

Revelation
Chapter 17

“The Bride of Antichrist”

All scripture references are from the NASU unless otherwise noted

Calvary Chapel Fellowship of Enid
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Teaching: Most of you know that we, as the church, are biblically referred to as the Bride of Christ, but fewer people are aware that there is also a Bride of the Antichrist. And for those who might be unaware of that ... the Lord has wisely brought us to that truth this morning in **Revelation chapter 17**.

Q. But first ... let me ask you a question ... where in the Bible can we find that very famous saying ... “The Lord helps those who help themselves”? – We can’t! Not only is that saying not in the Bible, the Bible actually says just the opposite. The Lord helps those who realize that they are totally incapable of helping themselves.

But that unbiblical quote really is the basic theology of the Bride of Antichrist as we will soon see.

But this really is a very important principle.

Q. So let me ask you ... are you truly convinced today that you’re totally incapable of helping yourself?

Now you’ll want to note with me that the chronology of **Revelation** ceases to flow in a linear fashion here. In reality, chronologically speaking ... after **chapter 16** comes **chapter 19**.

Because, for the most part, the **last 11 chapters** have focused on the details of God’s Tribulation judgment, but in **chapters 17 & 18** – the focus shifts from the details of the judgment to the details of what is being judged.

So don’t get confused, thinking that we’re moving further down the prophetic timeline in these **next two chapters**.

Now in preparation for this morning’s study ... I need you to think all the way back with me to the **book of Genesis** (if you’ve been with us for our Wednesday night studies that’ll be pretty easy, but if not ...).

Chapter 10 is where we’re going ... because that’s where we find the story of Nimrod. And Nimrod is, in many ways, The Father of False Religion. The Progenitor of self-help spirituality or as it’s known today, humanism.

Nimrod, you might remember, was a mighty hunter. The fourth generation from Noah ... his grandfather was Ham, the wicked son of Noah and he eventually took a wife by the name of Semiramis and had a son named Tammuz ... both of them widely written about in many cultures and by a wide variety of names because they came to be viewed as divine ... mother and son, co-redeemers of the world.

And remember that after the flood, God told Noah and his family to scatter out, multiply and fill the earth. But by the time of Nimrod ... just four generations down the line ... we find him doing just the opposite.

He sets out to gather all the people at the plain of Shinar (otherwise known as the Mesopotamian Mecca of Babylon) ... which brings us to **chapter 11 of Genesis** where we read of the intention of Nimrod and those who followed him ...

Genesis 11:4 They said, "Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."

Q. Hear that? – They're saying is that they had better make their own way to Heaven ... otherwise they might actually have to obey God.

Now obviously there's nothing wrong with building a city. There's nothing wrong with building a tower, but this was a project conceived in rebellion.

And this was not just any project ... this was a religious project. They intended to get to Heaven by the sweat of their brow. A do-it-yourself salvation ... or ... modern day, "Humanism"!

And just as a side note, for those who'd like to think that the church isn't into humanism today ... I told you about Nimrod's wife, Semiramis. And I told you that she's known by several other names ... in the Canaanite culture she's Ashera ... in Rome she's Venus, but we know her best by her Greek name ... Estheroth ... because she's the false goddess for whom Easter is named. She's also cited as the mother of Lint ... the 40 days of self-sacrifice observed by some denominations.

So Nimrod and his family were foundational in the start of this evil system of do-it yourself religion with the Tower of Babel (or, in the Greek ... Babylon). But in order to get to **Revelation chapter 17** ... we need to follow this trail just a little bit further down the line of history ...

Because Babel, we could fairly say, was the original cult. Along with the tower, they set up priests, to whom every new member had to make confession and bow down. These priests stood on elevated platforms and were said to possess the highest wisdom and most divine secrets.

And that evil religious system persisted in Babylon until its fall to the Medo-Persian

Empire in 539 B.C.. At that time, that evil religious system, and the priests who ran it, were relocated to Pergamos and absorbed into that culture.

In-fact, you may remember John telling us about that in his address to the Seven Churches (**Revelation 2:12-13**).

Q. Remember how God referred to Pergamos there as the “Seat of Satan” because they’d allowed the false teaching of church hierarchy to corrupt the fellowship? –
They’d essentially set up priests as mediators between God and man.

Well then when Attalus, the King of Pergamos died in B.C. 133, he bequeathed the headship of the Babylonian Priesthood to Rome. In fact, in B.C. 63, Julius Caesar was named the Supreme Pontiff of the Babylonian Order.

And at that point, the Roman emperors came to be known, not only as the emperor, but also as the Pontifex Maximus or “The Greatest High Priest”. Later on, the roles were separated and the Bishop of Rome took on the title of Pontifex ... later contracted to merely Pontiff ... as it remains to this day.

And yes, if it hasn’t become clear to you yet, I am indeed pointing at the Roman Catholic church with all of its pomp and show and ungodly hierarchy!

But I’m certainly not pointing exclusively at them because the Protestant church will stand for her own guilt ... and there’s plenty to go around.

But the biblical description of this Tribulation church, does indeed bare an uncanny resemblance to Roman Catholicism as a system.

Well ... we better get started ...

Verses 1-2: If you were here last week for our study of **chapter 16**, then you’ll recognize the angel that John’s speaking of here as one of the angels who poured out the final acts of God’s wrath.

And this angel is gonna go on to explain this vision to John, but in preview ... the woman is identified as Babylon, but representative of what we’ve been talking about ... the Revived Roman Empire and specifically here in **chapter 17** ... the revival of the evil religious system that Rome inherited from Babylon.

Likened here, in a very unflattering way, to a whore whose unfaithfulness affects and infects many people and nations with her adulterous spirit.

Verses 3-5: The beast, as we’ve seen previously, speaks of the Antichrist and please take note here that this woman ... the Babylonian religious system is riding this beast.

Q. When you saddle up a horse and jump on ... who’s in control? Who’s doing the

steering? – Now let me clarify ... I'm not suggesting that this woman has actually overpowered the beast ... but the appearance that she's in control ... is very intentional on the part of the beast.

The Antichrist will want the world to believe that he's bowed himself to this religious system. That he's submitted himself as a servant because that appearance will serve his cause.

So ... from this description we can deduce that this end-time, so-called "church", will be an attractive one in many ways. She's adorned to entice. And it works ... she's said to have intoxicated the nations with her, hard-to-resist, immorality.

Q. So back to the question of who is "Babylon the Great"? – Well certainly it could mean the literal city of Babylon. A Mecca which sat on the Euphrates River about 55 miles south of present day Bagdad. And ... in part, it probably does speak of the literal Babylon, but there are a number of reasons for us to suspect that more is intended:

1. For one ... as we saw ... this evil system that's being described by John and punished by God, can be traced from Babel through Pergamus and straight on into Rome.

2. Secondly ... the sign-off that Peter uses to close out his first epistle, says ...

1 Peter 5:13 She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark.

The problem with what Peter says there is that he was never speaking of or to, anyone in Babylon ... he was speaking of brothers and sisters in Rome.

Babylon was a well-established codename for Rome ... used so that the Roman officials wouldn't find the faithful in their city and persecute them.

3. Then for good measure ... skip ahead with me to **verse 9** for a moment ...

Rev 17:9 "Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits

Q. The "seven mountains" ... what seven mountains? – Almost from its founding ... Rome has been known as "The Legendary City of Seven Hills". Although it has come to occupy far more than seven hills ... the name has stuck from its time as a union of the settlements that sat atop the seven geographically, central hills.

And for you students and skeptics ... you can look up these references as well ... **Genesis 10:10, 11:9; Isaiah 13:19-20 & Jeremiah 50-51.**

In any case ... it's VERY widely believed that the term "Babylon the Great" is a codename for and, in this case, symbolizes ... Rome. Which indicates to us that the Antichrist's center of power during the Tribulation will be Rome.

Which makes **chapter 17**, primarily about the false religious system that will center in Rome during the Tribulation. In fact, John even calls this harlot a "mystery" in **verse 5**, which is the same term Paul uses for the church in **Ephesians chapter 3**.

And similar to what we see here, where the false church is described as a city ... the true church is described in **Revelation 21**, and many other places, as the great city ... the "**Holy Jerusalem**".

And if you've never counted them ... the most frequently mentioned city in the scriptures, as you might imagine, is Jerusalem. But the second most frequently mentioned city ... is Babylon and these two cities are consistently on opposite ends of the will of God in those passages.

The Bride of Christ and the Bride of Antichrist!

Verses 6-7: John expresses "wonder" here, as many will, for the reason we were talking about a moment ago ... that this woman on the beast's back seems to be in control.

To the casual, human observer ... it would appear that she's riding and controlling him, but the angel ... with his supernatural wisdom sees the truth and tells us in **verse 7**... "In reality, the beast is merely carrying the woman wherever he chooses." No doubt she too thinks she's in control, but in reality ... she's just being taken for a ride.

And that's what evil does! Satan loves it when you think you're in control of the fun. But in the end, you'll always find that he's taken you for a ride ... and usually to places you didn't intend to go.

Verses 8-13:

Q. Remember Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Daniel 2)? The one about the huge statue that Daniel interpreted for him? – Gold, silver, bronze, iron and then feet and ten toes that were a mixture of iron and clay? – Nebuchadnezzar didn't know what the dream meant so Daniel was summoned and he told the king that his dream was a vision of world kingdoms in succession.

He told him that ...

- 1.** The first kingdom was the kingdom of Babylon ... Nebuchadnezzar, of course, was the king of Babylon at that time.
- 2.** After Babylon, Daniel's prophecy said that Medo-Persia would take over and then ...

3. Greece and then ...

4. Rome.

Four world governing empires ... all of them either present or future from the perspective of the day Daniel penned the prophecy.

But before the time of Nebuchadnezzar, there were two other empires that held the place of world domination. Now, that's not to say that they ruled the world, but that they were the dominant figure of their day. Those two were:

1. Egypt and ...

2. Assyria.

And their rise and fall is biblically predicted, because of their relationship to Israel.

So historically there was Egypt,

Assyria,

Babylon,

Medo-Persia,

Greece and then ...

Rome ...

and when John was writing this ... the "one that was", was Rome. In fact, he was exiled to Patmos on Roman authority.

But that's only six world empires and this angel speaks of seven. And again ... Daniel's vision included 10 nations all banded together as represented by the ten toes made of mixed material.

The revived Roman Empire ... ruling over a ten-nation coalition ... which rounds out the seven that the angel speaks of. The kingdom of the Antichrist.

But the angel also says that he must continue "a short time".

Q. How short? – Forty two months or 1,260 days or 3 and ½ years ... the final half of the Tribulation period.

Q. But what's all this about him being one of the seven kings, but he's really the eighth and he used to be but isn't now, but will be in the future?

Q. Who remembers what happens to the Antichrist in chapter 13? – He dies! Probably gets assassinated, but is then supernaturally resurrected. He was and then was not and then was again. And when he dies ... his kingdom dies too. So what was the seventh, becomes the eighth.

And if you go back to the **1st verse of chapter 13**, you'll find that Satan is also described as having 10 horns ... speaking of this 10 nation federation which he will run through the Antichrist during the Tribulation. Ten nations who will, not only dominate the world at the pleasure of the evil one.

Daniel explains that in ...

Dan 7:24 'As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise ...

And what's more ... these kings will unite with the Antichrist for one specific purpose ... it will all come down to that one hour of purpose ... to oppose God as the **next verse** tells us ...

Verse 14: Again Daniel ... speaking to King Nebuchadnezzar ...

Dan 2:44 "In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. 45 "Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future ..."

God gave the breath of life and He can just as quickly remove it. He is the Lord who is over all lords and the King who is over all kings.

And all those who choose to join His team are made conquerors by virtue of His victory, but all who oppose Him will be eternally crushed.

Verses 15-18: Part of the apostasy of the Roman church will be their ecumenity. They will be the one world church. An accommodating ... one-size-fits-all sort of place.

Something that is so displeasing to God that He will actually use the Antichrist and his kingdom to destroy that adulterous church.

So to that end ... at some point, the Antichrist will have a falling out with the false church.

Whereas Christ will never separate Himself from the true bride ... the Antichrist will, true to his nature ... aggressively drive his bride away.

Once this religious system has fulfilled the purpose of the Antichrist and is no longer beneficial to him ... he will devour it.

Conclusion: There are two points, in particular, that I want you to take home with you

from this morning:

1. Anytime you think that you're riding the beast ... that you're in control of where your sin will take you. That you can put the brakes on your harlotry anytime you want and the beast will stop for you.

Don't be fooled. He's taking you for a ride and deceiving you into thinking you're in control, but you never are!

2. At the core of this false religious system's sin is self reliance. A do-it-yourself, earn God's favor type of mentality.

I pray that there is no one in here this morning who's been trying climb to Heaven based on their own goodness, but if that's you ... give up and fall into Jesus' arms.