

## THE HARLOT AND THE BEAST

<sup>1</sup> Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, <sup>2</sup> with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication."

<sup>3</sup> So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast *which was* full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. <sup>4</sup> The 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 <sup>5</sup> And on her forehead a name was written:

MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT,  
THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS  
AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS  
OF THE EARTH.

<sup>6</sup> I 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.

<sup>7</sup> But the angel said to me, "Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns. <sup>8</sup> The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

<sup>9</sup> "Here *is* the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. <sup>10</sup> There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, *and* the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time. <sup>11</sup> The beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition.

<sup>12</sup> "The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. <sup>13</sup> These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. <sup>14</sup> These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those *who are* with Him *are* called, chosen, and faithful."

<sup>15</sup> Then he said to me, "The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. <sup>16</sup> And the ten horns which you saw on <sup>[d]</sup> the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. <sup>17</sup> For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled. <sup>18</sup> And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth."

After last week's message a question was asked about the chronology of the Book of Revelation. One of the things that took place in chapter 16 was a voice came from the temple declaring that God' wrath against Jerusalem was complete. And yet, here we are in chapter 17 and there is more wrath to be poured out. One of the things that has to be understood about the Book of Revelation is that it is showing us the fulfillment of

Bible prophecy, and it is doing it in such a way that we should not miss that Jesus is the fulfillment of all of the prophecies. When you read the Bible it is important that we see that Jesus is not just the lamb. He is also the bridegroom, He is the King, and He is the Son of God...etc. ect. This book is detailing how the Lord Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of all of the promises in the Bible. There is a chronological aspect to the book, but what it is detailing more specifically is the completion and fulfillment of all that the Scriptures have said about the Messiah, and His Kingdom.

Today we will deal with two more of these familiar Biblical images. The harlot, who we have rarely spoken of, up to this point and the beast, more specifically the relationship of the beast to the harlot.

The passage begins with one of the angels who had recently poured out the bowls of God's judgment coming and saying to John, Come and I will show you the judgment of the great harlot that sits upon many waters. We are then told that this harlot, whoever she may be, had committed fornication with the Kings of the Earth, and the people of the land had become drunk with the wine of her fornication.

So the obvious question is: Who is the harlot? This question is one of those questions that many people have attempted to answer over the years, but one of the things that is rather humorous about so many of these attempts is that rather engage in exegesis, which means "critical examination of the text involved," so many modern "experts" delve into the oh so popular realm of eisegesis, which is "reading between the lines." Rather than finding their answers in the Biblical Text, they go outside of the text. They place over their Bible reading an interpretive scheme found outside the Biblical Text. This has caused no end of speculation, and scripture twisting. The Harlot, in modern times, has been identified as "The World Council of Churches," 'The spirit of 'ecumenicalism', and of course, that all famous candidate, "The Roman Catholic Church." Now mind you, this is not merely a modern problem. Many of these ideas, specifically, the idea that the Roman Catholic Church is the harlot have been with us for quite some time.

A lot of time could be spent in attacking many of these views, but today, we are not going to as much rebut these views, but we are going to attempt to show from the text who the harlot is.

One of the more familiar Old Testament themes of the Old Scripture is the theme of Israel, the Bride of Yahweh, falling into apostasy. This theme is presented in the Old Testament as adultery. Throughout the Scriptures, this spiritual adultery is very often portrayed as harlotry. Harlotry represented a nation or a people that had forsook their covenant and instead turned toward another. As I said earlier, to find examples of groups or individuals that have exercised this practice, of abandoning their covenant and turning to another is an easy thing to do, but just because we find an example of this, does not mean we have properly exegeted the text. What we need to find out, is what is the instance that this text is speaking of?

Now, one of our important rules of interpretation is that we must take our text in it's context. Gary Demar, in His excellent book, "Last Day's Madness" says something over and over again, that bears repeating. Those who keep trying to push the fulfillment of the prophecies of this book into our future, are guilty of ignoring, what he calls, "The Time Texts." In Chapter 1 Verse 1 of this Book, we are told that these events are things

which must “soon” take place. This message of soon, is repeated multiple times throughout the book. If I were to write you a letter, and tell you multiple times, that I would be doing something shortly, or soon, you would rightly be annoyed, if when you called me 2,000 years after receiving the letter to ask, “What exactly do you mean by soon?” I think your annoyance would only grow, if I responded that soon didn’t really mean soon, but that it meant immanent. You would then ask, what that means, and I would explain away my use of the words soon, and shortly by saying to you “It just means, that it could be at any moment.” Might be tomorrow, might be 100 years, might be 1000 years, heck it might even be 2000 years. This is a butchering of the language, and it is done to fit an interpretive scheme rather than “rightly dividing the Word of God.” What makes this even more egregious, is that the people who are saying things like this about the Word of God are the same people, who insist that they interpret the text literally. You can interpret anything literally is you literally change the meaning of words.

The context of the contents of the Book of Revelation, is events that would “soon take place.” And if you would like further clarification of what that means, we only have to go to the words of our Lord, when He said, in Matthew 24:34, “I tell you, this generation shall not pass, before all these things take place.” So then the harlot, which is what we are talking about today should be something that the people than living would see and understand.

Remember the Book of Revelation has two important cities. There is Babylon and New Jerusalem, which ascends from on high. The Book of Revelation also has two important women, The Bride, and the Harlot. We have spent quite a bit of time the last few messages dealing with what the City of Babylon is, She is that City, which is also called Spiritual Sodom, where also our Lord was crucified, Babylon is none other than the City of Jerusalem. New Jerusalem, as we will see in the future, is the consummation of all the promises of Paradise coming to their ultimate fulfillment in the Church of Jesus Christ.

The two key women in this Book are of course the Bride, who we will show great detail in Chapter 21 and of course the harlot. These two are mean to be contrasted one with another. The Harlot, is a fallen bride. Of course how is it that the faithful City of Jerusalem, became the Harlot City of Babylon. David Chilton, rightly points out that the beginning of this apostasy began with her priesthood. The Priests primary responsibility was to represent the Bridegroom to the Bride, and to guard her from danger. This is an ancient Biblical pattern. All the way back in Genesis Adam was told to keep or to guard the garden, as well as his wife. Adam failed, and of course, we see this continued failing throughout the Scriptures as differing priest fail in their designated task to guard and to keep the garden paradise of God. Ultimately Christ, of course successfully guards and keeps His bride.

Today’s text begins with one of the Angels who poured out the bowls of God’s wrath, calling John and letting Him know that he would now see the judgment of the great Harlot that sits on many waters. The next seven verses of Revelation 17 identify who this harlot is. We do not have time to deal with every aspect of this identification, but let us take a look at a few of these points and that should help us with our identification of this harlot.

The woman is seated on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, and the beast of course has the seven heads and ten horns. The woman is clothed with purple and scarlet, and she is adorned with precious stones and with pearls, and in her hand she carries a golden cup that is full of the abomination and filth of her uncleanness from her fornications. The woman also has a name written on her forehead and that name is MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE LAND. Lastly we see that this woman is drunk, she is drunk from the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witness of Jesus. John sees her and he wonders with a great wonder.

The Angel who shows John this image then asks Him, "Why are you wondering?" I will explain to you this mystery?

So the first thing we need to do, is in brief look at each of these and see how they are portrayed Biblically.

The Woman is riding a beast of scarlet. One of the questions this should cause us to ask, and that the text does not immediately answer is, Is this beast the red 7 headed and 10 horned dragon, which was introduced in Chapter 12, who is identified as Satan, or is it the beast from the sea who is said to be full of blasphemous names. Truthfully, this could be a compilation of both of these. This woman, who and I must emphasize this, who was once meant to be a bride, is now involved in adulterous relationships with not only the Roman Empire, but also with Satan himself.

The woman is clothed with purple and with scarlet, and she is decked with gold, precious stones, and pearls. A cursory reading of the passage would have us seeing an extravagantly dressed harlot, but on further inspection we should compare her to the earliest descriptions in the Bible of Eden, and also, she is on the outside attempting to look like the glorious City of God. It is interesting that she also carries a golden cup, but this cup is not full of the wine that we drink when we celebrate communion, this cup is full of abominations.

Pharisaic Judaism is the best description of who this harlot is. If we read the New Testament, we can see their consistent attempt to observe even the slightest details of God's Law. They measure on scales, mint and cumin. They are nit-pickers on the detail of the law, however our Lord tells them that they are nothing more than white washed tombs full of the bones of dead men. They are radically unclean, and yet they consider themselves to be examples of purity and righteousness. They partake of the cup of God in their feigned righteousness, but in reality they are drinking the communion of the damned.

Further evidence that this harlot is meant to be a picture of the apostate priesthood is the writing on her forehead. In Exodus 38 a description is given of what is to be worn on the High Priests forehead. A plate of pure Gold was to be worn on his forehead engraved with the words, Holy unto the Lord. And now the harlot, who is wearing the same outfit as the priest right down to the writing on the forehead, except instead of Holy unto the Lord, the priest carries the name of Babylon, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth.

Now we have spent a lot of time over the last few messages identifying mystery Babylon as the city of Jerusalem, but it is also important that we not forget who Babylon is. Babylon, going all the way back to Genesis 11, and the tower of Babel, is the seat of those who oppose God and His kingdom rule, and now Jerusalem, being led by her corrupt priesthood has become not God's representative, but in fact the chief enemy of the one who they were to serve.

The next ten verses of this chapter give us some very interesting historical details as to who this beast is. Verse 8 begins by telling us that "The Beast that you saw, was and is not, and is about to ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition." This verses meaning becomes much more clear when we understand the beast as a composite of all the other beasts as we discussed earlier. Chilton, in *Day's of Vengeance*, says "Here it is likely that the specific human reference of the Beast is Vespasian, who became Caesar after the chaos which followed the death of Nero." Ultimately though the thing that we need to look at in this passage is that this beast will be defeated and head to perdition.

We are then given an interesting description of the beast which we are told that if we have wisdom we can know what is being talked about:

<sup>9</sup> "Here *is* the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. <sup>10</sup> There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, *and* the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time. <sup>11</sup> The beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition.

<sup>12</sup> "The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. <sup>13</sup> These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. <sup>14</sup> These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those *who are* with Him *are* called, chosen, and faithful."

A lot of time could be spent going over each of these descriptions, and perhaps someday I will do that, but for now I am going to identify the beast that the woman rides upon, and this beast is the Empire of Rome. Rome is known as the City on Seven Hills, but what else is very interesting about this is that we are told the mountains are also seven Kings. The first five Caesars were Julius, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius (Five have fallen), The next Caesar was Nero (One now is). Interestingly enough this is also very strong internal evidence for the dating of this book during the reign of Nero Caesar. The seventh, has not yet come and it tells us when he does he will reign for a short time. History tells us this was Galba, who reigned for only seven months, Notice here, this short time, is also not interpreted to mean immanently.

After the seventh King, we are told that the eighth would be the one who "was and is not." I already mentioned that David Chilton identifies this King as Vespasian, I believe that he is correct. It is while Vespasian is emperor that the Temple in the City and the City itself are destroyed. The harlot who turned to the beast for her salvation is ultimately destroyed by the beast.

Then he said to me, "The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. <sup>16</sup> And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. <sup>17</sup> For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.

So Israel, and her priesthood turn to the beast for their salvation and the description in the text is so perfect. They hate the harlot, they make her desolate and naked they eat her flesh and burn her with fire. And we also find that in doing this they are doing what the Lord God wants done, they are fulfilling His purpose. We must remember though, just because a nation is fulfilling God's purpose this does not mean they are operating in God's favor.

Verse 14 tells us that the beast is making war with the lamb as well. I have heard people say before that you can tell a lot about a person by who their enemies are. In a sense that is true. But just because you oppose what God opposes, this does not make you a faithful one. God uses the schemes of wicked men to accomplish His purposes. He has always done so and He will continue to do so. Rome and the armies under General Titus were used by God to fulfill His purpose, but this did not make them faithful. We are told that they also warred with the lamb, but that the lamb would overcome them.

Again, today's text does not go into how and in what way the lamb destroys the Beast, But it does tell us why, it is because He is Lord of Lords and King of Kings. But the text does not end there it also speaks about those who are with the Lamb, those who are with Him are called Chosen and Faithful. As we have discussed many times in this survey, In Revelation 12 the dragon is overcome by the blood of the lamb and the word of the testimony of those who are with him, those who love not their own lives even to the death. They do not place their trust in anything, but Christ. When everything around them falls apart, they look to Christ. In our text today.

Christ is the fulfillment of every promise, And when we trust in Christ alone, we become heirs and beneficiaries of those promises.