the rulers on earth. Her impropriety is so great that the inhabitants of the earth have been intoxicated. Intoxication makes the one who is intoxicated oblivious to things around them and they have the appearance of being mentally not alert or lucid. The people of the earth have been intoxicated with viewing the wickedness of this woman for so long that they are mentally oblivious to her wickedness and being a prostitute to many of the kings of the earth.

*VERSE 3: 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.*

The angel, who had at first been describing the "Great Whore" to the Apostle John, now carries the Apostle John in his vision to a different location, which is described as a wilderness, and he sees this "woman" for the first time. The Apostle John sees the "woman" sitting upon a "scarlet colored beast". The color scarlet, a bright reddish color, in ancient times primarily represented wealth and power. Secondarily it also represented sensuality or erotic feelings. This scarlet colored dye was obtained by crushing a small insect called a "kermes", which fed on the Kermes oak. It is used in modern times by many armed forces as the main color of their ceremonial or "high class" uniforms.

The beast here is the same beast that was described in Revelation 13, with the exception of the scarlet color. However, the color scarlet is used to represent power and or wealth.

Revelation 13:1 "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy."

Notice that the "woman" is sitting upon the beast. To sit upon a strong and power beast indicates control or dominion of the beast upon which one is sitting. The beast is still very strong and powerful but is dominated and controlled by the one sitting upon it.

*VERSE 4: 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:*

More details of the woman's description is now given. She is arrayed in purple and scarlet. Purple in ancient times, and even modern times, is often associated with royalty or even religious piety. Notice that the woman is arrayed in "purple and scarlet colour". Her clothing is indicative of great power and wealth.

The woman is also "decked with gold and precious stones and pearls". According to the Merriam Webster dictionary the word "deck" means "to clothe in a striking or elegant manner" or "to portray or present with embellishments". She is wearing the finest jewelry that is available on the earth.

Notice here that the woman also is holding a cup in her hand. According to the Noah Webster 1828, the word “abomination” means “extreme hatred” or “detesting”. Her fornication is hated and detested by God. Even the scripture tells us that God's hate seven things and they are an abomination (detested) by Him:

Proverbs 6:16-19 (16) These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: (17) A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, (18) An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, (19) A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.

The woman here is definitely in the following categories given here in Proverbs 6: (1) “Hands that shed innocent blood and (2) A Heart that deviseth wicked imaginations”.

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

This woman has a very unusual name written upon her forehead. That way everyone will be able to see this name. Notice it is in all capital letters. All capital letters would be indicative of a title given to someone. Pontius Pilate after giving orders for the Lord Jesus Christ to be crucified, which was also part of God's divine plan, gave orders for a title to be put on top of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, upon his crucifixion. It was a title that Pontius Pilate giving Him this title as a reminder to these Jews that he thought the crucifixion demand that they gave was unjustified

Luke 23:38 “And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

She is being identified, to anyone who will notice, her true nature by God, through the title on her forehead. She is described as being the mother, or origin, of all harlots and abominations on earth. Most of the world however does not notice because they have been blinded by her acts of fornication and do not realize her true nature.

***VERSE 6: 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.***

This woman had been drinking the blood of the saints who were wounded and had died by other causes than persecution and the blood of those saints who were killed for their Christian testimony. She had drank so much of their blood that she appeared giddy and manifested all the physical symptoms of intoxication.

The Apostle John is mystified by the imagery of the great whore that he has seen in a very similar manner the prophet Daniel was mystified by the imagery he saw in his vision from the angel.

B. VERSES 7-14 INTERPRETATION OF THE MYSTERY OF THE GREAT WHORE

*VERSE 7 "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 angel who had shown the Apostle John this bizarre imagery now tells him that he will explain the mystery of the great whore, the beast that she is sitting upon. This is similar to the

*VERSE 8 "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.*

The phrase "the beast that thou sawest was, and is not, and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit" tells the reader the identity of this beast. The beast that the woman is riding is none other than the Antichrist, who is the Beast that is described in Revelation 13. Revelation 13 tells us that the Antichrist is killed by a sword wound in the middle of the Tribulation, after Satan loses the war in Heaven in Revelation 12. In Revelation 9, the leader of the demonic forces that are released out of the bottomless pit during trumpet judgment five is Apollyon, being none other than Satan himself. Satan is not bound in the bottomless pit with the majority of the fallen angels shortly after creation, but is free to roam the earth and even enters heaven to accuse the brethren, until the war in Heaven in Revelation 12.

The timing of this indicates that it is possible that Satan loses the war in Heaven between the fourth and fifth trumpet judgments, but only God knows for sure. After the fifth trumpet judgment is sounded there is no evidence to indicate the bottomless pit is closed again until Revelation 20, when Satan is bound in the bottomless pit during the Millennial Kingdom.

The dead body of Antichrist is resurrected and animated by the power of Satan shortly after his death. The soul of the man that was Antichrist is still dead and in Hell. The world will wander after the beast at that time. The phrase "and they that dwell on earth shall wonder" reminded the Apostle John, and subsequently the reader, that the beast here and in Revelation 13 are the one in the same person. Notice that only those who are not Tribulation saints will wonder after the beast. The non-believer will have been deceived, have been willing to be deceived, and also will have been sent "strong delusion" so they could be deceived.

The phrase "the beast that was, and is not, and yet is" reinforces the identity of this beast being the Antichrist, the beast of Revelation. This phrase makes allusion to the death of Antichrist and his body being resurrected by Satan. The soul of the man that was Antichrist is in Hell.

- **Beast That Was:** Antichrist as a man influenced by Satan.
- **And Is Not:** Antichrist dies by a sword wound.
- **And Yet Is:** Antichrist appears to be resurrected. Satan animated only.

*VERSE 9 "And here is the mind which hath wisdom.
The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth."*

The seven mountains here is where the city of Rome is located. Rome is situated and surrounded by seven different mountains. It is out of these mountains that the city of Rome received its drinking via the Roman aqueducts, which was an engineering marvel of the ancient world. This will become more clear when we study verse 18 and the identity of the woman is fully revealed.

*VERSE 10 "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."*

The angel here tells the Apostle John that there are seven kings that will have kingdoms. The key to proper understanding of this passage is the chronology here.

FIRST FIVE KINGS: At the time the Apostle John was given this vision, approximately 90 – 95 A.D., five of these seven kings have fallen. Five distinct world powers have come and gone before this time are:

- (1) Egypt: First great empire following the flood.
- (2) The Assyrian Empire: First great empire of the middle east.
- (3) The Babylonian Empire: Absorbed the Assyrian Empire and was larger.
- (4) The Medo-Persian Empire: Absorbed the Babylonian Empire
- (5) The Greek Empire of Alexander the Great: Absorbed the Medo-Persian Empire.

SIXTH KING: The sixth king that is described with the phrase "and one is" is the Roman Empire. To the Christian who is living in the latter part of the Church Age, the Roman Empire had fallen long ago. At the time of the writing of the book of the Revelation, The Roman Empire was in power and near the zenith of that power. The reader must keep this in mind to understand this passage properly.

SEVENTH KING: The seventh king that is described with the phrase, "and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space" is another reference to the Antichrist, who is referred to as the "Beast" in Revelation 13. The rule of the Antichrist as a man will only be 3 1/2 years before he is assassinated by a sword wound.

*VERSE 11 "And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth,
and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition."*

EIGHTH KING: This eighth king is really the seventh king, the Antichrist body resurrected and animated by Satan. The Antichrist is a man no longer, as his soul is in Hell. Satan, not having the power to bring a soul back into a body, could animate a dead body. To the unbeliever on earth, it appears that the Antichrist is come back to life and will look much the same. Only the believers will know and realize the truth, because they will know about the teaching of this passage from God's word.

The Antichrist, being resurrected and impersonated by Satan, is perfectly explained in the phrase "even he is the eighth and is of the seven". The word perdition carries the meaning in the original language of "destruction" or "damnation". The Beast, the Satan animated Antichrist, will go into perdition at the end of the tribulation. The scripture is very clear on this:

Revelation 19:20 “And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.”

VERSE 12 “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.”

This is a reference to the ten kingdoms of the kingdoms that compose the basis of the kingdom of the Antichrist. They will come to power at the beginning of the Tribulation at the time of the arising of Antichrist to power in seal judgment one. They are first prophesied in scripture in the image that King Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream in Daniel 2 and also seen by the prophet Daniel in his vision in Daniel 7.

Revelation 13:1 “And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.”

Daniel 7:7 “After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns.”

Revelation 6:2 “And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.”

VERSE 13 “These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.”

These ten kingdoms will be the "power base" of the kingdom of the Antichrist and will be in total agreement with the purposes of the Antichrist for the entire time of the Tribulation. Their allegiance to the Antichrist will be unwaivering right until the Battle of Armageddon. They will be in league and support the power of Antichrist particularly during the first 3 1/2 years of the Tribulation. They will have another critical role to play in the next verses as we will see shortly.

VERSE 14 “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.”

The fate of the Antichrist and the ten kingdoms that are the basis of his power on earth will make war against the Lord Jesus Christ by making war against his Tribulation saints that are still on earth and will culminate at the Battle of Armageddon at the end of the Tribulation.

Revelation 19:15 “And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.”

The Saints of the Old Testament and the Church Age that will accompany Him at the Battle of Armageddon. Notice they are described as “are called, and chosen, and faithful.”

C. VERSES 15-18: IDENTITY OF THE GREAT WHORE AND HER DESTRUCTION

VERSE 15 "And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues."

The angel now begins to explain what some of the imagery is representative of. The waters that was under the feet of the beast upon whom the woman sat was representative of the people upon the earth during this time. The woman sitting upon the beast and the beast standing upon the earth indicates that she have control over the population of the earth indirectly through the kingdom of the Antichrist.

VERSE 16 "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."

The identity of the ten kings is given in verse 12:

Revelation 17:12 "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."

The ten kingdoms will be instrumental in the destruction of the woman. First they will remove all the material assets of the woman and then remove her clothing leaving her exposed to the elements. Then the ten kingdoms will devour her and burn her remains leaving nothing of her in existence.

The timing of this event will be most likely in the middle of the Tribulation during shortly following the resurrection of the body of the Antichrist by Satan. During the first 3 1/2 years of the Tribulation, the Antichrist will be a man, influenced by Satan, but a man nevertheless. This woman, being she is the One World Religion or Superchurch, will be influential in support of the rule of the Antichrist and they will no doubt be of mutual aid to one another and will probably enjoy a somewhat symbiotic relationship.

However, once Satan is in control of the dead body of the Antichrist, he will see this "church" as garnering power and attention for itself and will want that adoration and worship for himself. He will therefore allow the ten kingdoms to do "his dirty work for him" and get rid of the One World Religion and these ten kingdoms will do so in a very quick and violent fashion.

This judgment of "Babylon the Great" was foretold by the second angelic messenger in Revelation 14:

Revelation 14:8 "And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."

The fact that in this verse, which immediately follows the middle of the Tribulation and its events, is the first evidence that the Great Whore, the One World Religion being destroyed by the ten kingdoms of the Antichrist, now the Beast. The second evidence of this happening is that you do not see the Great Whore referred to in the present tense in the seven vial judgments that were poured out on creation in Revelation 16.

We will study the economic system of the Great Whore in Revelation 18 and how her destruction affected the known world.

VERSE 17 "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.

Notice that the ten kingdoms and their respective rulers will think that it is their idea to render assistance to the Antichrist. But in reality they will be fulfilling the will of God. These ten kingdoms and their respective rulers have already given their allegiance willingly and therefore God has allowed their willing allegiance to the Antichrist to serve His great plan for them.

The word of God will be fulfilled with the return of the Lord Jesus Christ at the end of the Tribulation, the setup and rule of the Millennial Kingdom, and the New Heaven and the New Earth following the Millennial Kingdom. God has on numerous occasions in the past allowed the self-determined purposes of evil men to serve His plans.

The Pharaoh of Egypt would not let the children of Israel go and serve the Lord. God used the chosen disobedience and unbelief of Pharaoh to bring glory to Himself and show all the known world the all-powerful of God that He truly is.

Exodus 14:17 "And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen."

VERSE 18 "And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

The city that has rule over the kings of the earth is none other than the city of Rome. Rome has had rule over much of the earth in one form or the other, over much of the earth since ancient times. The city of Rome was the capital of the Roman Empire for over five centuries. Rome is also the headquarters, if you please, of the Roman Catholic Church since its inception in the early fourth century under the Roman Emperor Constantine. The Roman Catholic Church was a marriage or union of a version of distorted Christianity with the Roman state. True Bible-believing Christians would have never supported a state controlled by the church. After the fall of the Roman Empire, the Roman Catholic Church continued its existence and its authority came out of the city of Rome. It had considerable influence on many areas of the known world during the middle ages. The Holy Roman Empire of the middle ages, was either ruled or strongly influenced by the Roman Catholic Church. Even after the Reformation of the sixteenth century, when the political power of the Roman Catholic Church decreased, the influence of Roman Catholicism was still quite prevalent of many nations of the world and Roman Catholicism is still the state religion of many nations on earth today.

The Roman Catholic Church is a surviving vestige of the Roman Empire and as a result the Roman Empire has never died completely. The Roman Catholic Church, most notably during the Spanish Inquisition, has persecuted and killed many Bible believing Christians during the middle ages and the estimated of the number of these martyrs during the middle ages by some number as high as 60 to 65 million.

Sadly, and this statement is not given with any joy, the hierarchy and much of the membership of the Roman Catholic Church do not teach or believe in salvation by faith through the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross and instead add works to salvation and teach many other doctrines that are not taught in the Bible. As a result when the Rapture of the Church occurs they will be among those who are left behind along

III. APPLICATIONS

- **Those who are not born again will be deceived by the Antichrist and the One World Religion in the Tribulation.**
- **However this religion will look good and even seem good to a large number of people and will have considerable wealth and power.**
- **Many false religions even today look good, seem good, and are wealthy and powerful but they are deceivers leading the lost into an eternity in hell.**
- **God will use the ten kingdoms, although they think it is their idea, to bring His will and execute His righteous judgment.**
- **God can use the wicked and even government to bring about His will even though they reject him.**