

Session 10 Harlot Babylon: A Coming One-World Religion (Rev. 17-18)

I. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPHECY

- A. Revelation 17-18 is one of the most significant end-time prophecies, because it gives us insight into Satan’s strategy to deceive the nations and cause many Christians to fall away from the faith. Those who are deceived by the harlot will end up in the lake of fire; some saints who resist the harlot will be killed (Rev. 17:6). This prophecy deserves much careful study and dialogue.
- B. The *main message* of Revelation 17 is easy to understand. The main themes are the seductive power and cruel persecution of this harlot system along with its inevitable destruction. The harlot is a counterfeit of the Bride that the Holy Spirit is raising up.
- C. Revelation 17 is the most symbolic passage in Revelation with many intricate details, which makes it the most difficult chapter in Revelation to understand. Since the angel gave John the meaning of the symbols, we have a solid foundation for understanding this passage. ***Why is this most important prophecy veiled in such cryptic language?*** I think one reason is because it causes us to pore over every line and discuss it often to understand its every nuance.
- D. In this session, we will focus on Revelation 17:1-6, which gives us details about the emergence of the harlot Babylon as a one-world religion and describes her evil seductions and cruel persecutions. It will be a counterfeit justice movement that unifies multitudes from the largest religions on earth. The rest of Revelation 17-18 describes her relationship with the Antichrist and how she is finally destroyed.
- E. ***Review:*** The five chronological sections in the book of Revelation tell us the main storyline of judgment events against harlot Babylon and Antichrist’s empire. After each of the chronological sections, an angel explains to John why these judgment events are absolutely necessary. These explanations function as a parenthesis that puts the storyline “on pause” as they answer questions such as, *Why is God’s wrath so severe?* and *What will happen to the saints?*
- F. In the angelic explanation in Revelation 17-18, we are told why the bowls of wrath are necessary, and we are assured of the defeat of Babylon. The angel explains why it is necessary for Jesus to dash the infrastructure of the nations to pieces through the bowl judgments. It is because the seduction of Babylon’s evil religion will permeate so many of these structures.
- ⁸ ***I will give You [Jesus] the nations for Your inheritance ...⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel. (Ps. 2:8-9)***
- ²⁶ ***The nations ...²⁷ shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels (Rev. 2:26-27)***
- G. The seventh trumpet focuses on replacing evil leaders, and the bowl judgments focus on replacing the social infrastructures (tax codes, education and business policies, etc).

II. OVERVIEW OF REVELATION 17:1-19:10

- A. **The harlot Babylon** will be established in the rebuilt city of Babylon in Iraq (fifty miles south of Baghdad), which will be restored and used as one of the headquarters for the Antichrist.
1. It will function as the center of worldwide, demonic, religious and economic networks (Rev. 17-18; Isa. 13-14; 21; Jer. 50-51).
 2. As Jerusalem suddenly came out of the ashes and was rebuilt, so Babylon (in Iraq) will be suddenly rebuilt. The judgments prophesied in Jeremiah 50-51 that suddenly destroy Babylon forever have not yet happened.
- B. This passage is the longest prophecy in the New Testament (42 verses). The longest prophecy in the Old Testament is Jeremiah 50-51 (110 verses), which also focuses on Babylon in the end times, as does Isaiah 13-14 (54 verses). This prophecy is long because God wants us to understand its significance and danger. The second longest prophecy in the NT is focused on the New Jerusalem (33 verses; Rev. 21:1-22:5), which is a picture of the Bride of Christ in her glory. The harlot is the counterfeit of the Bride of Christ.
- C. God's wrath on Babylon will come in two stages. Revelation 17-18 describes the two falls of Babylon.
- D. **Focus of Rev. 17:** The first phase of Babylon's fall (Rev. 17) relates to the worldwide religion system of tolerance and syncretism. This occurs in the beginning of the Great Tribulation at the hands of the ten kings (Rev. 17:16) who burn the harlot to replace it with Antichrist worship.
- E. **Focus of Rev. 18:** The second phase of her fall will be at the end of the Tribulation. Revelation 18 focuses on the collapse of the Antichrist's global economic system at God's hands (Rev. 18:8).
- F. **Focus of Rev. 19:1-10:** The marriage supper of the Lamb and the rewards for each believer occurs in the context of the second coming and the rapture (Rev. 19:7-10).

III. THERE ARE TWO STAGES IN SATAN'S END-TIME PLAN

- A. There are two stages in Satan's end-time plan: to be worshiped by all nations and to rule them. ***⁴They worshiped the dragon [Satan]...and...the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?"...⁸All who dwell on the earth will worship him... (Rev. 13:4-8)***
- B. Satan knows that it is too big of a step for a compromising Christian, Muslim, Hindu, etc., to suddenly become a devoted Satan worshiper. Therefore, he will first call all to join a one-world religion of tolerance that will declare that all paths lead to God and to salvation. As multitudes are seduced into joining this harlot Babylon religion, it will weaken their conscience concerning their religious heritage. Next, Satan will demand that they all become Satan worshipers.

- C. The emergence of this false worship movement will lead to a falling away in the Church. The two signs that Paul gave to indicate the time of Jesus' coming are a falling away from the faith combined with the revealing of the Antichrist on the world stage to establish peace (1 Thes. 5:3).
³Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day [Jesus' second coming] will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin [Antichrist] is revealed. (2 Thes. 2:3)
- D. The nations will rejoice in the unity it brings and that it will help establish world peace.
³When they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them. (1 Thes. 5:3)
- E. People will defile their consciences and break relationships that are related to their religious heritage, renouncing both their former beliefs in absolutes and the people who hold to those absolutes. Once people leave their religious ideals, whether Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, or Buddhism, there will be no absolute truth to keep them from worshiping Satan (2 Cor. 11:14).
- F. The harlot religion will prepare the nations to receive the Antichrist. It will be a religion of affirmation and toleration without absolutes. It will be a **counterfeit justice movement** that will feed the poor and be deeply involved in humanitarian projects. The Antichrist will inspire acts of compassion, but for all the wrong reasons.
- G. The voluntary harlot Babylon religion will be replaced by a mandatory Antichrist religion. First, people will voluntarily join the harlot **Babylon's** one-world religion of tolerance (Rev. 17). Second, all will be forced to be Satan worshipers in the **Antichrist religion** (Rev. 13:4, 8, 15).
- H. Many believers will fall away to the seductions and deceptions of the **harlot's religion**. There will be a falling away from the faith at the end of the age (Mt. 24:9-13; 2 Thes. 2:3; 1 Tim. 4:1-2; 2 Tim. 3:1-7; 4:3-5; 2 Pet. 2:1-3). A doctrine of a demon is a teaching inspired by demons.
¹Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, ²speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, ³forbidding to marry. (1 Tim. 4:1-3)
- I. Sound doctrine teaches obedience to Jesus and His plans. It requires endurance. To turn the ear away means that the people will no longer hear what God intended in various Bible passages. They heap up teachers or zealously follow many teachers who support their desires.
³For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. (2 Tim. 4:3-4)
- J. Loving the truth is more than adhering to it; it's taking a firm stand regardless of the cost. Loving truth requires that we commit to accept any new ideas as long as they are substantiated in the Scripture, regardless of how different they are from our religious background. Those who love the truth will conform their agendas to it without bending the truth to fit their agendas.
⁹The coming of the lawless one [Antichrist] is...with all power, signs, and lying wonders, ¹⁰and unrighteous deception...because they did not receive the love of the truth. (2 Thes. 2:9-10)

IV. THE GREAT HARLOT: HER SEDUCTIONS AND PERSECUTIONS

¹“Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, ²with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication”...³...I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast [Antichrist]...⁴The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. ⁵...on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. ⁶I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints...¹⁵...he said to me, “The waters...where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues.” (Rev. 17:1-6, 15)

- A. Before the angel shows John the wealth and counterfeit beauty of the harlot religion, he shows him her inevitable judgment and sure defeat (v. 1). This system will fail and be utterly destroyed.
- B. The harlot will sit on, or will have authority over, many nations (v. 1) by seducing and controlling the world’s most powerful leaders (kings and merchants) through global networks. It will be a religious and economic network (Rev. 17) network based in Babylon (Rev. 18).
- C. The harlot’s system will cause the nations to be drunk with her seductions, or great benefits, including humanitarian aid, a unified religion (which minimizes wars), and a prosperous world economy. The nations will rejoice and get drunk with, or be intoxicated by, her promises of goodness, prosperity, and compassion, and her theology of tolerance based in deception.
²“...the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.” (Rev. 17:2)
- D. The harlot religion will have great prominence. It will be arrayed in purple (royal status) and will be respected by the elite financial leaders of the earth who will give their allegiance to her.
⁴The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet [royalty], and adorned with gold...having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. (Rev. 17:4)
- E. The harlot will be adorned with gold. It will be the wealthiest religious network in all history. The harlot will have a golden cup with which she “serves” the nations. It will appear golden (valuable and good). She will offer the nations unprecedented humanitarian service in helping the poor. As the harlot emerges with religious unity, war will disappear, and for the first time in modern history there will be world peace (1 Thes. 5:3).
- F. She will have an evil cup of abomination and filth. Abomination refers to being filled with demonic activity. In the OT, abominations refer to idolatrous (demonic) activity. Filthiness points to being filled with moral perversions.

- G. The harlot will deceive the nations by sorcery, which is a combination of drugs and demonic power (witchcraft). Her dark supernatural power will fascinate people and appear to be good. Her worship music will be powerful in that it will have a supernatural, demonic element to it.
²³For by your sorcery all the nations were deceived. (Rev. 18:23)
- H. Sin will be allowed to reach its fullness in the end times. The harlot Babylon is the context in which the nations will reach the heights of sin and their experience of the demonic realm.
²³“In the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their fullness, a king [Antichrist] shall arise...who understands sinister schemes.” (Dan. 8:23)
- I. We evaluate a ministry by the lifestyle it produces in others, not by how fast it grows or how much money it has. Because serving the poor and walking in unity is foundational to preaching the gospel, many will think that all who proclaim this represent the truth. This statement by Jesus will reach its greatest fullness in the end times.
¹⁵“For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.” (Lk. 16:15)
- J. The influence of the harlot will cause multitudes to be drunk, or intoxicated, with the blood of the saints who expose her (v. 6). In killing the saints, the more she kills, the bolder she will become. The one great enemy of the harlot religion will be the saints of Jesus in the prophetic Church.
⁶I saw the woman [harlot Babylon], drunk with the blood of the saints. (Rev. 17:6)
- K. The praying Church must expose the harlot for who she really is. The Church will be hated by all nations for this. We declare the seductive nature of her perversion and her judgment.
⁹“They will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake. ¹⁰...then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. ¹¹Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.” (Mt. 24:9-11)
- L. The kings (political leaders) will understand some of the lies that empower the harlot system. However, they will support her agenda to gain her wealth. In this way, they will knowingly prostitute themselves, or commit fornication with her, knowingly supporting her lies for money.
²The kings of the earth committed fornication...the inhabitants...were made drunk. (Rev. 17:2)
- M. The harlot will depend on the Antichrist, who will carry her (provide resource and protection).
³I saw a woman sitting on a...beast [Antichrist] which was full of names of blasphemy... ⁷I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her. (Rev. 17:3, 7)
- N. Surprisingly, the harlot’s worldwide religion will be hated and destroyed by the jealousy of the ten primary kings who serve the Antichrist (Dan. 7:7, 20, 24). They will burn the harlot at the beginning of the Great Tribulation. Satan’s kingdom is filled with hatred, not unity. We prophesy that after a short season of prominence, she will be burned by leaders of the Antichrist’s empire.
¹²“The ten horns which you saw are ten kings... ¹⁶...the ten horns...on the beast...will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire.” (Rev. 17:12, 16)

- O. In the middle of the final seven years of this age, the Antichrist’s plan is to replace the harlot religion of tolerance with Antichrist worship. This new worldwide religion will be strict (without any toleration). All who refuse to worship the Antichrist will be killed (Rev. 13:4-18). Satan’s purpose for the harlot religion is as a “forerunner” to prepare the nations for Antichrist worship.

V. THE END-TIME CONFLICT OVER THE TRUTH OF WHO JESUS IS

- A. In the end times, there will be a battle for the truth about Jesus. Some believers will give heed to doctrines that lie about Jesus. The conflict will center on defining who Jesus is and how we love Him. We must love God on His terms, expressed by allegiance to the Jesus of the Bible.
- B. Allegiance to Jesus is our main issue, along with being lovers of His truth (2 Thes. 2:10). Tolerance is the main issue in the counterfeit forerunner movements to the harlot Babylon. We greatly value the people in different religions. They possess great dignity before God. We are not willing to let them perish in hell by refusing to tell them the truth about Jesus and His salvation.
- C. Three truths about Jesus that offend humanists include: First, His deity; thus, His right to establish absolute standards for which the nations are accountable to Him. Jesus does not accept humanistic views of righteousness and love. Second, that the only way of salvation is through Jesus. Third, that He possesses the wisdom and love to judge sin in time and eternity.
- D. Anyone who confesses the name of Jesus must stand for His deity, or His way of salvation. If they do not, then they are operating under the spirit of a false prophet. This is true of famous people who work in the White House, host talk shows, fill stadiums with concerts for the poor, or lead mega-churches. We must apologize to Jesus for so much man-pleasing preaching of lies.
- E. There are counterfeit forerunners who are preparing the nations to embrace the harlot Babylon. These false forerunners tell lies about Jesus. Some are not yet false prophets, yet they operate in the same spirit as one. Some of them are still in the balance. The issue is not being positive or negative but being faithful witnesses to the truth. We are not running for office, but we are His messengers who will give an account at the judgment seat of Christ.
- F. The end-time praying Church is to steward the greatest hope and justice movement in history. We have a far superior hope than humanistic movements. Forerunners are the greatest hope-bringers in history. They will be filled with love, purity, and humility and will do deeds of compassion while giving a clear witness of the truth. They will magnify Jesus’ love and wisdom.
- G. We are called to judge people so that we can win them to righteousness, so they may be saved. If people confess to be followers of Jesus, they put themselves under the standards of God’s Word.

¹It is reported that there is sexual immorality among you...³I have already judged him who has so done this deed...⁵Deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus...¹¹I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person. (1 Cor. 5:1-11)

- H. We are only to judge in the way we want to be judged (accurately, patiently, and tenderly).
¹“Judge not [with false measures], that you be not judged. ²For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.” (Mt. 7:1-2)

VI. THE HARLOT’S ORIGIN: THE TOWER OF BABEL

- A. The harlot’s name was a mystery. In other words, the angel gave John new information that had not yet been clearly revealed in Scripture. Her name surprised John.
*⁵On her forehead a name was written: **MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.** (Rev. 17:5)*
- B. The angel revealed her name as Babylon. This name linked her to her origin, which goes back to the tower of Babel (where Babylon began). This reveals her true nature to us, as we understand what happened at the tower of Babel. Babel was the city in which the first organized religion in history developed, resulting in the first organized rebellion and war against God by mankind.
- C. The residents of Babel sought to build a tower whose “top is in the heavens.” This refers to reaching into the spirit realm (not to the height of the building made of mud bricks). God was not referring to their architectural abilities having no limit, but to their progression in evil. This refers to synergism in their sin escalating faster than other issues in human history.
⁴They said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.” (Gen. 11:4)
- D. Nothing they set their heart to do will be withheld from them in terms of reaching their full potential in sin. NASB/NIV translates that nothing which they plan to do “will be impossible for them.” This refers to their unity in sin in reaching into the demonic realm (top is in the heavens).
⁶The LORD said, “Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them.” (Gen. 11:6)
- E. In Genesis 11, God scattered their language to slow down the escalation of sin. God scattered the people of Babel so that man would not reach his full potential for evil until God’s timing.
⁷“Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language... ” ⁸So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. ⁹Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth. (Gen. 11:7-9)

VII. JACOB’S LADDER: ANGELS ASCENDING AND DESCENDING

- A. In Jacob’s dream, he saw a ladder that gave him access to the heavenly realm in the will of God. Jesus prophesied of Jacob’s ladder, where the angels would interact with the earthly realm.
¹²He [Jacob] dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. (Gen. 28:12)

⁵¹**He [Jesus] said to him [Nathanael], “Most assuredly...hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.” (Jn. 1:51)**

B. In the harlot church, there will be a “ladder of access” to the demonic realm, enabling the nations to escalate in their experience of sin and demons. The people of Babel sought this. In the Babylonian language, Babel means the “gate of heaven” (in Hebrew it means “confusion”). The people of Babel were attempting to reach a demonic open heaven (Gen. 28:12; Jn. 1:51).

C. Satan and billions of demons will be dislodged from their place in heaven and cast to earth. They will appear to people and interact with them at a level never known in history.

⁷**War broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon...⁸but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven...⁹The great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil...was cast to the earth, and his angels...with him. (Rev. 12:7-9)**

²**The dragon gave him [Antichrist] his power, his throne, and great authority. (Rev. 13:2)**

D. In the end times, there will be an unprecedented interaction between the demonic and human realm, leading to a worldwide judgment. The time before Jesus’ second coming is compared to the days of Noah, including the demonic realm touching the earth and leading to murder, etc.

³⁷**“But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.” (Mt. 24:37)**

E. The people in Genesis 6 walked in a “counterfeit” open heaven as demons interacted with humans in the natural realm in an evil way (Gen. 6:4; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). At this time, there was an unprecedented connection between the natural and demonic realm. It resulted in great violence, causing God to destroy the earth with the flood in Noah’s day (Gen. 6:7; 7:1-24).

⁵**The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ⁶...the LORD...was grieved in His heart. ⁷...the LORD said, “I will destroy man...from the face of the earth.” (Gen. 6:5-7)**

¹¹**The earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. ¹²So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth.**

¹³**God said to Noah, “The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth.” (Gen. 6:11-13)**

F. John was surprised that the harlot was the mother of harlots (source of false religion) through history, as well as being the primary source of false religion and abominations in the end times. Her offspring (false religion through history) will crescendo and set the stage in the end times.

⁵**...BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. (Rev. 17:5)**

G. The harlot will have a murderous heart despite her humanitarian appearance. John marveled at this mysterious plan, which will bring forth the salvation of Israel as it purifies and empowers the Church to be used in the end-time revival. As we understand this prophecy, we will marvel like John as we feel the weightiness of what is in God’s heart.

⁶I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement. (Rev. 17:6)