



Sermon Series Notes

“Beastly Betrayal” (Revelation 17)

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Intro: There are some things in this chapter that have been interpreted very differently by Bible scholars and commentators. With that said, the overall message of the chapter and its implications for each of us personally is absolutely clear to me, and that is what’s most important.

v.1 She sits on many waters – see v.15.

v.2 This is spiritual as well as physical adultery; She is intoxicating; Intoxicate: To excite or elate beyond self-control.

v.3 The seven heads and ten horns are the leaders of a revived Roman Empire ruled by antichrist. Remember seven of them submit willingly to antichrist, and three are subdued by him (Daniel 7:24b). The blasphemous names refer to the godlessness of these leaders. The scarlet color represents the utter sinfulness of this beast’s condition; Isa.1:18...though your sins be as **scarlet**, they shall be as white as snow.

v.4a She is “dressed to kill” (v.4); This is a prostitute with “class.” She is rich, and she is **very alluring**.

v.5 The first organized human system (government) that left God out of its equation originated in Babylon (see Gen.11:1-9). The bricks represent what man can build without God’s help. **All** false religion originated in ancient Babylon, and all the things that God calls an abomination originated in Babylon.

Jeremiah 51:7-8 Flee from Babylon! Run for your lives! Do not be destroyed because of her sins. It is the time for the Lord’s vengeance; he will repay her what she deserves. Babylon was a gold cup in the Lord’s hand; she made the whole earth drunk. **The nations** drank her wine; therefore they have now gone mad.

vv.6-11 Both the antichrist and the ten nation confederation he will rule over are both referred to as “the beast.” Antichrist and this kingdom will be empowered by Satan himself (see Rev.13:2b). The beast that once was seems to refer to the old Roman Empire that is revived in the last days. This is where it can get a little confusing for me. The ten nation confederation that antichrist will rule in this future time is a revived Roman Empire (Daniel 7:7). But this woman “Mystery Babylon The Great” also seems to have some kind of connection with Rome.

The early church unanimously viewed Babylon as Rome. None of the early church fathers held that Babylon was to be taken literally. They all viewed it as symbolic of the Roman Empire in general and the city of Rome in particular. The reformers and the puritans were also unanimous in taking Babylon as a

symbol of Rome. The only difference was that they extended it to refer to papal Rome as the apostate church of the last days.

Many see the seven hills as representing Rome; Any first century reader would identify v.9 as Rome. Some people see the seven kings as seven forms of Roman government, others as seven Roman emperors. Still others see them as ancient world powers: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, & Greece would be the five that have fallen; Rome of John the apostle's day is the sixth, and, and of course the seventh is Rome revived. The eighth king is antichrist.

The woman is drunk with the blood of the saints (v.6a); Political and papal Rome certainly have a history of killing true saints of God; Roman rulers such as Nero, Domitian, Trajan, Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius, Diocletian, and many others brutally persecuted Christians; Paul the apostle was executed by Nero, & all the other apostles except John died martyrs deaths under Roman rule; John of course was banished to the island of Patmos by Domitian; Polycarp was a direct disciple of John's. Rome burned him at the stake. Here's what he prayed just before his execution:

Lord God Almighty, Father of your blessed and beloved child Jesus Christ, through whom we have received knowledge of you, God of angels and hosts and all creation, and of the whole race of the upright who live in your presence: I bless you that you have thought me worthy of this day and hour, to be numbered among the martyrs and share in the cup of Christ, for resurrection to eternal life, for soul and body in the incorruptibility of the Holy Spirit. Among them may I be accepted before you today, as a rich and acceptable sacrifice, just as you, the faithful and true God, have prepared and foreshown and brought about. For this reason and for all things I praise you, I bless you, I glorify you, through the eternal heavenly high priest Jesus Christ, your beloved child, through whom be glory to you, with him and the Holy Spirit, now and for the ages to come. Amen.

The fire was then lit and shortly thereafter a soldier stabbed Polycarp to death by order of the magistrate.

Among those persecuted by papal Rome are people like John Wycliffe, John Hus, who was influenced by John Wycliffe. They burned John Hus at the stake. His name in German sounded like "goose," so his nickname was "the goose," and that's where the phrase "the goose has been cooked" or "your goose is cooked" came from.

William Tyndale translated the first English Bible taken directly from the Hebrew and Greek texts. He was strangled and then burned at the stake.

You may have also heard the name Martin Luther. And there are many many more we could mention.

v.12 One hour is not a literal hour, it refers to a brief time.

v.14 This fast forwards us to Rev.19:19-21 (read, noting context).

v.15 This tells me that “Mystery Babylon The Great” is not limited geographically. These are people of the world.

Jeremiah 51:7 Babylon...she made **the whole earth** drunk. **The nations** drank her wine; therefore they have now gone mad.

She is the world of people who live their lives without the true God in the equation. They may be religious, but they are not redeemed. They reject the true Christ & follow a false Christ, who in reality is indwelt and empowered by Satan himself. They ride on the back of the beast, astonished at the power and glory of his kingdom, impressed by his false resurrection, marveling at the counterfeit miracles performed by the false prophet, who has everyone killed who refuses to worship the beast (Rev.13:15).

vv.16-18 I do not know what the city of v.18 is. Many see it as Rome. I don't know. But that's not what's important! Whatever city it is, the message here is the same. There will be a one world government in the end ruled by antichrist. The world's inhabitants will marvel at antichrist and worship him. But at some point things take a drastic and shocking turn. Antichrist turns on the very people who have bowed to worship him.

In 1804, Napoleon summoned Pope Pius VII to leave Rome and come to Paris in order to crown him emperor of France. Knowing the one who crowns the emperor would always have a voice of power with the emperor, Pius showed up with crown in hand. But just as he was about to place the crown on Napoleon's brow, Napoleon grabbed it from Pope Pius and crowned himself. Horrified, Pope Pius immediately understood the implication: Napoleon had wrested all power from Rome.

That is exactly what happens here. What an incredible turn of events. The woman has enjoyed the ride on the back of the beast until now. Talk about shocking! The antichrist and his empire that dominates the world in this coming day, having taken ultimate advantage of the woman, now turns against her in hellish hatred!

II Cor.4:4 refers to Satan as “the god of this world.”

Let me remind us what the god of this world is like:

John 8:44...He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

II Cor.11:14...Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.

The beast – Antichrist & the world government he commands; he is not viewed as a beast by the inhabitants of the world who follow and worship him.

John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy...

Here in Revelation 17, antichrist' true nature is revealed, as he turns against the woman who rode on his back.

“Mystery Babylon The Great” is the spirit of the world.

By the way, what does a prostitute try to do to people?

Seduce: To lead astray by alluring and enticing temptation.

I Cor.2:12a We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God...

Eph.2:1-3 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed **the ways of this world** and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

James 4:4 You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

The OT prophets brought similar charges against Nineveh (Nah.3:1-4), Tyre (Isa.23:15-17, Babylon (Ezek.23:17), and even Jerusalem (Isa.1:21; Jer.3:8-9)
I John 2:15-17

What were the three things Satan tempted Jesus with in the wilderness?

We make Satan's business of deception a lot easier, because we all have a propensity to sin.

Jer.17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things...

James 1:14...each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.

Satan uses the things of this world to lure, entice, and intoxicate us. He can take you on quite a ride, but in the end, he burns you!

Satan does not tempt us randomly

He looks for an opportune time

- See Eph.6:13; Luke 4:1-13 (note v.13)

- Jesus was tempted when he was all alone in the wilderness, as well as when he was very hungry.

- Joseph was tempted at age 17 after he was rejected by his brothers, sold into slavery, lonely, & a long way from home; I think when a person goes off to college, Satan loves it, because it's an opportune time to tempt.

- Esau was tempted after a hunting trip when he was physically famished, and he ended up selling his birthright for a pot of stew; King David was tempted when he took a break from the battle ("Spring Break," the day of evil).

He looks for an opportune temptation

- The lust of the flesh is a powerful temptation, and sexual lust is extremely potent, and many have fallen to this deception. But for some, it is not the lust of the flesh that takes them down, it's the lust of the eyes; In the parable of the seed & the sower, the seed that fell among thorns referred to those who became unfruitful as a result of the worries of this life and the **deceitfulness** of wealth (Matt.13:22 & Mark 4:18); It's what Satan used to take down a servant of one of the greatest prophets in the OT, Gehazi (See II Kings 5:19b-27); It's what took down Balaam, the rich young ruler, Judas, Ananias and Sapphira, the Pharisees (Luke 16:14).

I Tim.6:10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

But there is one more potential deception that we are prone to. This is the pride of life; See II Chron.26:3-5, 16-21; This deception also took down King Hezekiah, King Saul, Nebuchadnezzar, King Herod, and many others.

How To Escape The Seduction Of Mystery Babylon The Great

Resist temptation with truth

- Jesus resisted every temptation of the devil by the Word of God.

- The sword of the Spirit (Eph.6:17); the more sword in my sheath, the more weapon in my hand;

Psalm 119:11 I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

Resist temptation with your will

- In order to win this battle, I must resist my natural desires (see Titus 2:13; Gal.5:17).

Repent if you have allowed yourself to be seduced

- The Prodigal

CONCLUSION

* If we follow the ways of this world, it means we are following the god of this world. His name is Lucifer, and he is a liar and a deceiver. He looks to take advantage of our propensity to sin, and he knows our particular weaknesses. For some of us it is the lust of the flesh, for others it is the lust of the eyes, for still others it is the pride of life. Sometimes it's all three. Thank God there is a way to overcome our adversary, but it will take daily self-denial, the daily bread of God's Word, and the constant reminder that nothing gained in this world is worth losing the rewards offered to us in eternity.

* Mark 8: 34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 35 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. 36 What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?"