**The Portrayal of Satan’s Counterfeit to God’s Church**

***Revelation 17:1-18***

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Introduction: We read in chapters 17 & 18 of Revelation the detailed description of Babylon's complete destruction. "Babylon" is used in reference to both an ecclesiastical system (ch. 17) & a political entity (ch. 18). The "Great Whore" of chapter 17 represents the apostate, ecumenical, world-wide religion (or "church") & its connection to a political structure that also opposes God. Note with me here this morn-ing the illustration before John (:1-7) & the interpretation for John (:8-18). Tonight we will consider the identification of us (:14), giving us needed words of instruction.

I. The illustration before John (:1-7)

A. The symbols

1. The "great whore" (Harlot - Greek word "porne")

a. Defining the word:

(1) One who sells her body

(2) Anyone who commits fornication

b. Describing the wickedness:

(1) "In the O.T. especially, physical fornication & adultery were often considered as

symbolic of spiritual fornication - that is, of serving & loving other gods than the true

Creator" (H. Morris). [See Ezk. 16 & 23, Hosea, Jer. 2:20, 3:3, 5:7, & 13:27]

(2) In the N.T. see James 4:4 & contrast II Cor. 11:2

2. The many waters (cf. :15)

a. Symbolizes mankind's diversity

b. Shows the beast (with the woman) having control over the multitudes of the world.

3. The scarlet beast

a. The beast is both the Antichrist & his empire

b. The beast was introduced in ch. 13, having a deadly wound but was healed

B. The significance

1. The mystery (:5) [contrast Ephesians 5:32]

a. A mother - but terrible children ("harlots")

b. A mother - but guilty of abominations, idol worship (cf. Mt. 24:15)

c. A mother - but clothed in earthly riches & splendor

2. The martyrs (:6)

a. False religion seeks to destroy the godly by infiltration, corruption &/or persecution

b. False religion hates Christianity. Why? "The only answer is the old dragon & his enmity

against the seed of the woman, the true God & Creator & Savior, Jesus Christ. He has

energized the political power (the beast) which controls the religious power (the whore),

& they everlastingly do all they can to resist & destroy the work of God" (Morris).

c. "...apostate Christendom is unsparing in its persecution of those who attempt to maintain a

a true faith in Jesus Christ" (Walvoord).

3. The marvel (:7)

a. John "wondered with great admiration" - "I wondered with great wonder" (astonishment)

b. John was in awe or amazement at the amazing influence & corruption of this system.

c. "Perhaps John had never realized before the amazing scope of Babylon's baleful influence,

but now he sees this unspeakable woman drunk with her fornication & idolatry & the

blood of all the martyred saints, & he (as we) can only marvel at the revelation" (Morris).

II. The interpretation for John (:8-18)

A. The description (:8-15)

1. The "beast" - Satan? (cf. 11:7); Antichrist? (cf. 13:3); world-empire? (cf. 17:11) - Satan

comes out of the abyss, empowers & controls the Antichrist & promotes a world government

in opposition to God.

2. The beast worshippers - those whose names are not written in the book of life (cf 13:8 & 3:5)

3. The 7 mountains & 7 kings

a. The 7 hills of Rome??

b. The 7 successive forms of world government: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece,

Rome, Revived Roman Empire (cf. Dan. 7 & 8)

c. These 7 world powers are all influenced by the woman - idolatrous worship in the name of

worshipping God (false religions)

d. There are 5 kings (kingdoms) fallen: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece; "One is..."

Rome; "the other is not yet come": Revived Roman Empire

e. The beast (Antichrist & his world empire) is the 8th & "goeth into perdition" (his eternal

destruction; see Mt. 7:13)

4. The 10 horns (:12-14, 16-17)

a. The revived Roman Empire - union of 10 nations (European Common Market??)

b. The 10 kings rule simultaneously but are subject to the beast

c. The 10 kings will make war with the Lamb & be defeated

B. The destruction (:16-17)

1. The 10 kings & the Antichrist destroy the apostate, ecumenical false church (mid-Trib)

2. The 10 kings give the Antichrist their support & he declares himself "God" (I Thess. 2:4) -

"...he no longer needs the help & power of the church. He therefore destroys the world

church & substitutes for this ecclesiastical apostasy the final form of wickedness in the area

of religion, the worship of himself" (Walvoord).

C. The determination (:17-18)

1. These nations will fulfill God's will even while they oppose His will (cf. Ps. 76:10) - "Thus

the plan of the ages unfolds majestically, & Scripture indicates that God sovereignly permits

the increment of wickedness until the cup of iniquity overflows" (Walvoord).

2. This great city (:18) has been identified as a "mystery" (:5) & probably refers to Babylon

"...in its religious rather than its historical significance" (Walvoord).

Conclusion: What lessons can we learn from our study of Revelation, particularly here in ch. 17? Robert Bell writes, "It is very natural for Bible-believing Christians to become distressed over the progress of the ecumenical movement: so many people have been deceived by the rhetoric of peace, unity, & Christian love; they are blind to the Satanic influence which is building a unified ecclesiastical machine to oppose the truth of God's Word." However, we can be both comforted & challenged as we read of the judgment of God upon apostasy & the Antichrist. We serve the Lord of lords & King of kings if we know Him as our Lord & Savior. Are you identified as one of those who is "with Him"? Are you one of the "called, chosen, & faithful"? Tonight we will examine verse 14 in more detail, by considering our noted attri-butes & our needed admonitions. How about you here this morning? Have you been saved? Are you able to claim the promises of escape from that awful time known as the Tribulation? (see I Thess. 5:9 & Rev. 3:10). Will you deter-mine to faithfully read, hear, & heed this message - this revelation of Jesus Christ to His servants?

The Identification of Believers

Revelation 17:14

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I. Our noted attributes

A. We are "called":

1. With a "holy" calling > II Timothy 1:9

2. With a "high" calling > Philippians 3:14

3. With a "heavenly" calling > Hebrews 3:1

B. We are "chosen":

1. In the Savior > Ephesians 1:3-4 (& cf. Mark 3:14)

2. To salvation > II Thessalonians 2:13 (& cf. Revelation 13:8 & contrast 17:8)

3. Unto sanctification > Colossians 3:12 (& cf. Romans 8:28-29)

C. We are consecrated ("faithful"):

1. By our love for Christ > John 14:15 (& cf. John 14:21 & 23)

2. By our loyalty to Christ > Matthew 20:20-23 (& cf. II Timothy 2:12)

3. By our likeness to Christ > II Corinthians 3:18 (& cf. Ephesians 4:13)

II. Our needed admonitions

A. We are warned about the lure of worldly conformity:

1. Romans 12:1-2 > likeness to this world (& cf. I Peter 1:14)

2. I John 2:15-17 > love for this world (& cf. James 4:4)

3. Matthew 6:31-34 > living as this world (& cf. I Corinthians 3:1-3 & 6:1-8)

B. We are warned about the lax in spiritual purity:

1. Our need is for holiness > II Corinthians 7:1 (& cf. I Peter 1:15-16)

2. Our need is for saintliness > James 1:27 (& cf. I John 2:28-3:3)

3. Our need is for exclusiveness > I John 5:21 (& cf. Matthew 22:37-38)

C. We are warned about the loss of personal integrity:

1. Because of pride & prestige > Acts 5:1-11

2. Because of covetousness > Colossians 3:5

3. Because of immorality > I Thessalonians 4:3-4 (& cf. Matthew 5:27-28 &

Proverbs 6:32-33)