

Series: The Blessing Book

Text: Revelation 17

Title: The Fall of False Religion

The purpose of Revelation is not to conceal but to reveal.

On a need-to-know basis...

The church will be in heaven if you hold to a pre-tribulation rapture perspective. If you don't, you might want to pay real close attention here.

With the church safe in heaven, God is pouring out His wrath in measured portions, allowing man the opportunity to repent, and as we have studied so far, man continues to rebel against God, leaving God no choice but to bring the fullness of His wrath to completion.

Another reason for a pre-tribulation rapture viewpoint is the impossibility of having a one-world religion with the church on earth.

It's the church that is preventing John Lennon's Beatles song from becoming a possibility.

There is an old expression: I'd rather be divided by truth than united by a lie.

Once the church is removed, a one-world religion isn't only possible; it's actually going to happen, as we read in Revelation 17.

Revelation means unveiling

Here in chapter 17

The woman is portrayed as a prostitute. "A scarlet harlot"

Babylon is a picture of man's kingdom on earth

Babylon refers to the political, economic, and religious kingdom of the Antichrist. In Chapter 17 we find the religious system, and in Chapter 18 we will learn of the political and economic systems of Babylon.

Babylon Became the Enemy
Babylon destroyed Jerusalem.
Burned the temple.
Carried God's people away in chains.

To a Jewish heart, "Babylon" was trauma.

It meant: Idolatry, Blasphemy, Persecution
By John's day, Rome fit that description
perfectly.

And in every generation since, Babylon has
worn new clothes.

Babylon is not just a city. Babylon is a system.

It is humanity building a name without God.

We first learned about Babylon in the book of
Genesis in chapter 11, where Nimrod, the
world's first dictator, established the world's first
religious center. Nimrod was described as a
mighty hunter of men's souls who defied the

Lord. After the flood, when the world had been washed clean, Noah and his family came out of the ark, and as man began to repopulate the earth, God instructed mankind to spread out across the planet. In defiance of God's orders, Nimrod instructed the people to build a tower, known as the Tower of Babel. The tower was built to look to the stars to see one's destiny instead of God. Babylon became the birthplace of astrology and man-centered religion. All religions of the world have their origin in what took place in Babylon. The tower of Babel is a perfect example of mankind trying to reach God through his own efforts rather than acknowledging God's plan of God Himself coming down from heaven to reach mankind through Jesus Christ, God the Son.

Genesis 11:3-4, “3 They began saying to each other, “Let’s make bricks and harden them with fire.” (In this region bricks were used instead of stone, and tar was used for mortar.) 4 Then they said, “Come, let’s build a great city for ourselves with a tower that

reaches into the sky. This will make us famous and keep us from being scattered all over the world.”

This is a portrait of man-made religion. Men want a relationship with God, but they want it on their own terms. At first it looks promising. World revival is coming!

But it is not what you think. It will not be a sweeping Christian awakening. It will not be a global turning to Christ. It will be an antichrist revival. A one-world religion. A system designed not to exalt God, but to exalt humanity.

And in Revelation 17, that system is pictured as a woman.

They want forgiveness but they don't want repentance.

Babylon was the beginning of humanism. God had told them to spread out and instead they

determined to come together, to work together to worship themselves in a unified global community. They were extremely proud of what they had built.

God sent great confusion among the people and they were no longer able to communicate so they scattered as God had originally directed them to do.

Babel over time became the great world empire of Babylon under King Nebuchadnezzar and then Belshazzar before Babylon was overtaken by the Medo-Persian forces.

There is a movement building around the world, a community that says we can all come together if we would just set aside our religious differences. You hear these exact words: “We all worship the same God” And, “All religions teach basically the same thing”.

G.K. Chesterton summed up well the religion of the end times when he wrote, “People think that

when they do not believe in God they believe in nothing, but the fact is they will believe in anything”

During the Tribulation period, those words will ring true as the world's religion takes the form of a scarlet harlot.

Revelation 17:1, **“One of the seven angels who had poured out the seven bowls came over and spoke to me. “Come with me,” he said, “and I will show you the judgment that is going to come on the great prostitute, who rules over many waters”**

Notice this: **Her judgment is announced before her description.**

This is not a close contest.

Babylon has already fallen twice in Revelation (14:8; 16:19).

Chapters 17–18 are simply the replay.

God pulls the camera in close and says: Let me show you how she fell. Let me show you why.

Babylon is mentioned 287 times in Scripture. Only Jerusalem is mentioned more.

Two cities.

Two destinies.

Two loves.

Babylon was a real place

Revelation 17:15 interprets it: **“15 Then the angel said to me, “The waters where the prostitute is ruling represent masses of people of every nation and language”**

The waters... are peoples, masses of people, nations, and languages”

This is global influence.

This is not a local church.
This is not merely Rome.
This is worldwide.

During the future Tribulation, Babylon will
influence every nation.

For you and me today, Revelation 17 is about a
choice.

Before it is about Rome...
Before it is about Babylon...
Before it is about Europe...
Before it is about a pope or a dictator...

It is about a choice.

There are only two women in Revelation.

In chapter 12 we read of a woman clothed with
the sun, who bears the Man-child, Jesus Christ.
In chapter 17 we read of a woman clothed in
purple and scarlet, who bears a cup of
abominations.

Every human being belongs to one of these women.

Revelation 17:2, **“2 The kings of the world have committed adultery with her, and the people who belong to this world have been made drunk by the wine of her immorality.”**

Adultery isn't just physical; it is also spiritual.

Jeremiah 3:6, **“6 During the reign of King Josiah, the LORD said to me, “Have you seen what fickle Israel has done? Like a wife who commits adultery, Israel has worshiped other gods on every hill and under every green tree.”**

Hosea: The entire book is a metaphor that speaks of Israel's spiritual harlotry, being like an unfaithful wife going after foreign gods. Hearts that have gone astray.

Empty religion sedates.

Religion is spirituality without repentance
Religion gives you spirituality without
repentance.

Morality without Christ.
Meaning without submission.

Satan cannot create. He counterfeits.

Like imitation vanilla. People raised on the fake
reject the real.

She never says, "There is no God."
She says, "Here is a god... and he asks less."

Which cup are you drinking from?
The world's system
The communion cup with Christ.

Revelation 17:3, **"3 So the angel took me in**
the Spirit into the wilderness. There I saw a

woman sitting on a scarlet beast that had seven heads and ten horns, and blasphemies against God were written all over it.”

The scarlet harlot... She rides the Beast.

Important observation:

She is not the Beast.

She rides the Beast.

The Beast represents the final world ruler, the Antichrist.

At first, the religious-commercial system supports him.

Later, he destroys her.

This is a temporary alliance between: False religion and Political power

No separation of church and state here.

Revelation 17:4, **“4 The woman wore purple**

and scarlet clothing and beautiful jewelry made of gold and precious gems and pearls. In her hand she held a gold goblet full of obscenities and the impurities of her immorality.”

The scarlet harlot is luxurious and wealthy
These are royal colors.

Purple
Scarlet
Gold
Precious stones
Pearls

And in her hand? A golden cup.

Beautiful on the outside. Filth inside, full of abominations

That is false religion.

It is attractive. It is aesthetic. It is intoxicating.

Hebrews 11:25-26, **“Sin is pleasurable for a moment”**

Revelation 17:5, **“5 A mysterious name was written on her forehead: “Babylon the Great, Mother of All Prostitutes and Obscenities in the World.”**

She is the center of a global economy.
Merchants grow rich through her.
This is not merely a religious system.
It is an economic empire.

Revelation 17:6, **“I could see that she was drunk—drunk with the blood of God’s holy people who were witnesses for Jesus. I stared at her in complete amazement.”**

She is drunk with the blood of saints. She

persecutes believers.

Throughout history, false religion and godless systems have persecuted God's people.

But during the Tribulation, persecution will intensify beyond anything the world has seen before.

You remember Jim Jones, the cult leader who established what he said would be a socialist utopia free from racism and oppression in Jonestown, South America. As reports of abuse drew the attention of the United States government and led to an investigation, Jones convinced more than 900 people, including over 300 children, to drink a cyanide-laced drink. Some were forced to drink it. Jones died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

After the Rapture of the church, the world will be forced to regroup. You can imagine what it will be like when millions of believers from

around the world are instantly gone from the earth. The world will be in a tailspin, and the Antichrist will step in to save the day.

For a season, everything is going according to plan.

But when the “man of peace” is exposed for who he really is after helping the Jewish people rebuild their temple, he will commit the abomination that causes desolation.

Revelation 17:7, “**7 “Why are you so amazed?” the angel asked. “I will tell you the mystery of this woman and of the beast with seven heads and ten horns on which she sits.”**

Outwardly, she appears to control him. Inwardly, he is using her.

Revelation 17:8, “**The beast you saw was**

once alive but isn't now. And yet he will soon come up out of the bottomless pit and go to eternal destruction."

Remember that the Beast or the Antichrist is the Devil's cheap imitation of the Messiah.

Remember the prefix "anti" doesn't just mean "against" it also means "instead of"

Satan has his unholy trinity where Satan is God the Father, the Antichrist is God the Son, and the False Prophet is the Holy Spirit.

In the end, sin cannot win and faith cannot fail

Verse 8 speaks of a counterfeit resurrection.

"The beast you saw was once alive but isn't now"

The beast mimics eternity.

And the world marvels.

But his destiny is destruction.

Revelation 17:8, “ **The beast you saw was once alive but isn’t now. And yet he will soon come up out of the bottomless pit and go to eternal destruction. And the people who belong to this world, whose names were not written in the Book of Life before the world was made, will be amazed at the reappearance of this beast who had died.**”

Only those:

Not written in the Book of Life
From the foundation of the world
These are unbelievers hardened in rebellion.

They believe the deception spoken of in 2 Thessalonians 2:11, “**So God will cause them to be greatly deceived, and they will believe these lies. 12 Then they will be condemned for enjoying evil rather than believing the truth.**”

Revelation 17: 9-13: “**9 “This calls for a mind with understanding: The seven heads of the beast represent the seven hills where the woman rules. They also represent seven kings. 10 Five kings have already fallen, the sixth now reigns, and the seventh is yet to come, but his reign will be brief.**

11 “The scarlet beast that was, but is no longer, is the eighth king. He is like the other seven, and he, too, is headed for destruction. 12 The ten horns of the beast are ten kings who have not yet risen to power. They will be appointed to their kingdoms for one brief moment to reign with the beast. 13 They will all agree to give him their power and authority.”

This is a difficult passage.

Seven hills likely represent kingdoms.

Five fallen: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece.

One is: Rome.

One to come: a future revived power.

Then an eighth: the Antichrist who summarizes them all.

Egypt's bondage.

Assyria's cruelty.

Babylon's idolatry.

Persia's reach.

Greece's philosophy.

Rome's iron.

Human government without God.

The ten kings receive authority for a short time and give their power to the beast. Their unity is temporary. Their strength is borrowed. Their rule is brief. They think they are building a kingdom, but they are really preparing themselves for judgment we read at the end of verse 11.

And one phrase ends it: **“headed to destruction.”**

Revelation 17:14, **“14 Together they will go to war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will defeat them because he is Lord of all lords and King of all kings. And his called and chosen and faithful ones will be with him.”**

They Will Make War with the Lamb

The climax: **“Together they will go to war against the Lamb”**

This is Armageddon.

But: **“but the Lamb will defeat them”**

Why? **“because he is Lord of all lords and King of all kings”**

The world system gathers against Christ. But the outcome is never in doubt.

Revelation 17:16–18, **“16 The scarlet beast and his ten horns all hate the prostitute. They will strip her naked, eat her flesh, and burn her remains with fire. 17 For God has put a plan into their minds, a plan that will carry out his purposes. They will agree to give their authority to the scarlet beast, and so the words of God will be fulfilled. 18 And this woman you saw in your vision represents the great city that rules over the kings of the world.”**

The collapse of Babylon is astonishing.

The Beast and the ten kings:

Hate the harlot.

Make her desolate.

Burn her with fire.

The very system that supported him becomes expendable.

Why?

Revelation 17:17: **"7 For God has put a plan into their minds, a plan that will carry out his purposes"**

Even in chaos, God is sovereign; God is always in control.

Here is the takeaway today!

False religion is more dangerous than atheism.

The atheist denies Christ.

The harlot replaces Him.

So test the cup.

Ask one question: What does it do with Jesus?

Crucified for sinners.

Risen bodily.

Coming again.

Every daughter of Babylon sidesteps who Jesus Christ is.

The world's unity is not our hope.

God's sovereignty is our pillow to rest our head.

The Lamb wins.

And there are two cups.

One golden cup filled with abominations.

One cup lifted in an upper room: "This cup is the new covenant in My blood."

We lift this cup today!!!