

Political Prostitution

Revelation 17:2-6

By Phil Kayser at Dominion Covenant Church on 2018-03-11

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Text 1 One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me saying, “Come, I will show you the judgment of the great whore who sits on the many waters, 2 with whom the kings of the earth fornicated; and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.”

3 So he took me away in spirit to a wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns. 4 And the woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, 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 And on her forehead a name was written: “Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of the prostitutes and the abominations of the earth.” 6 And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, even with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And upon seeing her I was tremendously impressed.

Introduction

A number of you were missing last week, and I won't catch you up on what we covered. But I will just briefly say that I focused on the identity of this whore city. And we worked our way through quite a few different interpretations that people have given and then, using John's internal clues, we systematically ruled out all theories but one - that the whore was Jerusalem. I am 100% confident that this whore symbolizes Jerusalem. And since I ended last week's sermon with a quick romp through verse 1, we are going to pick up at verse 2.

I. the kings of the land committed fornication with Jerusalem

Verse 2 starts in the middle of a sentence saying, “...with whom the kings of the earth fornicated...” How do kings fornicate with a city? And how can a city be a prostitute or a whore? Well, the answer is that the Old Testament uses that term to refer to any criminal compromise for the purpose of gain, whether it is sexual or non-sexual. And modern dictionaries are similar. For example, Webster's Unabridged Dictionary gives two definitions for the word “prostitute.” One is literal or sexual prostitution, and the other is metaphorical. It defines selling out your moral integrity or your artistic

integrity, etc as a kind of prostitution.¹ So Scripture actually has a slightly tighter definition of metaphorical prostitution. It is criminal compromise for the purpose of gain. The metaphorical meaning describes either apostasy from God's law (which was a capitol crime) or other violations of criminal law for personal gain. But always there is a purchase or selling of something that should not be purchased or sold. That's what makes it prostitution.

And again, the question comes, how does a city engage in whoredom or prostitution? And the answer is, "When its representatives buy or sell things they should not buy or sell, and they do so for personal gain; when they misuse the trust of their political office in criminal ways for personal gain." Well, with that definition, you can see political prostitution everywhere. P.J. O'Rourke's book "A Parliament of Whores" shows how politicians have a tendency to set aside principle for political gain. And he defines that as technically being prostitution or whoredom. And let me illustrate it with Obamacare since so many people recognized the attempts to buy votes to pass the legislation as a type of prostitution. Now it happens all the time with other bills, but it was so obvious with Obamacare that even the average citizen could not avoid coming to that conclusion. The Dakota Beacon, A Newspaper out of Bismark, North Dakota, outlined the political prostitution that Senator Harry Reid engaged in when he brazenly purchased the votes of unwilling Senators so that the Obamacare bill would pass. After characterizing the whole endeavor as prostitution, it said,

Senator Mary Landrieu, Louisiana Democrat, sold her vote for \$300 million otherwise known as the 'Second Louisiana Purchase.' ... Vermont Democrat Senator Bernie Sanders sold his vote for \$10 billion in new funding for community health centers.² And it goes on and on to outline ways that Reid flagrantly purchased votes. If his initial offers weren't high enough, he would keep raising the price to get them to vote. He believed that everyone eventually has a price. Another website talked about our own Senator Nelson's political prostitution. It said, Harry Reid finally managed to find his 60 votes. He did it by finally buying out Democrat Ben Nelson, in one of the most blatant examples of political prostitution ever seen in Washington.

Turns out that Louisiana's Mary Landrieu priced her services kind of cheaply at that. She must be green with envy at a higher priced hooker like Ben Nelson.

Here's what Ben Nelson sold himself for.

Essentially, American taxpayers will pay Nebraska's Medicare bills forever. He also got special federally funded exemptions physician owned hospitals in Nebraska — and Nebraska only. Nelson essentially sold his vote and caved on federal funding for abortions in order to get the money.³

1 "to sell (oneself, one's artistic or moral integrity, etc.) for low or unworthy purposes."

2 http://dakotabeacon.com/entry/dennis_patrick_a_parliament_of_whores/

3 <http://www.watcherofweasels.org/10-girl-in-a-5-town-ben-nelson-whores-out-for-obamacare/>

Now it may seem outrageous to start a sermon with illustrations like that, but as we go through chapters 17 and 18 you will see those kinds of things being called prostitution by the apostle John. Is the Beast alive and well today? Yes it is - in a different form, but the same demonic beast is present. Is the Harlot alive and well today? Yes, with local communities often acting as the whore. We just tend to be a bit more blind to our own sins. We tend to read chapters like these and think, "That's terrible. I'm glad we don't live in those times." And we fail to realize that the same things happen today. For example, is it political prostitution when the federal government gains influence over sheriff's departments through massive funding, gifts of anti-terrorist equipment, access to the Federal criminal data base, and other Federal goodies? I think the Bible would say absolutely yes. It is political prostitution. Webster's dictionary would say yes. In sheriff's offices across our nation there had been a gradual shifting of loyalties away from the county and toward the federal authority. Why? Because they are addicted to what the Federal bed has to offer.

Well, hopefully those examples will help you to see that the verses we are going to be going through over the next weeks are not irrelevant. They describe what is a constant danger in any country. We are up to our ears in the shenanigans of these demonic beings that stand behind the political machinery of our age.

And notice in verse 2 that it is "the kings of the land" (τῆς γῆς) who are committing this fornication. Now, it is true that in verse 3 John will show similar fornication with the emperor, but it starts off with the kings (plural) of the land (τῆς γῆς). So in some way the kings in the land of Israel were committing fornication with Jerusalem.

Which of the three forms of prostitution defined in the Bible were happening? The Bible outlines literal prostitution, apostasy from God, and political prostitution. And I would say that all three forms were present in first century Jerusalem. There were a lot of sexual favors being handed around. Some scholars believe that the only reason the Queen of Israel, Queen Berenice, had a longstanding sexual relationship with Titus was for purposes of influence, and that she used her wiles on others as well. But even though literal fornication was indeed involved (and for sure was involved in the capitol of Rome), chapters 17-18 seem to indicate that John primarily has a metaphorical use of that term in mind. It could be that the literal just symbolized the spiritual and political, but the focus seems to be on the spiritual and political.

For example, chapter 18:9 says, “The kings of the land who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her...” That seems to indicate an immoral use of office to trade favors and gain wealth. And there was a massive amount of wealth that was being transferred from the coffers of the Sadducees into the personal hands of all of the rulers of Israel. Of course, Rome gave the Sadducees sufficient power that they could gain even more wealth. So political prostitution was happening constantly.

But spiritual prostitution was happening as well. Israel had abandoned the true religion. Josephus was horrified by the compromises in temple worship that were happening because of this Roman-Sadducean connection. Did you know that the Bible would use the terms harlotry, prostitution, fornication for a person like me if I compromised my preaching in order to keep my job, or in order to keep wealthy people from leaving the congregation? We don’t actually have any wealthy people, but you know what I mean. That kind of thing happens in many churches, and it is a kind of spiritual prostitution. So Leviticus 20:6 says, “the person who turns to mediums and familiar spirits, to prostitute himself with them, I will set My face against that person and cut him off from his people.” That usage of the term prostitute in that passage has nothing to do with sex. These people were simply going to mediums to get information that they thought they desperately needed. But they were compromising their Biblical principles in order to do so. And any time pastors deliberately compromise their principles to retain influence, position, or money, they have become spiritual prostitutes.

Anyway, I believe Duncan McKenzie is correct when he said, “The fornication between the harlot and the kings of the land is talking about the illicit relationship that had evolved between the Temple leaders and the Roman appointed rulers of the land of Israel.”⁴ You may not have been aware that things had gotten so corrupt in the temple, so I want to read a short section from a large history book on Israel to give you a tiny peak into the nature of this illicit relationship. I’m reading from Hersh Goldwurm’s History of the Jewish People. He says,

The Roman rulers followed Herod’s example of bestowing this sacred office [of high priest] upon the highest bidder. As the Sadducees had no lack of money, they offered huge personal bribes to the procurators, and a candidate of their choice became High Priest. The Roman officials soon realized that the office of the High Priest was an infallible source of income. At frequent intervals, they would dismiss the current Kohen Gadol (High Priest) and auction off the position to the highest bidder. From the beginning

4 Duncan McKenzie, *Antichrist and the Second Coming: Volume II: The Book of Revelation* (Xulon Press, 2012), p. 220.

of the era of the Roman procurators until the Destruction of the Temple, a period of nearly sixty years, this exalted office had thirty occupants. For this reason the High Priest's chamber on the Temple Mount was called Lishkas Palhedrin, which means "the chamber of the king's officials." The prestige of the office thus suffered during this period as the Kohen Gadol came to be regarded as a petty politician who was appointed by the secular government and who cared only about his own glory and enrichment. Even after being dismissed from their office, the former High Priests would continue to exploit their connections for selfish ends. In the course of time, with their number growing, they became a domineering aristocracy and together with their relatives and friends, they abused the people and brought about the Destruction of the Temple.⁵

Who were some of these kings? Well, in the 100 years leading up to the Jewish War there was Herod the Great, Archelaus, Quirinius, Valerius Gratus, Vitellius, Agrippa I, Herod of Chalkis, and Agrippa II.⁶ Of course, a lot of the same stuff happened with the governors and prefects as well. Thus, the high priesthood, and with it the whole temple service was defiled by Rome. There was a reason Christ cleansed the temple. The king turned a blind eye to the Sadducees' use of police force violence and even assassinations in exchange for money or other favors. Likewise, the Sadducees enforced Roman wishes with an iron fist. It's no wonder that the Sicarii assassins assassinated Sadducees, and not just Romans - they saw them as 100% in bed with Rome. Around the time of Christ's ministry, Caiaphas the high priest managed to force out all the other competing markets for sacrifices and currency exchange and he developed a monopoly within the temple. And he ripped people off. He was raking in the money. Jesus said that he and his family had turned the temple into a den of thieves and robbers. Worship became repulsive to the people and I believe it became repulsive to God. When similar things had happened in Isaiah's day, he said, "He who kills a bull is as if he slays a man; he who sacrifices a lamb, as if he breaks a dog's neck; he who offers a grain offering, as if he offers swine's blood; he who burns incense, as if he blesses an idol." (Is. 66:3) So it is no exaggeration whatsoever to say that Jerusalem's leadership fornicated with the kings of the land.

II. The citizens of the land became oblivious

But the citizens themselves are implicated in this covenant lawsuit. Verse 2 ends by saying, "and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication." Somehow the citizens got involved in the fornication or at least benefited from the fornication sufficiently that they

5 Hersh Goldwurm, *History of the Jewish People: The Second Temple Era*, The ArtScroll History Series, ed. Nosson Schermann and Meir Zlotowitz (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1982), p. 149.

6 For the full list see Emil Schurer, *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*, trans. by John Macpherson (2d. ed.: Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, rep. 1994 [1890],) 3:197-202.

became used to it and began to lose their discernment. And God condemns the citizens for not caring. To become drunk is to lose your sense of discernment and to no longer care. Though Beale's massive commentary gets the timing wrong, he gets the meaning absolutely correct. He compares all the verses on this wine, fornication, and drunkenness and says that the fornication for the citizens was going along with the compromises of the leaders in exchange for economic security. He said,

The opportunity for such security is a temptation too great to resist... But Babylon's promise of earthly prosperity for its willing subjects is an intoxication that the majority ... want to imbibe. Once imbibed, the intoxicating influence removes all desire to resist Babylon's destructive influence, blinds one to Babylon's own ultimate insecurity and to God as the source of real security, and numbs one against any fear of a coming judgment (for the metaphor of drunkenness as spiritual blindness see Isa. 29:9)... The economic interpretation ... is clear from 18:3, 9-19, where the same phrases for immorality and intoxication as in 17:2 are equated with terms for economic prosperity. The nations' loyalty to Babylon was brought on by her ability to provide economic prosperity for them...⁷

To put it into modern terms and times, though citizens may express hatred for the corrupt system we have in local through national governments, they receive so many personal benefits (such as free education) that they have a hard time not going back to the whore for more, and more, and more. The political prostitution of today is like an addiction. Though people may claim they hate what is happening and may blame the system, they still use the system and are thus considered guilty by God of political prostitution.

So the Pharisees may have hated the Sadducees and hated their blatant compromises with Rome, but when push came to shove on their own financial security, the Pharisees cooperated. When it came to opposing Christianity, they cooperated because Christianity was a threat to their corrupt system. Back then they didn't just have two political parties who hated each other's guts; they had three: 1) The Sadducees who controlled the temple and controlled international banking, 2) the Pharisees, who controlled the Congress, and 3) the Herodians who used people on both sides to build coalitions. And though they had a public reputation for hating each other, they were constantly making back-room deals just like the leadership of the Republicans and Democrats do today. So for example, when the terroristic Sicarii began to be a threat, all three parties compromised and put stringent weapons control laws into effect to deal with their threat. When important issues came up, party leaders were promised bribes just like Harry Reid gave party leaders bribes if they would support his policies. Having a three party

7 G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 849.

system actually worked to their advantage because it gave the average citizen the illusion of strong opposition to the corruption of Jerusalem, all the while being a part of that corruption. You can see that there is really nothing new under the sun.

And for the common citizens, it was often a combination of blind loyalty to their party and fear of social stigma if they didn't go along. If a citizen were to get excommunicated from the synagogues, it would negatively impact his ability to do business with his neighbors, so there was even an economic incentive for the average citizen to go ahead and drink the Kool Aid along with everyone else. And when you live with compromises long enough, they no longer seem like compromises. And it is Jesus who looks like He is the unreasonable rule breaker. Jesus seemed like he was the unreasonable trouble maker. But He was not. He was simply upholding Biblical law and resisting the overreach of civil government.

But just as it was hard to convince Jews of the first century that what their party was doing was that bad, it is hard to convince most Christians in America that our nation is engaged in constant political prostitution and that many pastors are engaged in spiritual prostitution. Most Evangelicals would have a hard time believing that property taxes are inherently evil and are theft. Or at least it would be hard to convince them that using taxes to pay for the education of their children was theft. But it is. If you have not read Fredric Bastiat's book, *The Law*,⁸ it is worth the read. You could probably read it in a couple of hours. It clearly demonstrates that the use of tax dollars for education is theft on a grand scale and makes the government a criminal government. By the time you have read that book you will recognize that citizens in America are indeed drunk with the wine of political prostitution. They have drunk so deeply of statist propaganda that they don't even realize they are guilty of whoredom. But if you started taking away some of their benefits, they would be upset. Citizens like their public libraries and their free health clinics.

In fact, let me do a little social experiment on you to see how much of this metaphorical wine you have imbibed. I am going to read you a list of socialistic programs that the Bible would label as evil usurpation of jurisdiction, and as I read these, see if you would be reluctant to give any of these up. Let's say that the state reformed and took these things away - would you feel bad? If so, you have probably imbibed some of the same metaphorical wine that the first century Jews had imbibed. Each of these

8 https://smile.amazon.com/Law-Frederic-Bastiat/dp/1940177014/ref=sr_1_sc_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1520860849&sr=8-1-spell&keywords=fredric+bastiat+the+law

things can be proved to be unconstitutional. But more importantly, they are things God forbids the state to be involved in. Here's my very partial list:

City parks, state parks, national parks, food stamps, public health care, K-12 government education, State Universities, education grants and loans that involve tax money, loan forgiveness programs, stipends and assistance for low income people such as renters' assistance and negative income tax. Negative income tax is where you fill out your taxes and actually get paid by the government money you never put in. My accountant years ago thought I was nuts to not take the money I could have gotten. I told him its not my money; it would be theft from other tax payers. Anyway, continuing on with my list: national forests, city buses, Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, WIC, welfare, secretly turning your company in for health or building code violations, farming subsidies.

Did you know that the Feds hand out multiplied billions to farmers every year for doing nothing. By the way, there is a movement of farmers who have made a mint off these subsidies starting to oppose them. Stephen Fincher, a Tennessee Republican received \$3.2 million in subsidies over a twenty year period, so it seems a little bit hypocritical for him to speak against it. Clint Didier ran for Senate, calling the Feds predators, but it came to light that had received \$273,000 in farm subsidy payments. But at least I am glad there is some push back. But let me continue with my partial list:

Hoping inflation will continue so that your debts are partially paid off by inflation. If you have that secret wish you have definitely drunk some of the Kool Aid or the wine. OK, here is one that is Constitutional, but is not Biblical - the Post Office. Homeland Security, government funded firefighters, Prisons and corrections, public hospitals, Center for Disease Control, feeling content with the FDA and over a hundred other Federal agencies. I have known many Christians who think the FDA is an absolutely necessary thing. Government mosquito abatement. I've seen people excited about that program in various states. Road salting and snow plowing. You might think, "Who else is going to do it?" But pragmatism is not a good argument against Biblical civics. But there are answers. I would refer to you mises.org for very creative answers on why none of these things is needed. Here are some more: Game wardens, fishing and hunting licenses and regulations, conservation easements, government land buyouts in regularly flooded areas, wildlife refuges, government run homeless shelters, business licenses, medical licenses, drug approval and regulation, rural electrification, consumer protection laws, animal control, fish stocking, buying confiscated property from police departments at a huge discount. Of yeah, there are a lot

of people who can't wait for the next Sheriff's sale. Buying houses for the cost of back-taxes, ... And we have barely just begun.

How did you do on that list? Were most of those items things that you would gladly give up? Now you might quibble over one or two of those on the list, but if you knew that they were unbiblical, would you still be secretly glad if the state insisted that they be in place? I'm not even saying that it is possible to completely extricate oneself from the slavery of socialism. I don't believe in Medicare, but I don't see how people could get out of it. That's not the point. What I am saying is that these kinds of things are so pervasive in our society that people don't even recognize what is socialism and what is not. There is a sense in which the society's discernment has been skewed by constant exposure. They are drunk with the wine of socialism. They don't care. They don't want to care. Changing such things would be too inconvenient.

Well, add to that list many other evils that we have become accustomed to in our society (evils like RICO laws, penalties for use of illegal drugs, Asset Forfeiture Laws, etc) and you can get a feel for what the readers were hearing when they first got to read chapters 17 and 18. It would have been a shock to many to hear that they themselves were guilty of political prostitution. When we cover for our political candidate's sins, we are involved in his or her sins. When we say, "There ought to be a law against that," we are empowering the Harlot and the Beast if the Bible does not define the "that" as truly being a crime. So it's not just the leaders; it is the citizens who are going to be judged in this chapter. Verse 2 says, "and the inhabitants of the land were made drunk with the wine of her fornication." And after reading chapters 17 and 18 again, I am convinced that the vast majority of America's churches are drunk with the wine of political prostitution. Granted, verse 2 implies that the situation was forced on the citizens. They were made drunk with the wine of her fornication. But they no doubt liked it. That's the key point that I am making. Do we hate this political prostitution, and (within our sphere of influence) are we doing everything in our power to resist it? Or do we secretly delight in the benefits of being in bed with the government? Are we happy that the government is forcing us to be in bed with this prostitute?

III. This harlot was already under the curse/forsaken (v. 3a)

Verse 3 says, "So he took me away in spirit to a wilderness." The true bride

had to flee into the wilderness for a short time, but that was not her abode. She is destined to inherit the land. But this harlot is said to be in the wilderness of her own volition. The wilderness in the Old Testament was usually thought of as a symbol of God's curse. It was a habitation of demons. It is the removal of God's blessings. But this harlot prefers it. She is sharing the abode of the dragon and deserves the judgment of the dragon.

Now, I will grant you that when you are a citizen of Jerusalem, it is hard to agree with God that the city deserves judgment. Your house, comfort, and economics could be at stake. And I would say the same is true today. We don't want to see America today as being in the wilderness, abandoned by God, associated with the dragon and the beast. To think of economic crushing judgments coming upon us is hard to swallow.

Did Jerusalem recognize that she was cursed? I doubt it. When you read the literature about the first century, the leaders of Jerusalem actually thought they were serving God by persecuting Christians. They thought they were blessed by God in cooperating with Roman interventionism. Self-deception can be quite pervasive in a society. And there is no better metaphor for that self-deception than the image of drunkenness.

IV. Jerusalem sat on the beast (v. 3b)

Verse 3 continues: "And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns." The blasphemous names, the seven heads, and the ten horns makes it clear that this is the same beast as in chapter 13. But where the beast was said to look like a leopard, with feet of a bear, and a mouth like a lion, this adds in the color scarlet. Whether this is highlighting the demonic beast's color shining through the Roman empire's skin or not, I do not know, but the scarlet color of the beast matches the scarlet color of some of the woman's clothing. In any case, most commentators believe that this is the harlot sitting on the same beast as chapter 13 described.

Well, automatically that means that Jerusalem sat on Rome in some sense. I mentioned last week that this sitting indicates both that Rome supported Jerusalem with its full military and political strength⁹ and that Jerusalem in some way guided Rome.¹⁰ When you sit on a beast it is supporting you, but

9 Though Walvoord applies this to the future, he would be one of many who sees this sitting as indicating the beast's political support of the woman. Walvoord, John F. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*. Chicago: Moody, 1966.

10 Examples of commentators who take the sitting as indicating that the whore guides the beast would be Alford and Walvoord. Alford, Henry. *Alford's Greek Testament, an Exegetical and Critical Commentary*. Vol. 4. 1875. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980. Walvoord, John F. *The Revelation of Jesus*

you are also probably guiding it.

On another Sunday I will examine the seven year covenant that Rome and Israel entered into under Nero to exterminate Christianity. But for today I want to remind you that this sitting on the beast went back to at least seventy years before Christ. In exchange for Rome keeping the Sadducees in power, the Sadducees kept Israel in submission to Rome. That was part of the deal. I mentioned before that the Sadducean mafia family started with Alexander Jannaeus, who lived from 103 BC to 76 BC.

So long before the time of Christ, the Sadducees entrenched their power in every way possible. But they not only had power over the people; they also had power over the Roman officials. They used temple money to control rulers like Herod, Festus, Florus, and others. And when they couldn't control them, they would get them removed by Rome itself. And they had an enormous network of influence within the capitol of Rome. Harry Tajra says,

Although widely disliked by upper-class Romans, the Jews at Rome formed a politically powerful unit. The community was large and influential and its leadership had always maintained good relations with and direct access to the successive Caesars... [After giving some examples, he says] it is clear that the Jews wielded considerable influence at court.¹¹

They were sitting on the beast of Rome. This influence included approving or disapproving of massive loans that the empire needed for its wars and other projects. And of course, for the privilege of getting the money there were favors exchanged. There was a sense in which the International Bankers ran the show back then just like they run the show today. James Stuart Russell says, "The influence exercised by the Jewish race in all parts of the Roman Empire previous to the destruction of Jerusalem was immense."¹² I have a coin that shows Herod Chalcis and Herod Agrippa crowning the previous emperor, Claudius.

Christ. Chicago: Moody, 1966.

11 Harry W. Tajra, *The Martyrdom of St. Paul: Historical and Judicial Context, Traditions, and Legends*, volumes 3-146234 (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1994), p. 83.

12 J. Stuart Russell, *The Parousia*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1887, 1999), p. 503.



That's astonishing, when you think about it - that two Jewish kings would have that kind of influence over previous emperors. So the influence was already there. But what begins to happen in AD 62 is more than that - much more. And when I preached on Revelation 6:9-11, I gave six things that came together to make Israel and Rome enter a seven-year treaty or covenant that would give Israel the right to execute anyone without consulting Roman authorities for the crimes of blasphemy, apostasy, and other Biblical capital crimes. Second, this treaty gave them the right to exterminate Christians. They couldn't do that on their own prior to this treaty.

But they not only guided politics in the capitol city of Rome, they also guided the politics of the Roman officials in Israel. In one of my previous sermons I documented the enormous power that the mafioso family of

Ananas wielded. He was feared by everyone. His network of spies was huge. His financial empire was huge. His ability to assassinate opposition was well-known.

When the local procurator, Gratus, finally got frustrated enough with the criminal activities of Ananus and his intervention in Roman politics, he deposed Ananus in AD 15. He technically had that power. However, it appears that Gratus was immediately reprimanded and slapped down by Roman officials above him because we see him immediately putting Ananus' son Eleazar into office. Why did he appoint his son instead of some other family of the Sadducees? Any Sadducean family would have worked. Well, he appointed him because there was money and because Ananus was able to pull strings. With his son in the high priesthood, Ananus was effectively in the high priesthood. It didn't seem to matter how many times a mafioso family member would get deposed because of corruption or murder, money still talked, and another family member would be put into that position. They were a mafia family. And behind the scenes constantly lay the hand of the Godfather mafioso, Ananus. Are you frustrated that people in power in DC never seem to get prison time? Scandalous crime after crime gets uncovered, yet nothing is done about it. Don't be surprised. Nothing is new under the sun. One author said,

Through Ananus the Elder and five sons, Eleazar, Jonathan, Theophilus, Mattathias, Ananus, one son-in-law, Joseph Caiphas, and one grandson, Mattathias son of Theophilus, the power of Ananus and the House of Ananus extended clear to 66 CE and the start of the revolt with Rome. It was this family, the House of Ananus that put Peter and John in prison, captured Peter and many apostles, imprisoned and flogged them. They put Stephen the deacon to death by stoning, incited King Agrippa I to behead James the brother of John, and capture to kill the Apostle Peter. Then they stoned, beat and killed James the Just the brother of Jesus who was the leader for thirty two years over the Hebrew Nazarene Ecclesia in Jerusalem.¹³

The bottom line was that there is abundant evidence that the leadership of Jerusalem sat on the beast. I mentioned last week that the Sadducees tended to influence through money and occasional assassinations. The Pharisees influenced through friendships and trading favors within their sphere of influence. And the Herodians did the same. Where they were all united was in their hatred for Christ and His followers.

That's as far as we will get today. But I would just encourage you not to treat these chapters as academic history of a bye-gone age. It will be dealing with things that guide us on how not to be sucked in by our own modern Beast and our own modern Political Whores who tend to dominate all of life. For

13 <http://www.biblesearchers.com/hebrewchurch/primitive/primitive11.shtml>

sure to not be a church that gives support to the government's bestial characteristics. We should encourage lower governments to engage in interposition against tyranny, not to profit from national tyranny. Instead of sleeping with Rome, Jerusalem should have been protecting its citizens from the corruption of Rome. But as we have just seen, corruption tends to grow and influence even the most idealistic of leaders.

But this chapter was not written to make you despair and to think that draining the swamp is hopeless. Nothing is hopeless for the Gospel. It's just hopeless for politics to clean up the swamp without the power of the Gospel. Yet, even in the midst of rank corruption, it is encouraging to know that Jesus sits above it all, and He guides and protects His faithful remnant through it all. May we remain faithful even when all around us are worshiping the beast and/or committing spiritual prostitution. Amen.