That Hideous Beast — Delivery Transcript

Revelation 17:7–18 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, July 10, 2022 · *Mystery Babylon*

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…wants to say. For those of you who are visiting with us today, which are a handful of visitors, we are going— as a church, we're going through the book of the Revelation, and typically in our church we just pick a book of the Bible and preach through it. That way if you didn't like the sermon, you know it wasn't personal; we weren't picking on you, we're just going to whatever was next. That's great in some ways because you get into interesting things you thought you would never preach on and talk about things you never thought you'd talk about.

It's difficult in other ways because some of the things that are in the Bible, especially some of the things that are in the book of the Revelation, are extremely hard to understand. And not unlike today's case, not only are they hard to understand, there's sentences in there that are even hard to read. You're like, Did you not pass your sixth-grade grammar? Things of that nature. I mean, it's really difficult some of the things we've been looking at over the past couple of weeks and months in this book. Now, all Scripture is breathed out by God.

It is profitable and helpful. And so we're going to see that this morning. And again, like we said with worship, it's really not so much about the preacher or the content as much as it is the heart. And so I hope that you'll— as we tackle a text this morning that's maybe a little bit different than what we normally look at, I hope you'll approach it with a sense of eagerness to discern what God's Word says, knowing God's word is true. It is inspired by God. Nothing is there by accident, even if it's phrased a little bit difficultly— and then also to try to glean from God's word application of how we might allow it to shape our life individually and shape our life together as a church.

So with that said, let's look at Revelation chapter 17. We started this chapter last week, and it's a chapter about this big, great prostitute, which all of the parents go, Oh dear, I shouldn't have brought my kids to this message. But it's not like a prostitute like you might find in Amsterdam or certain streets here even in Abilene, Texas. But it is a prostitute that represents spiritual idolatry. And spiritual idolatry is oftentimes referred to as spiritual adultery throughout the Old Testament. And that's who this woman represents. And the way you know that she is a harlot or a prostitute isn't just because of the things that she says or the actions that she engages in.

She actually has a tattoo on the top of her head that says the mother of prostitutes. And like most things in the book of the Revelation, John is not seeing some literal woman in space-time in human history. He's having a vision and Jesus is telling him through this vision what the world is going to look like in the days prior to his appearing. The book of the Revelation is all about the second coming of Jesus Christ: that Jesus lived, he died, he rose again, he ascended into heaven. But that someday he is going to come again.

And when he comes again, he is going to establish heaven on earth. And John's goal, essentially, in the book of the Revelation is to describe for us, through this vision, what the world's going to look like when that day comes and specifically what the religious, financial and social context of the world is going to look like in the days leading up to the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. And that's who this woman and this beast represent. You might think of the woman as a city, kind of like New York City or Las Vegas, a city that is the center or hub of the financial and religious and social corruption that is at work in the world.

And you might think of this beast that we're going to look at today as a stand-in for a kind of power, an evil power that is at work in the world that's in cahoots with this woman, that is attempting to thwart God's plans and crush God's people. We saw all that last week. This is just by way of review. This week's text is essentially going to take where we left off last week and flesh it out a little more fully: not so much who the woman is and what the woman represents, but who this beast on which she sits, what that beast is and what that beast represents.

And like most things in the book of Revelation, it's highly metaphorical, highly symbolic. And so you got to kind of take the symbols and make sense out of them. So the first thing we're going to do is define the terms, and then we'll spend the rest of our time having defined our terms, seeking to understand what John means by some of the things that he is saying. So picking up in Revelation chapter 17, starting in verse six, John says, "When I saw her"—meaning this woman, this great prostitute— "I was greatly astonished."

And that word astonished sometimes translated marvel in some of your translations. It means you can't stop looking at it. It means to see something that's so unbelievable you're compelled to not look away. Kind of like when Moses was staring at the burning bush.

Stephen in his sermon in Acts 7 says that he marveled at the burning bush, meaning, this bush is on fire, but it's not burning down. I can't understand how all that's working. So he just stares at it. He's consumed by it. That's what John is doing with this woman.

He's seeing this woman, this city that represents corruption and idolatry. And he is mesmerized by how influential she is, by how powerful she is, by how evil that she is. And then this angel comes up to John and says, Why are you astonished? I'm going to explain to you this woman. So defining the terms, what is the woman? The woman is the center of the corruption that's at work in the world in the days leading up to Jesus' return. If we were going to define her in our day and age, maybe we would look to a city like New York City or Las Vegas or Mecca or some other city that is a hub of idolatry and immorality.

And there's going to be something like that in the future before Jesus returns. John's mesmerized by it, and then the angel comes and says, Don't marvel, I'm going to explain to you what this woman is. So verse 7, let's pick it up. This is where our text begins today. "Then the angel said to me, 'Why are you astonished? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast, with the seven heads and the ten horns, that carries her.'" So this beast on which the woman sits is a beast with seven different heads and ten different horns.

"The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up from the abyss and go to destruction. Those who live on the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world"— those people— "will be astonished when they see the beast that was, and is not, and is to come." So like I said, pretty tough sledding. So John sees the woman, the woman sitting on the beast. This beast has seven heads and ten horns. And John describes the beast as the beast that was, is not, and is to come.

I think it's interesting that this angel comes up to John and says, I'm going to explain the woman. Now let me tell you all about the beast. Almost as if you really can't understand who this woman is unless you understand this beast on which she sits. And so if the woman represents a center of corruption in the world, financial and religious and spiritual, then this beast you might think of as the epitome or the establishment of an evil end-times empire— or if you don't want to use the word empire, some kind of governing authority— that uses its power to crush God's people and advance Satan's interest.

How many Star Wars fans have we got in the— any Star Wars fans? The Empire's got the bad mojo going on, right? The Empire Strikes Back. I don't want to play too fast and loose with the text here, but you might think of the bride of Christ, the church and that remnant of God's people, whoever they make up in the end of days, you might think of them as the resistance and the Empire as the antichrist and his government or his administration. And the city is kind of like— I can't think of the big city where the homeboy posts up.

What's the senator's name? Palpatine. Where does he live? What's his planet? Come on, guys. No true Star Wars fans? Where? Coruscant. Alright. So think of that as a city. I'm totally off the rails here now. But that's kind of the layout of the land. And remember, John's goal is to describe the social, religious, political, financial context of the world before Jesus comes again. And so that's who this beast is. Now what does he say about the beast? If you're taking notes, he's the antichrist or it's that end times empire of the antichrist.

And he says that this administration or this government will be, if you're taking notes, inferior to Christ, from the abyss, and deceive many. All that's in the text. At first he says that this antichrist was and is not, but will come again in the future. That's interesting in the book of the Revelation. Oftentimes John will talk about Jesus as he who was and is and is to come, or who is and was and is to come. He talks about God the Father in the same kind of language. And yet here with the antichrist he says this one was, is not, and is to come.

Now some take that literally as in the antichrist existed in the past, or at least some version of him; it's not in the present when John was writing, but that it would surface after his death or later on down the road. Some take it more generally to say it's just saying he's inferior to God because God is eternal, he's everlasting, he's never-ending. This evil, whatever it is, is kind of like Hydra. You cut off one head, another one grows in its place. It was, it isn't, but it always comes back again and again and again.

And that's kind of the— I lean closer to that direction, although the literal interpretation is certainly not out of bounds. Whatever he is, he's inferior to the Lord. He's from the abyss, meaning from the pit of hell. From the abyss: That's Revelation 9, Revelation chapter 11. The abyss was where these demonic locusts came out of earlier, symbolizing torment, agony, evil unleashed on the world, and this thing, this government deceives many. We saw this in Revelation chapter 13. We saw it also in Revelation chapter 16 and earlier in Revelation chapter 17 that this beast and the woman deceived the kings of the earth.

In chapter 13, all the peoples of the earth, from every tribe, tongue, and nation, bowed down to the beast, meaning they submitted themselves to the authority of this end-times government. Revelation 13 talks about people who won't take the mark of the beast being killed and not being able to participate in the economy, whatever the particulars are, it's as if this government uses its influence and authority to amass tons and tons of loyalty and allegiance and it deceives many, many people. Whether it's just a government or whether it's some combination of a government slash religion, unholy alliance between the two, is— you know, it's unclear.

But whatever it is, it's from the devil and deceives a lot of people. He goes on to describe the beast in verses 9 to 11 as having these seven heads and these seven heads representing mountains or kings. And so let's read that and kind of flesh out a little further who this antichrist figure is. He says, "This calls for a mind that has wisdom. The seven heads are

seven mountains on which the woman is seated. They are also seven kings: Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he comes, he must remain for only a little while.

The beast that was and is not, is itself an eighth king, but it belongs to the seven and is going to destruction." That's about as clear as mud, right? Everybody's eyes just glazed over. Wake up. Alright, come back. Come back to me. So what's he talking about? The beast has seven heads. The seven heads have ten horns. And then you have these kings a little bit later on who go in cahoots with the government. So what is that? Well, he says heads, mountains, kings, and he's referring to the same thing each time, right?

Seven heads, which are seven mountains, which are seven kings. So whatever these things are, they're the same thing. And if you keep reading, I'm going to show you that what that represents is past, present, and future expressions of this antichrist. That this antichrist existed prior to John's day. There was a sense in which the evil of that kingdom was at work in John's day. And there was a sense in which in the future a fuller, final expression of that evil would manifest before Jesus comes again. Five were, one is, one will come.

Then he talks to that seventh one. He says, then there's going to be like this weird eighth head coming out. Don't get distracted by that quite yet. Let's figure out what the seven heads are first. We talked about when we started this book of Revelation how different people interpret it different ways. There are these main interpretive camps. There's what's called a preterist camp, which says it was all fulfilled in the first century. There's what's called an idealist camp, which says it's all kind of spiritual, metaphorical ideals. Let's deal with the ideals, not the particulars.

And then there's what's called a futurist camp that says no, they're literal things, but they're going to happen in the future. They didn't all happen in the first century. And in my preaching of this book, I've tried to draw from the strengths of the preterist and the idealist, but I'm pretty much in the camp of the futurist. And so how do they approach this passage? Because they all disagree on how to make sense of it. The preterists, those who think it was all fulfilled in the first century, they, as you might imagine, say that these seven heads refer to seven Roman emperors.

Okay, because John is in the end days. He's under the Roman administration, Nero or Vespasian, whoever it was that was alive during the writing of Revelation. And so they say the five that had fallen were five Roman emperors before this. The Roman emperor was the one that is, and then the Roman Emperor that was to come, which would be under the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and the fall of Rome, that's the one that would be. There's a case that you can make for that. The idealist camp says, I don't know that that makes all that much sense.

Seems like you're playing fast and loose with some of Roman history. Better to take it more generally. And so John uses the number seven in the book of the Revelation. The number seven represents the totality of something, the fullness of something. So all John is doing is saying that there was a sense in which this antichrist empire existed in the past, and those five kingdoms that have fallen, that's a general way of saying anti-Christian, anti-God governments in the past. The sixth is a general way of saying there is a sense in which there is an evil anti-God government at work in the world today.

And then the seventh is a general way of saying there will come a full, final expression of this anti-God, anti-Christ force, political force in the future. And so they say it's in general talking about evil. The futurists say you're not necessarily wrong and you're not all the way wrong, but it's not just general. There is a way for us to identify particular historical kingdoms that epitomized the evil of the antichrist. And so they list out particular kings and kingdoms that thwarted God's plans and crushed God's people. And you'll be familiar with them if you're familiar with your Old Testament.

The first one is the Egyptian Empire, headed up by Pharaoh, Pharaoh— oh, let's not do the rest of that. The Egyptian Empire, headed up by Pharaoh, enslaved God's people, took Moses to lead a revolution to get them out of there. After the Egyptians came the— anybody remember? Came the Assyrians. The Assyrian Empire was headed up by a bad dude named Shalmaneser.[1] He attacked and carried into exile the ten northern tribes of Israel. After the Assyrian captivity came the— any trivia students out there? That's right, Babylonian Empire. And the Babylonian Empire didn't take the northern tribes of Israel; they took the southern tribes of Israel.

And Babylonian Empire, that's the one Nebuchadnezzar was the head of, and you can read about him in Daniel, first couple chapters of Daniel. After the Babylonian Empire came what was called the Medo-Persian Empire. That's where the book of Esther comes out of. You got Haman and his devilish plot to exterminate the Jews. And after the Medo-Persian Empire came Alexander the Great. Great movie, by the way, with Colin Farrell[2] playing Alexander the Great. Can't remember the name of it, but it's a good movie. Remember at the end, Alexander the Great dies and he hands off his kingdom to four different of his friends.

And so the empire was split four different ways. And from that split came Antiochus Epiphanes IV over the Seleucid Empire. And so they would say that's what that fourth kingdom represents, the Grecian— or the fifth kingdom represents the Grecian Empire in general, and Antiochus in particular. And then the sixth one in Revelation, the one that is at the time of John's writing, would be the Roman Empire, because the Romans were in charge at the time that the book of the Revelation was written. Where people disagree in this camp is who is the seventh?

What's the seventh head? And what's this eighth head coming out of the seventh head? And what are we to make sense of all that? Some suggest that's going to be a revived Roman Empire or some kind of European Union coalition thing. Others say no, it's not European, it's not Roman, it's Islamic. And it's centered in the Middle East in some kind of conglomeration of Islamic countries and they would say the seventh is actually the historic Islamic Empire and the eighth will be a revived Islamic Empire. And you can look actually throughout history and see how Islam after the fall of Rome, Islam came up and totally swallowed that whole area and dominated the Middle East and crushed the people of God, and not just Jews but Christians as well.

Now, why would they come up with those nations in particular? It's not just because they look at the Old Testament and see patterns in which these evil nations acted in antichrist types of ways. You can actually look at Daniel's prophecy in Daniel chapter 2 and Daniel chapter 7 and almost see laid out before your eyes at least the final four of these nations spelled out very clearly. And I want to show you that Daniel chapter 2 and Daniel chapter 7. I know it's getting in the weeds a little bit. Some of you will love it, others of you will stop listening.

But again, remember, try to stay with me. It will tie together at the end. You got to know that in Revelation, the reason we keep going back to the book of Daniel is because John is pulling from the book of Daniel to articulate his vision. I'm going to show you that in specific ways, but in Daniel chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar has this dream of a statue, and he can't get anybody to interpret the dream, so he calls Daniel in to interpret the dream because he was a dream interpreter. And Daniel interprets Nebuchadnezzar's dream this way.

He says, this is the dream. Now let me tell you the interpretation. Your Majesty King Nebuchadnezzar, you are king of kings, and the true God of heaven has given you sovereignty, power, strength, and glory. Wherever people live, or wild animals or birds of the sky, he's handed them over to you and made you ruler of them all. You are the head of gold. So the head of gold is Babylon. After you there will come another kingdom, inferior to yours, and then three, another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule the whole earth.

And then four, a fourth kingdom will be as strong as iron, for as iron crushes and shatters everything. And like iron smashes, it will crush and smash all the others. And you saw feet and toes, partly of a potter's— partly iron, partly clay. That's going to be a divided kingdom, and though some of the strength of the iron will be in it, you also saw it mixed with clay. And the toes of the feet were partly iron and partly fired clay, so the kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle.

I know that's a ton of stuff, so let me just kind of show you in a picture form what he's talking about. Four different kingdoms and then this revived kingdom that's talking about the toes of iron and clay together. The head was Babylon, that was King Nebuchadnezzar, currently

ruling in Daniel's day. He says, after you are gone, there's going to come up another kingdom, that's the Medo-Persian kingdom. After the Medo-Persian kingdom came the Grecian kingdom, Alexander the Great, and then it split four ways, and you had Antiochus pop up alongside of some others.

And then finally there's this fourth kingdom, this mysterious kingdom that is partly iron and partly clay. And that kingdom has these toes down at the bottom. You've got the iron and clay here, but then the toes, partly brittle, partly strong. Some suggest that's going to be some kind of revival of that fourth kingdom. Now, the question is, which kingdom is it? Which kingdom was the same as the Babylonian kingdom, the Medo-Persian kingdom, the Grecian kingdom, which kingdom covered the same geographical area as those three, but did it in a bigger, badder way.

That's why a lot of people suggest it's an Islamic empire. This fourth kingdom is an Islamic empire because only Islam controlled the Middle East, like Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece. I'm going to show you this a couple of different ways with these maps. They have maps in your Bible for a reason, right? Alright, so we're going to get to the maps. Here's Babylon, the Babylonian Empire. You can see it covers pretty much the top part of the Middle East. That's the first kingdom. The second kingdom is the Medo-Persian Empire. You can see they kind of spread out further what was centralized here in Babylon.

After the Medo-Persian kingdom came Alexander the Great and the Greek Empire. You notice he goes way far west, but he also still goes east. Alexander really took some names there. Again, watch the movie. Very good movie, actually. I probably shouldn't recommend it. I think it's got some nudity and stuff, so don't watch it— but watch it on Pure Flix and you'll like it. And then after Alexander the Great came along, a lot of people suggest the fourth kingdom, that's the Roman Empire. Because look at how much Rome controlled. They expanded it even greater.

The problem with that is they're going west; most— Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece really went east. They crushed the eastern part, the Middle Eastern parts of the world. And so that's why some say, No, it's not Rome, it's Islam. Now let me show you this the Islamic map. This is the Greek Empire under Alexander the Great. You notice when— oh, I can't even remember the names of all the— you got Muhammad, 622 to 632, Abu Bakr, Ali. Each additional caliphate took more and more land. But notice they don't just go west, they don't take Europe kind of like Rome did, but they go on the tips of Africa west, but then they swallow up the whole Middle East and they really crush it, just like Daniel 2 said this final kingdom would.

And so that's why a lot of people say it's not going to be the Roman Empire, it's not going to be a revived Roman Empire. It's going to be some kind of revived Islamic caliphate because the Islamic Caliphate was the seventh head. It was the godless power, a demonic force that

crushed the area that Nebuchadnezzar had and all the other antichrist type rulers. The reason I think there's some weight to that, if you're taking notes, geographically and historically the Islamic caliphate, I think, fits a little better than the Roman Empire.

Because Daniel chapter 7 is really where John's pulling so much of his vision of the beast from. In Daniel chapter 7, you have these four different beasts. The first beast he sees is a lion with wings. That's the Babylonian Empire. After that he sees a bear with these three ribs in his mouth. That's a reference to the Medo-Persian empire conquering Egypt and Libya and I can't remember the third kingdom. After them came Alexander the Great and the Grecian Empire. That's the leopard. It happened very, very quickly. He's got the four wings, meaning he split his kingdom into four different parts after he died.

That's where you have Antiochus Epiphanes come up as an antichrist type ruler. But then Daniel says in his vision in Daniel chapter 7, After that I saw a fourth beast, who was bigger and badder and greater than all the beasts that were before it. And this beast had ten horns, just like the beast in Revelation chapter 17. And this beast swallowed up all the land that the previous three kingdoms had combined. Let me read this to you, Daniel chapter 7, verse 7: "After this, while I was watching in the night visions, suddenly a fourth beast appeared, frightening and dreadful, and incredibly strong, with large iron teeth.

It devoured and crushed, and it trampled with its feet whatever was left." So it got their kingdom plus everything else, "and it was different from all the beasts before it, and it had ten horns." Ten horns, just like the beast in Revelation 13 and Revelation chapter 17. So I believe this fourth beast in Daniel 7 is similar to the beast or to the statue in Daniel chapter 2. And that's exactly where John is pulling his beast in Revelation chapter 13 and 17. Let me show you this in chapter 13. Let me show you how John talks about it because you're going to see this in Revelation 13.

Can you throw Revelation 13 verses 1 and 2 up there? Revelation chapter 13, verse 1 says, I saw a beast coming out of the sea. It had ten horns— just like Daniel 7— seven heads; on its horns were ten crowns, and on its heads were blasphemous names. Look what the beast looks like now. The beast I saw was like a leopard. Its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. The dragon— this is Satan— gave this beast his power, his throne, and great authority. So John takes the three beasts of Daniel's vision and combines them together.

It was a lion, leopard, bear, just like the beast in Daniel 7, but it was a conglomeration of all of those kingdoms. And that is the fourth beast of Daniel 7. And so is it a revived Roman Empire or is it an Islamic Empire? I think people can debate until they're blue in the face. There's no way to know for sure. I kind of tend to lean towards the idea that the Islamic Caliphate makes better sense historically and geographically. It is a combination of Babylon and Medo-Persia and Greece plus more.

Just like John says, just like Daniel says, whatever the particulars, whatever it is, whenever it is, however it manifests, here's the point. Here's what you need to know. This beast is going to behave in ways that are similar to the antichrist governments that came before it. That's why John says five have already fallen. We've seen this game before. You see it right now in front of your very eyes. One is, but there's coming one that's going to be the fullest final expression. Whether Roman, European, or Islamic, is somewhat secondary to the fact that there will come one.

It will act in ways that were very similar to the ones that came before it. And you need to be ready. Now, moving on in Revelation chapter 17. I know that was a big detour, but I wanted to try to show you why certain interpreters identify those specific kingdoms. Egypt, Assyria, and so on and so forth. It could be just in general, a general reference to past fallen kingdoms, present kingdoms, and a future kingdom, or maybe the preterists have it right, I don't know. The point is, the one that will happen in the future will be similar to the ones in the past.

Here's what's going to happen to that final kingdom whenever that day comes. Chapter 17, verse 12: "The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they will receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour. These"— ten kings— "have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast." So if it is some Islamic caliphate, this idea that the beast will be in power and he will unify this ten-nation coalition, or ten kings, who are not ruling as of yet, but they're going to give their power and authority over to this antichrist, and he's going to use it to advance his purposes.

That's exactly what Daniel says is going to happen in Daniel 7. If you were to go back to Daniel 7, he talks about the fourth beast and the ten horns on the fourth beast. And he says, out of those ten horns comes a itty-bitty little horn. And that little bitty horn uproots the first three horns. I think I've got it up here, Daniel chapter 7, verse 8. Another horn, a little one, came up amongst the three first horns, and it was uprooted— the first three horns were uprooted, and on the little horn there became eyes like a human and a mouth that was speaking arrogantly.

A lot of people say that's the antichrist. And so in Revelation 17, John's taking this imagery and he's saying you're going to have these ten kings give their authority to this little arrogant loudmouth, and he's going to use that coalition to advance his purposes, his evil purposes. And what are those purposes? It is to war against God, to war against the Lamb. And that's what Revelation 17 describes. Verse 14, these people, the antichrist government, his ten kings: "These will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb"— Jesus Christ— "will conquer them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings.

Those with him are called, chosen, and faithful." So if you're taking notes, mark this down: in the cosmic battle between good and evil, Jesus Christ and his people will win. Whether it's

a revived Roman Empire, whether it's all past and this is just spiritualized versions of our present-day battle against good and evil, Jesus always wins. And his people are with him when he comes. He's got his bride with him in the air. They come back, they destroy this embodiment of Satan on the earth, this antichrist and his regime. He is toast.

After he describes the defeat of Satan, then he goes on to describe the defeat and the destruction of the harlot. He says in chapter 17, verse 15, "He also said to me, 'The waters you saw, where the prostitute was seated,'" those waters are representative of "'peoples, multitudes, nations, and languages.'" There's a lot of people who say that this woman represents a city and the city must be a seaport city because she's seated on many waters. But right here, John's saying, I'm not talking about literal waters. I'm saying this woman has influence over many peoples, multitudes, nations, and languages.

So that's what the water represents. And then he says in verse 16, "The ten horns you saw, and the beast"— that coalition is going to hate this city. They're going to hate this prostitute. And they're going to "make her desolate and naked, devour her flesh, and burn her up with fire." Isn't that interesting? "For God has put it into their hearts to carry out his plan by having one purpose and to give their kingdom to the beast until the words of God are fulfilled." And so what you have in chapter 17, you've got this prostitute woman in cahoots with the beast.

City of sin, antichrist, they're Silver and the Lone Ranger, right? They're together. They're running together, they're fighting together, they're killing Christians together, they're persecuting Jews together, and then suddenly after this beast, this antichrist, gets enough power from his ten friends, he says, Okay, now, prostitute, it's your turn. And he turns on her and destroys the city. And so this idea that you have this economic hub that the antichrist is using for his purposes while it's convenient, but then when he has enough power, he destroys her on top of destroying everyone and everybody else.

God uses the one to destroy the other. So in the battle between good and evil, Christ and his people will win. And the partnership between beast and harlot, God uses one to destroy the other. What does that teach us today, practical application? Because again, I don't know the particulars of what this will look like in the future. Here's what I do know. These days will come. This coalition will happen. We may or may not be on the earth. I think we'll still be present while all this is going on. Others say we're raptured out of here.

Even if we're here, even if we're going through all of these terrible days, what this passage shows you over and over and over again is that God is completely sovereign through every step of the way. He is sovereign and his people are safe. Do you notice in chapter 17, verse 14, it says they try to war against the lamb? The lamb conquers them. Why? Because he's sovereign. He's Lord of lords and he's King of kings. And those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful. That is a perfect description of the sovereignty of God.

Not just the sovereignty of God over the rise and fall of kingdoms, but the sovereignty of God over the plight of his people, the sovereignty of God over even our own salvation. It's God who calls, God who chooses, God who brings us in and keeps us safe every step of the way. And, you know, a lot of us in this room are going through all kinds of difficulties right now. You say, I don't even want to talk about the antichrist. My marriage is falling apart. My kid's not talking to me.

I just lost my job. I can't pay my bills. Whether it's that situation or whether it's the rise and fall of empires during the end of days, God is in control. Nothing takes him by surprise. Nothing hits your life that does not first filter through his sovereign, omnipotent hand. And at the end of days, when it's all said and done, no matter what we may walk through on this earth during our days, there's coming a day where we will be with him. We will be clothed in white. We will be absolutely victorious, and we will see the full and final defeat of evil, abolished forevermore.

And on that day, every tear will be wiped from our eyes, and this brokenness that we battle day in and day out will be reversed and come untrue. God is sovereign and his people are safe. Secondly, Satan, evil, the antichrist, this prostitute, however you want to put it, the way sin works in your life is it leads with the carrot, but it finishes with a stick. Satan starts with seduction, but he always ends with destruction. It's the nature of sin. Sin starts out fun. I don't know if anybody's ever done any sin lately, but it always starts out fun.

It always starts out somewhat innocent. It's not that big a deal. It's just one time. It's just a little bit. I mean, it's already legal everywhere else. Not to pick any in particular. But then eventually it kind of reels you in like a fish on a hook. And then it snags you there at the end. And what started out as fun and liberating and prosperity ends up enslaving you, destroying you, making you miserable, feeling like you can't get away. You feel condemned, you feel ashamed, you feel worthless. Because that's how Satan always finishes.

That's always his finishing move. It's condemnation, it's shame, it's destruction. He even takes the prostitute, who is his partner in crime, and destroys her in the end, according to the sovereign plan of God. What do you think he'll do with you? He tempts with prosperity, he leaves you in poverty. He tempts with freedom, but leaves you enslaved. He leads with health and wealth and everything good, but his promises are fake. And his intentions are destructive. Over and over again, Scripture warns us of the seductive power of sin. I've never met a prostitute— I've actually never ever met a prostitute.

But let's say I did meet a prostitute. I bet you any prostitute I were to meet will not lead with, Hey, come sleep with me and I'll ruin your marriage and your kids will hate you. That's not what any prostitute leads with. They lead with, I'll understand you better. I'll make you happy. You deserve it. And I don't know what's going on in your life. I just know that's the

nature of sin. And some of you are at that initial stage and you're kind of playing with it and toying with it, and maybe it's not going to hurt anybody and it'll be fine.

Just look a little further down the road. It's where it always ends up. And some of you are down the road. Some of you wake up, you look in the mirror, you can't stand the man or the woman that you see. You feel like you're trapped, you're enslaved, you're addicted, you're whatever the case may be, and today you need to hear that there is a God in heaven who is powerful to save, someone who can deliver you. It's not too late. The end is not here yet. The story is not finished.

He can pick you up out of the pit, pull you out of the abyss, give you a new hope, a new future, but you've got to surrender your life. You've got to admit your sin left you in a mess. You've got to admit, I can't run my life like I thought I could. I need a new captain. I need a new co-pilot. And that captain is the Lord Jesus Christ. And so I'm going to repent of my sin. I'm going to trust in Jesus as Lord. Just like Oakley did last week, coming up— professing that through baptism.

I want a new life. The old me is dead. The new me has come, filled with the Spirit of God, surrendered fully to the Lord Jesus Christ. And if you've never done that, today is a day where you can find that new hope and that new future. And I would plead with you to do that as Taylor comes and leads us. For the rest of us who are maybe in that mushy middle, in one of those two extremes. And so today I think is a warning for us as the people of God to wake up, to be sober-minded, to be alert and aware that whatever and whenever this final evil manifests, it will not be a total shock because it'll be just like the evil that came before it.

And just like the glimmers of evil that we see today, and so our calling as Christians is to flee from the devil, to resist him so that he'll flee from us, to be strong, steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the hope of the Lord, keeping our hope fixed on that day when Jesus comes again and sets everything right. Our hope's not in earthly politicians or political campaigns. Those are tools in the hands of the true sovereign, the true King of kings, the true Lord of lords, and that's where our true confidence lies.

And so this morning as Taylor leads us, would you ask the Lord to shift the affections of your heart back onto the Lord Jesus Christ, to shift your confidence into the one who is the true King of kings and the true Lord of lords. Let's pray together. Father, we thank you for this time. I know this has been a tough text and it's been a challenging thing to listen to, but Holy Spirit, you are the teacher. You are the one that inspired these words. Every syllable, every word is inspired, profitable, helpful for teaching and admonishing, rebuking, correcting.

And so would you use your word in the life of your church to wake us up, to inspire us, to encourage us, to comfort us, to draw us to salvation, out of the darkness, into the light.

Would you use your word now as we respond to accomplish your purposes, and we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

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1. Transcript note: spoken as "a bad dude named Sennacherib. He attacked and carried into exile the ten northern tribes"; the Assyrian king who besieged Samaria and deported the northern tribes was Shalmaneser (2 Kings 17:3–6; Assyrian records credit the final capture in 722 BC to his successor Sargon II). Sennacherib attacked Judah later, in Hezekiah's fourteenth year (2 Kings 18:13). Source: 2 Kings 17:3–6; 18:13 (CSB), BibleGateway. ↩
2. Transcript note: spoken as "Brad Pitt playing Alexander the Great"; in Oliver Stone's *Alexander* (2004) the title role is played by Colin Farrell (Brad Pitt played Achilles in *Troy*, 2004). Source: Wikipedia, "Alexander (2004 film)". ↩