

## Mystery Babylon

### *Revelation 17*

- I. A parenthesis between chapters 16 and 19.
  - A. At the conclusion of the seven bowl judgements, Jesus Christ will return.
  - B. Chapters 17 and 18 give insight into the final judgement of the “Harlot” Babylon and the beast.
  - C. Chapters 17 and 18 go together, both concern the future outlook of the woman and the beast.
    1. Chapter 17 concerned with the religion of “Babylon the Great”
    2. Chapter 18 concerned with the economics and politics of “Babylon the Great”.
- II. Man’s need for “religion”.
  - A. Definitions:
    1. Religion—the broad way: Man’s attempt to please God—There is something I can do to please God.
    2. Christianity—the narrow way: Based in faith in Jesus Christ—Not what I have done but what God has done.
  - B. Ecclesiastes 3:11 God has placed “eternity in man’s heart”
    1. Man’s need for filling the “God shaped hole” that only God can fill.
  - C. The first example of “religion” in the Bible: Genesis 11.
    1. God’s command—**Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.**
    2. Man’s preference—Stay put, build a tower to heaven for man’s glory.
    3. Babylon becomes a city, an empire, but later a world system of thought and action.
      - a. Revelation 14:8 The fall of Babylon the Great foretold.
      - b. Revelation 18:1-3 This Babylon system will be worldwide and will fall!
- III. The harlot (Vs.1-7).
  - A. “**Stands on many waters**”—all the peoples, crowds, nations and tongues (V.15).

- B. The entire world joins in to the woman's "sensuality".
  - C. The woman "rides" the beast—a position of authority. (chapters 12 and 13)
    - 1. She is clothed in expensive clothes and accessories—Prominence, royalty, wealth.
  - D. She is a murderer of followers of Christ... **drunk with their blood** (V.6).
- IV. The angel interprets for John.
- A. The woman/harlot is "Babylon the Great" (V. 18).
  - B. The beast—the one who was apparently slain but comes back to life—most likely a "false resurrection" (Ch. 13).
    - 1. (V.8) The unbelievers will be amazed at the resurrected beast and will end up worshipping him (Ch.13).
  - C. The seven heads—are seven mountains who are seven kings or seven kingdoms (Vs. 9-10).
    - 1. **Five have fallen**—Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece.
    - 2. **One that is**—Rome: the empire during John's time.
    - 3. **Yet to come**—the Beast's empire.
    - 4. The eighth—Possibly the beast after his resurrection.
  - D. The ten horns—ten future kings who will be assigned regions (Vs. 12-13)
    - 1. They will serve and promote the beast.
  - E. The beast and the ten kings will wage war with the Lamb (Jesus Christ) and will be defeated (future). (V. 14).
- V. The beast and the ten kings will destroy the harlot! (V. 16).
- A. The beast wants a ONE world system, One world religion (him), One world economic system (his), A One world leader (himself).
  - B. Where is God in all this?
    - 1. Everything that will happen will achieve His purposes (V.17).

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We are missing a large portion of our church family this morning... I understand around 36 of our men are at the retreat, they should be having their own worship service by now... Our college students have begin their Spring Break, so they are searching for warmer, dryer lands...and many, way too many of our church family are at home ill.

Something has gone around, I understand all over the country... Even my family in Canada have been down with this horrible sickness...two weeks ago today I drove down to Los Angeles to attend the Shepherd's Conference only to spend every day that week in bed...Last Sunday we drove back and I've been in bed ever since!... It is good to stand upright this morning!...this is a test!

You know that when you are sick you have all this time but can't do anything but lay there... You can't read, write, do your nails...nothing... *but think*...I have done a lot of thinking over the last 15 days....(and a little too much watching internet news and commentary, worthless opinions.)

Thinking mostly about these later passages we are moving into in the book of Revelation... in light with what all is happening in our world right now... more and more as the world happens.... I can see how these events in Revelation are coinciding.....along with what I have been observing more than ever to be a general insecure if not negative outlook for the future in so many I talk to....there seems to be an underlying gloom wherever I go...

The most recent Gallup poll reported: *"Only about 59% of Americans are optimistic about their future, marking the lowest level recorded since Gallup began tracking this measure. This decline reflects a significant erosion of optimism, with only 48% of Americans classified as "thriving" in their current and future life assessments."*

Optimistic does not mean ecstatic!...less than half are struggling... either physically or mentally...for sure spiritually...or likely all three!

Financial insecurity...Relationship issues...Health issues...mental issues... depression...anxieties... social issues... *What's happening to the values and morality of our country*...Political divisions...war... are we headed for World War III?...National security... security insecurity, are we safe?...

In light of recent domestic terrorist attacks on churches and synagogues... A national warning yesterday *"If you attend religious services have your eyes open"*...(I've been praying for that ever since I began preaching!).

[by the way we have a very good, well-trained security/safety team here at the church...in service right now.]

I know many of you are struggling...many legitimate concerns... some of you I know are more than struggling... I want you to leave this morning reminded of the great hope we have in Jesus Christ...

Some wonderful passages come to mind:

1 Peter 1:3 **he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.**

Hebrews 6:19 **We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm, and secure...**

Romans 15:13 A wonderful benediction...**May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him...**through all your circumstances... there may be flames all around you... but there is joy and peace in all of it!... trust in Him!... **so that you may overflow with hope by YOUR OWN POWER... NO!... by the power of the Holy Spirit.**

Isaiah 40:31 **But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles...** let me end with a Psalm:

Psalms 33:18 **But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear Him, on those whose hope is in His unfailing love.**

Think about it... all those verses were penned with the world falling apart...the world has always been falling apart!

So... with all those blessed wonderful encouraging words from God... let's talk about the final destruction of the world!... Actually there is encouragement in these final chapters for the Christian...but being a Christian is key!

Chapters 16-18 are showing us what the very end of this world will look like... the final events leading up to the very return of Jesus Christ... To realize that there actually will be a summation of world history...this world... this broken world will NOT continue on and on and on...

And these chapters beg each person to stop and evaluate their lives in relation to the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ... it all gets boiled down to a question with two options...**Who/What do you place your life on?...Who is your god? 1. Will you choose Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? or will you 2. Choose the empty promises of this world?...** which is in reality putting your faith in the evil one...

Chapters 17 and 18 will help you on that decision if you have not yet decided...they bring us to the very end of the administration that has been in power over the world for thousands of years... chapter 19 brings in a regime change... an administration you want to be under...It is literally

God's final call... this world is coming to a conclusion...and everything we view as valuable and essential is going to be brought down to the bottom line... **do you have Christ?...or... another way to put it... Does He have you?**

We ended last time, a few weeks ago looking at the seven bowl judgements in chapter 16 [I am aware I didn't do the 7<sup>th</sup> bowl, we ran out of time... I will be attaching that to when we get to chapter 19]

As we now have seen, there will be three sets of seven judgements coming in the final tribulation period prior to the return of Jesus Christ... the seven scrolls and seals (chpts.6-8)... the seven trumpet judgments (chpts. 8-11) ending with the most severe of the three... the seven bowl judgements (chpt. 16).

Chronologically... at the conclusion of the final bowl judgement, number seven (chpt. 16)... the next event is the second coming of Jesus Christ... which is chapter 19... God gives John (and us) a parenthesis between chapters 16 and 19... a pause to fill in some more vital information **for our understanding.**

That's interesting to me because I have found...along with most others who have studied these chapters... they are some of the **most difficult passages to understand** in the entire Bible! Brilliant bible scholars have spent thousands of hours pouring over these verses to fit them all together in some meaningful way. I don't think they needed to do that.

- God is clear with what He wants us to know... when scripture is vague... it is not by accident... Yes, I think it is one way God gets us to dive deep in all of His word to try to understand it... but I think it s time to step back and get the big picture... have some humility in not understanding everything.

So this morning...more of the big picture than diving into the weeds.

I believe chapters 17 and 18 go together... it will become apparent that chapter 17 focusses on the destruction of the world's religion where chapter 18 focusses on the political, economic collapse of the world system.

A few weeks ago we got a delivery from Amazon here at the church... it was late in the afternoon, I met the young man to get the package, he was friendly... not in as big of a hurry than usual... he asked me if I was the pastor...

It was like he felt the need to confess... he said... *I'm really not very religious... maybe I should get more religious...* he was startled when I said *I hope not!*...I loved it because it opened the door for a mini-sermon!

I explained that being “religious” is **man’s attempt to please God**... it is the “broad” way... the idea that there is SOMETHING I can do to please God...religion is works based...performance based...really...man is at the center... not God...the last thing you need is to be more “religious”.

Christianity is the narrow way...it is not based on my works...my abilities... it is based in faith in a person...in a relationship with that person... Jesus Christ... who died for our sins... paying the full price for our sins...

One of the greatest enemies of the Christian life is a “religious” life...Religion is what I do for God... Christianity is what God has done for us... religion is an effort... Christianity is a gift... he just kept shaking his head....

The reason he felt the need to be more religious, I think is because of what Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 3:11 that God has placed "**eternity in man’s heart**.”... Pascal said something similar, he said God put a *god-shaped vacuum* in every person... **a God shaped hole that only God can fill**...

And everyone spends their lives trying to fill it... Chapter 17 is the culmination of all of man’s efforts, through all of time to be religious...I’ll argue it began in the garden after the fall when Adam and Eve tried to cover themselves with plant leaves to make themselves presentable to God...covering the result of their sin.... only God could cover their sin.

Continued through all of history... through the present and will continue to the end... Turn with me to Genesis 11 to see a significant event in man’s attempt to be religious...not long after the flood...

The descendants of Noah moved east and came to a plain in a land called Shinar...which is ancient Babylonia...

### **Read Genesis 11:1-2**

This may sound “*no big deal*”...but if you remember God’s command back in chapter 9:1...**Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth...** “*spread out! Go to the ends of the world... have babies and more babies!*”

No... they would do it their way... all hold hands and journey together to this huge flat desert plain...

**3**Then they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly.” And they had brick for stone, and they had tar for mortar.

**4** And they said, “Come, let us build **for ourselves a city**, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make **for ourselves a name**, lest we be scattered over the face of the whole earth.”

**Ourselves...get that?**

This is one of the first humanistic attempt to reach god...*if not replace god*...maybe it would be better to say *reach heaven*... everyone comes together devising their own plans... rather than following God's command to fill the earth... they build a tower for "man's glory"... to make a name for themselves...by building a monument for themselves...God is not happy with this...

**Read verse 6**

**One people...one language**... isn't it interesting... today what do we hear?... One World...One currency...One economy... One government...God says... "***This will be the first of many projects to build THEIR kingdom***..."

**Read verses 7-9**

Babel...literally means "Gate of God"...it is a play on words... connected with the Hebrew verb which means to confuse... Babel...Babylon... so yes... Babylon was a place...it became a great city and world empire... and in chapter 17 I believe it still is a place...a literal city on the Euphrates...

BUT... in chapter 17...I want to suggest it is more than a literal city... it is a system... a world system... a system that began at the building of the tower...the origin of humanistic effort to fill that God hole... and has been building ever since...an effort based system... it is a system that is directly opposed to God.

Moving back to Revelation... stop at chapter 14:8...

**Read 14:8**

The fall of this Babylon is predicted... this world system will fall... a philosophy of life... a way of thinking... a religion... an economical system... Babylon the Great...turn to chapter 18...a sneak peak to next Sunday:

**Read 18:1-3**

This isn't the specific geological location of a city...all the nations of the world have imbibed on Babylon's wretched wine... kings, rulers, presidents? Have bought into her sexual immorality... her sins.... Her lifestyle... there was a physical benefit to do so!... **Merchants of the earth had become rich by the power of her sensuality.**

Some say "Babylon" is actually Jerusalem... or Rome...we can debate...but what it is, is anywhere Satan's deceptions dominate... anywhere that opposes the one true God... one commentator said *Babylon is "trans-historical"*... not limited to a time... it exists through all of history.... It is important to note... **SHE IS FALLEN!**

It is alive and well today!... can't you see it?... we are a very "religious" people... for human achievement and human glory... all to elevate the supremacy of man...all this is setting up what will dominate the world when the church has been removed!

*"You are your own God"*...a perfect set up for the harlot who rides the beast...

### **Read Revelation 17:1**

This angel... one who pour one of the bowls... pauses to show John this scene...the judgements are ending... Christ is about to come...*let me show you the final judgement of this great harlot! Who sits on many waters...*

We don't have to wonder about the many waters... verse 15 tells us what that is:

### **Read verse 15**

This harlot is not over a few people... a local influence... this harlot sits on the entire world... all people... All nations... no one is left out of its influence...

### **Read verse 2**

*Everyone* is joining in with this wretched world system... this immoral manmade religion... they've all bought into it...they hear the teaching... they liked it... it appealed to them...to their senses... note it is all very "sensual"...

### **Read verse 3**

Sound familiar?

Way back in chapter 12 we met the great dragon who had seven heads and ten horns...that was Satan... the next chapter, chapter 13 we see this dragon standing on the seashore... then coming out of the sea was a beast.... And this beast had seven heads and ten horns...

This beast being similar in appearance to the dragon reveals his allegiance to the dragon... he comes out of the sea and he will become the great world leader... popularly known as the "antichrist"...shortly after...

His assistant... the **beast from the earth** joins him and he is the prophet... the beast has joined us again in chapter 17...this woman... the harlot is sitting on the beast... that of course is a position of dominance... which eventually will have eternal consequences!

Look how the woman is clothed...

### **Read verse 4**

All kinds of thoughts on what each piece of these garments represent... one thing for sure...it is all very expensive... only the elite could be adorned in these clothes and accessories...it

represents power... influence... privilege...she looked great!!!.... but she was full of disgusting abominations and sexual impurities....

Who is she?...who does she represent?...

### **Read verse 5**

The mother of all religions..... the mother of all humanists.... Self-centered, work based , egocentric religion... she is the head of all *religion*... eastern...western...new age...old age... mysticism... philosophies...

She rides the beast... they are in tandem together...The beast carries the message.... The system on his back...

### **Read verse 6**

Much there... Jeremiah 51:49

**Indeed Babylon is to fall for the slain of Israel,  
As also for Babylon the slain of all the earth have fallen.**

Revelation 18:24

**And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth.”**

This system of the world... is an enemy of God’s people... we don’t have to look back through history to see this... and it is not something in the future... this is happening today...

I know what you are all thinking.... *We’re only to verse 6 and I’m not sure I’m understanding all this!.... isn’t this too much for a Sunday morning?* ...well... John felt the same way!... John says **“I wonder”**...I’m so glad to hear that?... I wonder also!

God is full of grace... what does He do?... He has this angel explain the mystery to John.... And to us:

### **Read verse 7**

In the Bible...a mystery refers to God’s secret plans, purposes, or truths that are beyond human understanding until God chooses to reveal them.... It’s time He reveals this mystery... In my Bible I have highlighted a few things in these following verses:

**V.8 The beast that you saw...was**

**V.12 And the ten horns which you saw...are**

**V.15 The waters which you saw...are.**

**V.16 The ten horns which you saw... and the beast.**

### V.18 The woman whom you saw... is

The angel is interpreting what John has seen... pretty much the rest of this chapter is about the beast... but we want to know what this angel says about the woman... so that was verse 18.

#### Read verse 18

This is where the woman is identified as “Babylon”...the harlot is Babylon... notice it says **the great city... I’m ok with that being an actual physical city... but look at the extent of her influence... over the kings of the earth...the entire world!**

And now the beast:

**(8) The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction...**

I’m glad the angel spelled that out plainly!...I wish I could ask him a few questions now... **the beast you saw was...and is not... and is about to come out...** all sorts of ideas...one idea... looking back over history... we can see many “*antichrist’s*” show up on the world scene... Nero... Hitler... Mussolini... you see one then they’re gone only to have another one pop up later...

1 John 2:18

**Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour.**

Another idea... perhaps more likely... remember when we were introduced to the beast back in chapter 13... when John for the first time sees him... one of his seven heads appeared to have been slain fatally... perhaps an assassination attempt... he either was killed.... Or he appeared to have been killed... but that fatal wound “miraculously” was healed.

And because of this miraculous “resurrection from the dead”... the **whole earth marveled and followed the beast....eventually worshipping him. You saw the beast... then he was not... and is about to come out...**

He was Satan powered... from the abyss... but note... **he is headed for destruction.**

That makes sense...

**8...And those who dwell on the earth whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, Unbelievers, those who don’t know the Lord... will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come.** They will be so impressed... so taken in.

So... what about these seven heads and ten horns?

#### Read verse 9

The seven heads are seven mountains...some say this is referring to Rome... Rome is known for its seven hills... but it says mountains!...mountains are often symbolic for kingdoms on the Bible:

[Daniel 2:35... the sone that struck the image in the vision of the statue becomes a mountains—an empire. ]... so I don't think its Rome.

But there's more... listen carefully:

(10) **and they** (the seven mountains) **are seven kings...five have fallen...one is** (five of these guys are gone, fallen, but there is this one who still is...**the other has not yet come**... this is best understood as five kingdoms that are no longer...

Egypt... Assyria... Babylon... Medo-Persian...Greece... empires all past.... The **one that is** would be Rome... the Roman empire was during John's life... The other that is **yet to come** would be the Beast's coming empire.... Some call that Rome 11...when he comes **he must remain a little while.**

A short period of time...

Note: each one of these empires embraced the values of Babylon... and as one empire fell... some of that empire's Babylonian system was passed to the next.... Then the next...and each empire has played its part in keeping this word system alive... even our own!

### **Read verse 11**

How's this?...possibly when he is "resurrected"... he is the eighth...and don't miss his outcome... **he goes to destruction....** He will have a devastating effect on this earth... leading many, many people to eternal damnation... which is his own final destination.

How about the ten horns?

### **Read verse 12**

These are future kings...they have not been given specific kingdoms... perhaps they will be assigned regions in the world... some say these kings are being prepared today!

### **Read verse 13**

**These will wage war with the Lamb...Jesus Christ... and the Lamb will overcome them because He is Lord of Lords and King of Kings, and those who are with Him are the called and elect and faithful....** People.... That's where you want to be!... with Him!

We know about the waters verse 14...Now listen to this...

### **Read verse 16**

This Babylon... this system uses all the world's stuff... all the religions (remember religions not Christianity!) to deceive the masses... to entice them... to lure them in... here we see the beast with his ten horns... his ten world leaders who exists to give power and authority to the beast... turn on Babylon!

I mentioned earlier that this Babylon riding ON the beast was usurping authority from the beast... so now... the beast is no longer a mule!... no longer is he going to accept many world religions coming together... World economic systems to unite... He wants ONE religion... ONE object of worship... the beast... ONE economic system... ONE power!

Destroy all other systems of thinking... all other religions... so that the focus will be on him and him alone.

We must not simply think "*well, all this is in the tribulation I don't have to think about it... it doesn't really have anything to do with us today*"... I hope you have your eyes open... the world is moving closer and closer to accomplishing the scenario we just looked at... Thank God the church is here and active!... for once the church is removed it all falls.

Babylon is alive and well today...enticing whoever it can to move into its system... it sounds good!... dismantling the foundations of the world... the pillars of Christianity... values and morals... absolutes and truth....bringing everyone together as one...

- **Burning Man** A giant wooden man (40') on top of an obelisk (60') Burned
- **Nova Music Festival** Israel on October 7<sup>th</sup>
- **Festivals and meeting internationally**
- ***Game of Gods: The Temple of Man in the Age of Re-Enchantment*** Carl Teichrib

The book argues history is driven by three deep human ambitions:

1. **To be like God**
2. **To control meaning and destiny**
3. **To build heaven on Earth**

- **A New Worldview Called "One-ism"**  
*The author says modern culture is moving toward **One-ism**.*  
*This belief says:*  
*everything is connected*  
*humanity is one global family*  
*divinity is within humanity and nature*

Where is God in all this?

**God is in control**

**Read verse 17**

**Romans 15:13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him**

**Takeaways:**

1. **The truth of religious activity\_ It feels alive, good, satisfying, full and real...but it is dead.**

**Stay away!**

2. **The truth of Satanic strategy It appears impressive and effective, smart, but it is evil and deceptive.....**

**Stay alert!**

3. **The truth of God's sovereignty Seems absence and uninvolved but is present and engaged.**

**Stay aware!**