

**Revelation**  
**Babylon is Fallen! (Part 1)**  
**Revelation 17:1-18:24**  
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I mentioned that as we looked to the Word of God tonight, there are a couple of issues that are sort of out there for me: one of them is my voice. I was born with a very good diaphragm and a loud voice, and I am just used to it being there. My wife is always saying to me, “Sweetheart, we are right here in the same room.” So, I am a little bit hampered by that. I will say, however, that in God’s providence, I had the opportunity when I was in Grace Church one Sunday night when John was away, I had to preach. I was excited about preaching, but I preached all day and that night, by the afternoon, I had completely lost my voice. Not like this. I mean, it was a whisper. I preached an entire sermon at a whisper, and you know what, the Lord’s Word is the Lord’s Word, and He used it. So, I’m not worried about that part of it. But I will say that I love consecutive expository preaching. I love coming to the next text, studying it together, unfolding it for myself and my understanding for you. Ordinarily, that really works well. It is amazing how in God’s remarkable providence, passages fall at just the right time. But I will say that there are occasions, rare occasions, and this would be one of them, when the passage that we come to somehow just doesn’t seem quite appropriate for the occasion. Because today is Mother’s Day and tonight, we are going to be talking about the Great Harlot. But here we are. So, you have to disconnect those two entirely in your mind now that I have connected them for you. Let’s study the Word of God together because it has much to tell us in the passage that we come to.

In fact, what we learn as we come to Revelation 17 and 18, really in an over-arching sense, is about worship. Worship is the ultimate human priority. In fact, I would go beyond that and say, that it is the ultimate priority for every intelligent being in the universe. Every single human being, yourself included, was made to worship. Now, every person having been made to worship can respond to that reality in different ways: a person may deny that entirely; or a person may

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seek to stay away from organized religion and say that they are not religious at all. They can even claim to be an agnostic or an atheist. But what a human being can never do is change what he was hard-wired by God to do.

So, what happens then when a creature made to worship refuses to worship the true God? The answer is he doesn't stop worshipping. He becomes instead an idolater. Romans chapter 1, in fact, look at it with me. Romans chapter 1 and verse 21. It says, "Even though [through the creation, through all that God revealed about Himself in the creation.] they [all peoples everywhere] knew God, [that is, they knew that there was a God; they knew His eternity; they knew His power; they knew certain things about God from the creation. Even though they knew this about God] they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and birds, and four-footed animals and crawling creatures." That friends, is what always happens when a human being made to worship refuses to worship and acknowledge the true God.

Idolatry in all of its forms ultimately has two great appeals—two great compelling appeals to idolatry. Number one is self-centered gratification. If I could take you back through the gods of the Old Testament, or we could rehearse the gods of the New Testament era or the gods of our day, I could show you that in those cases, at the root of idolatry is self-centered gratification usually centering on some combination of violence and brutality, sexual fulfillment, and financial prosperity. That's the first appeal of idolatry. Even with Baal worship. That's what it was all about. Those are the things that motivated people to become worshippers of Baal.

The other great appeal of idolatry is perhaps even greater and that is, self-rule—self-rule. I love the way David Wells describes it. Listen to this:

Why do people choose the substitute over God Himself? Probably the most important reason is that it obviates accountability to God. We can meet idols on

our own terms because they are our own creations. They are safe, predictable and controllable. They are, in Jeremiah's colorful language, the scarecrows in a cucumber field. They can be carried, and they are completely under the user's control. They offer nothing like the threat of a god who thunders from Sinai and whose providence in this world so often appears to us to be incomprehensible and dangerous. People who remain in the center of their lives and loyalties need face only themselves. This is the appeal of idolatry.

You see, false religion is not in fact for those who are seeking God. A lot of young Christians, sadly even some mature Christians, think that false religion is because people are really seeking the true God. Nothing could be farther from the truth. It's not for those who are seeking God, but false religion is for those running away from God—the true God. That's why Paul says in Romans 3:11, "There is none who seeks for God." There aren't seekers except God Himself. Thank God He is a seeker. Jesus said, "I came to seek and to save that which is lost." He is the only seeker in the universe.

Now, when it comes then to false religion—listen carefully—when it comes to false religion, Karl Marx was right. It is the opium of the people. It's often used to control, and it makes people feel better about their difficult lives. But what is the source of all false religion? Well, Satan, the father of lies, John 8:44, and his demons; blind sinners, 2 Corinthians 2:4. They disguise themselves as angels of light, 2 Corinthians 11:14, and they persuade people to believe the lies of false religion. Because false religion is one of Satan's greatest weapons, its power and influence will reach its height during the future Tribulation. Under Antichrist and the false prophet, all religions of the world will unite into one final world religion during the first half of the Tribulation remaining apparently distinct in their own ways, but coming together as one great ecumenical force and that false religious system will play an essential role in Antichrist's final world empire. John MacArthur writes this:

During the Tribulation, people will desperately seek religion because of what will be happening in the world as the hammer blows of God's judgment devastate the earth and terrorize its inhabitants. People will turn in desperation to Antichrist as their savior. Aided by the false prophet and hordes of deceiving demons, Antichrist will establish a world-wide religion.

Tonight, in our study of Revelation, we see the power of its future worldwide domination and at the same time, it's certain destruction by the Lamb. Let me remind you of Revelation in its larger sense. The theme of this book is the unveiling of Jesus Christ and His glorious Kingdom resulting in the everlasting destruction of His enemies and the everlasting blessing of His Saints. That is the theme of the book of Revelation. As far as an outline of Revelation, it really comes to us from Jesus' words to John in chapter 1, verse 19. They provide a natural framework and outline for the book. Chapter 1, verse 19 says, "Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things." Using that framework, here is the outline we have pursued of this book: in chapter 1, you have the things which you have seen: that's the setting of Jesus' prophecy, the vision of Jesus in Chapter 1. Then you have the things which are: the state of Jesus' church, in chapters 2 and 3. And then you have the things which will take place after these things: these are the stages of Jesus' final triumph from chapter 4 through chapter 22.

Now when you look at that outline, I want us to focus on the largest section of it: chapters 6 through 18. You'll see "B" there in the outline as the sub-category: it is the Seven-Year Tribulation—begins in chapter 6, runs all the way through chapter 18. Let me give you an outline of just that section. We are only looking at the Great Tribulation described from chapters 6 through 18. We have looked at the seals; we have looked at the trumpets; the seven bowls; and now we come, in chapters 17 and 18, to the destruction of Babylon. That's where we come in our study this evening.

Now let me give you the theme of these two chapters. When you think about it, it comes down to this: in Revelation 17 and 18, we learn in detail of the destruction of Antichrist's false religious system, his political empire and his capital city. Chapters 17 and 18 again as we have seen often in this book, step away from the chronological flow of the events at the end of the Tribulation to enlarge on a theme that John has already addressed, in fact, go back to chapter 14. Look at Revelation 14, and verse 8. "Another angel, a second one, followed, saying, 'Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality.'" So here we see the first hint of this coming destruction. Turn over to chapter 16 and in the middle of the unfolding of the bowls, the dumping and pouring out of the bowls, we see the destruction again of Babylon. Verse 17, you'll notice begins the seventh angel pouring out his bowl. As part of that seventh bowl judgment, look down at verse 19, "The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell." The first great city is Jerusalem as we discovered, then the cities of the nations around the world and then "Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath." So, in the chronology of Revelation, as the seventh bowl of judgment is poured out on the earth, part of the destruction of that final bowl right near the end of the Tribulation period, is the destruction of Babylon. But in these two chapters, we step away from the chronology to describe in detail the destruction of Babylon the Great. Let me give you a preliminary outline of these two chapters. Essentially, chapter 17 is the Destruction of Religious Babylon; chapter 18 is the Destruction of Political Babylon. One city, two great emphases and one great kingdom.

So, let's start as we begin our study tonight by looking at the Destruction of Religious Babylon. We won't make it all the way through this chapter. In fact, we will just sort of begin because there's a lot we need to discuss in introducing this. Then, next time, Lord willing that we study this together, we will finish chapter 17. But let's begin to look first of all in verses 1 through the first half of verse 6. We see the description of religious Babylon as a harlot. Let's read it together. Revelation 17 beginning in verse 1:

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, “Come here, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed acts of immorality, and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of immorality.” And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns. The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality, and on her forehead a name was written, a mystery, “BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.” And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints and with the witnesses of Jesus.

Now in that passage, an angel describes to John and to us, the false religious system that will blanket the earth during the Tribulation period. He understandably describes that religious system as a harlot or as a prostitute. Let’s look at this description together. First, as we examine this description, we learn the scope of the harlot’s influence. The scope of the harlot’s influence in verses 1 and 2. Verse 1 begins, “Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me.” Now, one of the seven angels then who had poured out the seven bowls of wrath that we just read about and studied in chapter 16, came and spoke with John. We aren’t told which of the seven angels so we can’t be certain. However, I think it’s reasonable to assume that there’s a decent chance that it was the seventh angel whose bowl actually included judgment on Babylon according to chapter 16, verse 19. This, by the way, is the very first time in the book of Revelation of what will be several times moving forward, when an angel will explain a vision to John. Verse 1 goes on, he “spoke with [John] saying, ‘Come here, I will show you.’” Now what’s fascinating about those words is that they are exactly the same words that an angel will later use in chapter 21. Flip over to chapter 21 and look at verse 9. You will recognize this immediately: “Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, [sounds almost identical. And watch this:] ‘Come here,

I will show you [but I'll show you what? I will show you] the bride, the wife of the Lamb.” It is obvious that God intended, the Lord intended, and that John intended an intentional contrast here between this harlot representing all false religion and the Lamb’s bride, or the true church. Now let’s go back to chapter 17. Because in chapter 17, in this case, notice the angel will show John, verse 1, “the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters.” The angel invited John to come with him so John could witness the judgment. The Greek word for “judgment” means both the “verdict” and “the sentence” carried out. In this case, the judgment, notice, on the great harlot or the prostitute. Now this harlot is not an actual person. Instead, in Scripture, the word “harlot” or “prostitute” is often used as a metaphor for false religion; for idolatry; and even for apostasy, that is, those who have turned from the true faith to some aberration. In fact, other cities in the Old Testament are called prostitutes or harlots because of their false religion. For example, in Nineveh, Nahum chapter 3, Nineveh is called a harlot because of her idols. The city of Tyre on the Mediterranean coast is referred to the same way in Isaiah 23. Even Jerusalem is referred to as a harlot. Here’s Isaiah 1:21, “How the faithful city has become a harlot, she who was full of justice! Righteousness once lodged in her, but now murderers.” Even of the nation of Israel as a whole, Jeremiah 3, verses 8 and 9: “And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce, yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also. Because of the lightness of her harlotry, she polluted the land and committed adultery with stones and trees.” Again, making it clear that the kind of harlotry or prostitution he is talking about is spiritual—it’s idolatry.

So back to our text in Revelation 17, this harlot, this prostitute, seduces the entire world into false religion. It includes both pagan idolatry, that will be existing in the time of the Tribulation, as well as a perverted apostate Christianity which will also exist during the time of the Tribulation period. In fact, seven times in this chapter, John uses words related to prostitution. Here’s the angel’s point to John: the final ecumenical world religion, the uniting of all the world’s religions into one will be a spiritual prostitute. Notice she’s described here as “sitting on many waters.” In the ancient world, cities, especially great and influential cities, were always located near a perpetual source of water. The ancient city of Babylon itself was located on the

Euphrates River, many canals and irrigation streams. In Jeremiah 51:13, Jeremiah describes that ancient city and its inhabitants as “you who dwell by many waters.” But the angel here explains its meaning. Go down to verse 15: “He said to me, ‘The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.’” So, this idea of the harlot sitting on the many waters, says that her influence will blanket the planet in the same way that our oceans blanket the planet. The entire world will be under the power and influence of this final false religious system and her power and influence will dominate all levels of society. Look at verse 2, “with whom the kings of the earth committed acts of immorality.” As has often been true with false religions throughout history. This final world religious system, this ecumenical amalgamation of religions across the world will exercise immense political influence. The kings of the earth, the leaders of the world’s nations, will be willing for politically expedient reasons to join, to align themselves with it.

Verse 2 goes on to say that not just the kings, but “those who dwell on the earth.” That expression is used throughout Revelation for all unbelievers. All unbelievers living at that time will join themselves, either for personal advantage or out of passionate faith, to Antichrist’s false religious system. And they will be so committed to it, they will be so enamored with it, that it will seem as if they are drunk on it—intoxicated with it.

How will this happen? How can an entire planet of people be convinced? Well, notice in verse 3 the source of harlot’s power—the source of the harlot’s power. Verse 3 says, “And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness.” At this point, the scene in John’s vision suddenly changes and he finds himself in a wilderness, a deserted desolate place. There John says, “I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast.” The woman here is clearly the prostitute the angel had been talking about in verses 1 and 2. In this case, in verse 3, she is “sitting on” which implies being supported by “a scarlet beast.” Now the description of this beast, as it unfolds, makes it very clear that we are talking about the Antichrist, the political world ruler who will dominate the Tribulation period. If you doubt that, go back to chapter 13, verse 1. Here’s the description of him, “Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads.” All of these things are



identical to what we are going to see in chapter 17, “And on his horns were 10 diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names.” So, we are talking about that beast—we are talking about the Antichrist. He will be beastly in his character and rule.

Now, in our text in chapter 17, we are told in verse 3, for the first time, the color of this beast—he’s scarlet. In Scripture, scarlet has some interesting associations. It is associated most often with luxury and royalty. But it is also associated with sin. You remember Isaiah 1:18, “Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow.” It is associated as well with bloodshed. I think all of those things are likely implied here. Antichrist will a king. He will be royalty but royalty that is characterized by sin and luxury and brutal violence.

John goes on to describe the beast in other ways. Notice verse 3, he’s “full of blasphemous names.” Back in chapter 13, verse 1, we just read a moment ago, it said “on his heads were blasphemous names.” Here, they cover his entire body. Now why is he described as being full of blasphemous names? He is described that way for two reasons: first of all, because of the names and titles of deity which he claims for himself. You remember in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, verse 4, we are told that when he destroys the worship in the Temple in Jerusalem in the middle point of the Tribulation period, he will set up an image of himself and he will display himself as god. But he is also full of blasphemous names because of the arrogant words he will speak against the true God. He not only claims to be god himself, but he denigrates the true God. Back in Daniel when we were studying through Daniel, we saw what he will do. Daniel chapter 7, verse 25: “He will speak out against the Most High.” Daniel 11:36: “The king will do as he pleases, and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods.” If you think you have heard our politicians say something blasphemous against God, you haven’t yet. He will. “He is covered with blasphemous names.” Full of them.

John goes on to describe Antichrist: the scarlet beast on which the harlot sits as, notice in verse 3, “having seven heads and ten horns.” Now this describes his political power and his alliances. We will see that next time in verses 9 and 10. In those verses, we’ll discover that the seven heads are described as seven mountains on which the women sits, likely seven kingdoms as well as seven

kings. We will talk about what those are when we get there. And the ten horns are explicitly described as ten kings, verse 12, who will rule in the last days under Antichrist, verse 13.

Understand this: under Antichrist, there will be no separation of church and state.

Now, what verse 3 is describing here is the fact, listen carefully, that for a time, Antichrist and this false religious system will co-exist supporting one another. For the first three-and-a-half years of the Tribulation, Antichrist will support this false religious system where all of the false religions of the world come together into one wonderful, “let’s shake hands, let’s all be friends” kind of one-world faith. He will use that to his advantage to build his empire, to build his kingdom. However, eventually Antichrist will change his tune: look down at verse 16, “And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast.” So, ten kings who rule under Antichrist and the beast, the Antichrist himself, “these will hate the harlot,”—this false religious system—“and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire.” That’s pretty descriptive. They are going to turn on this false religious system and say, “Okay, you helped us build the empire, we are done with you.” Likely, during the first half of the Tribulation, Antichrist will align himself with and support this false religious system made up of all of these different world religions. Remember they are going to still be here. They come together. They finally get it together and they unite as they always have in their hatred of the true God and of the Saints.

So, they will support each other. She rides around on this beast. He supports her. Gives her her power. But at the mid-point of the Tribulation, when Antichrist appears to have been killed and resurrected, at that point he turns against all other false religions in the world, and he destroys them, and he has one final great world religion—and it is himself. He refuses to allow any other worship but the worship of himself. Turn back to chapter 13, verse 11. This is the description of the false prophet: “I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon. He exercises all the authority of the first beast”—that’s Antichrist—“in his presence. And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed. He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men. And he deceives those who dwell

on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform.” And as a result, verse 15, he is even able to “breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast would even speak and cause as many”—notice this—“as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed.” So, there is this bizarre amalgamation of false religions in the first three-and-a-half years. The Muslims, and the Mormons and you name it, all the false religions will join together into one great happy family and Antichrist will use them to build his empire. But at the mid-point of the Tribulation, when he appears to suffer a fatal wound and he is resurrected, then he and the false prophet will say, “Enough with those people.” And he will set up an image of himself and the temple, 2 Thessalonians talks about it, Daniel talks about it, Jesus refers to it as the “Abomination of Desolation.” He will set up an image of himself. He will do away with all other false worship, and he alone will be the object of false worship. But until he turns against this religious system, verse 3 tells us, “He will be the source of its power.”

Let’s consider thirdly the symbols of the harlot’s prosperity in verse 4: the symbols of the harlot’s prosperity. Prostitutes often dress to draw attention to themselves and the same will be true for the harlot Babylon. Notice verse 4, “The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet.” Because of the difficulty of dyeing fabrics and dark colors, there were very few ways to get that kind of color in a garment, it was a difficult process; the materials were hard to come by, particular berries, particular snails were the only ways you could dye certain fabrics these colors. As a result of that, these colors were the colors worn by royalty. Purple and scarlet. They represented prosperity, nobility, wealth and she is decked out in purple and scarlet. Verse 4 goes on to say, “and adorned with gold.” Literally “made gold with gold” is what the text says. She wore so much gold that she appeared golden. In addition, she adorned herself, notice, with “precious stones and pearls.” Now these fine jewels not only indicate her desire to make herself attractive and alluring to her victims, but they also imply that she has been very successful in her evil trade and has become incredibly wealthy. Compare that to the simple clothes of the Bride of the Lamb. Chapter 19, verse 8, “It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.”

John notices something else about this woman in verse 4, “having in her hand a gold cup.” That gold cup again underscores her wealth and royalty. If you were a normal person living in the first century, you didn’t have a gold cup. You had a clay cup and you had to replace it often because you often broke it. She has a gold cup. And notice it’s disgusting contents: verse 4 says, this cup is “full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality.” In other words, idolatry and all of the acts of worship associated with idolatry are unclean things and abominations to God. In other words, this religious system, will engage in literally everything that God hates. But it will be wealthy. This future false religious system will be no different than all false religion throughout history. It will use its power and influence over the souls of people to enrich itself. That’s true whether you think of the scribes and the Pharisees in the first century or whether you think of Roman Catholicism today. I looked up, because I was curious, what is the wealth of the Roman Catholic church today. Nobody knows because it is completely off the charts. It is, if not the wealthiest one of the wealthy institutions on the planet. But that is what false religion always does. It engorges itself on the backs of poor desperate people, promising them things that it cannot give. False religion in the Tribulation will be no different than false religion today. It will be very prosperous.

That brings us fourthly to the secret of the harlot’s name. The secret of the harlot’s name in verses 5 and 6. Verse 5 says, “and on her forehead a name was written.” Now this would have been understandable to the readers of this book in the first century because in Rome, it was common for prostitutes to identify themselves. This prostitute has a name written on her forehead, either tattooed into the skin itself or, more likely, like the Roman harlots of that time, written on a headband. But notice her name is a “mystery.” If you have studied the New Testament, you know that the noun “mystery” is used in the New Testament to describe something that has not been revealed in the past, and something that would never have been known apart from divine revelation, but which now has been revealed by God. The fact that here, Babylon the Great is called a “mystery” implies that in this context we are not talking about the ancient city of Babylon. We are not talking about that geographic location, because guess what? That wouldn’t be a mystery. But here this false religious system is called “Babylon the Great.”

Babylon—the ancient symbol of false religion and rebellion against God. And it’s the “great” because of its massive world-wide power and influence. So, who is or what is “Babylon the Great”? Tertullian in the late second century was apparently the first church father to use the label “Babylon” for Rome. Because of other clues in this text, like the “seven hills” in verse 9 and the reference to a “great city” in verse 18, many have argued that the spiritual harlot in this chapter is, in fact, Rome and the Roman Catholic Church. And I am not here to say that that is impossible. Clearly, it is apostate; clearly it is a false religious system; clearly it is, if not the most powerful and certainly one of the most powerful false religious systems on the planet today. It will undoubtedly be a part of this final ecumenical religious system. But I think the language of these chapters makes it include more than the Roman Catholic church. It’s all false religion brought under one head or one system. There is still a mysterious element to this system of the future.

Now to understand this future false religious system called “Babylon the Great” you first need to understand the role of the ancient city of Babylon and how it has played a role in false religion throughout history. You see, really, the story of false religion begins with the Tower of Babel. After the flood, the descendants of Noah arrived in Babylon in the land of Shinar. Genesis 10, 9 and 10, describes the leader, Nimrod. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord. The beginning of his kingdom was Babel in the land of Shinar. And then you come to Genesis 11, and in Genesis 11, verse 1 to 9, Nimrod apparently leads in the construction of the Tower of Babel. It is a story that is very familiar, if you are familiar with the Scripture at all. What was the motivation of the Tower of Babel? Part of the motivation was to “make for themselves a name.” But it really involved making their own religion. The towers of brick that they built which later became known as “ziggurats” were used in false religion. And after God scattered the people from Babel and confused their languages, they scattered across the world, Genesis 11:8 says. And they took their new designer religion with them. From that point, Babylon has been connected to and has been the center of false religion.

So, when God decides to give a name to the final world religious system where all of the false religions that exist at that time are brought together into one great ecumenical mass, what name makes the most sense? Babylon the Great. Just as the ancient city of Babylon spawned all false religion throughout history, this future Babylon will be the mother, the source and sustainer of every false religion that exists during that time. Look at verse 6, “And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints.” Sadly, then and now, prostitutes are often marked with substance abuse, either alcohol or drugs. But this prostitute representing all false religion at the end of the age, will be drunk, not with alcohol but with the blood of the saints and the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. The expression “drunk with blood” implies that she will have an insatiable thirst and lust for blood and violence. She will carry it out on a vast worldwide scale. And those who are involved in this, those who engage in this worldwide slaughter of believers, will be irrationally out of control. They will be like they are intoxicated—like they are drunk with blood. There is a great irony here: this harlot will accept everyone into her ecumenical fold except all genuine Christians.

Now look at the two groups there. Those are probably not two separate groups in verse 6 but rather two descriptions of the same group. It is talking about true believers. But false religion persecutes and murders believers in the true God for both of these reasons: because they are saints and because they live holy, Godly lives. Unbelieving religion hates believers for that because they can never manifest that. Their persecution is because believers are witnesses of Jesus. They faithfully share the true Jesus and the biblical gospel which constantly confronts the evil in the lives of those in false religion. This description in verse 6 shouldn't surprise us. Remember, Satan is according to Jesus a what? A murderer. He has always been a murderer. So, everyone under his control is a murderer. You know, our hearts break with the violence we see in our world. You need to understand, that violence does not originate in God. That violence originates in Satan whom Jesus said was a “liar and a murderer from the beginning.” When you read your news source and you see another violent killing of innocent life, that is an expression of Satan himself. He is a murderer; God is the giver of life, and He is the only One who has the right to take it. But Satan as he does with so many things usurps or attempts to usurp God's

position and wants to take and destroy life. Under his direction, the propagators of false religion have killed countless believers through the centuries and in the Tribulation period, they will be the greatest massacre of believers that has ever been in human history. They will be drunk. False religion, those who survive Islam, Mormonism, Buddhism on and on the list goes, all the false religions of our world that exist until that day, they will get drunk on the blood of true believers because they are saints. They live holy lives and because they keep on talking about Jesus and the gospel.

Now, you say, “Tom, what possible implications or lessons can there be for our lives from this remarkable story?” Well, there are, let me just point out a few for you. First of all, you were made to worship, and you are worshipping. Never stops. You were made to worship by God, and you are worshipping. If you are not worshipping the true God, you are worshipping something else. It may be something God made. It may be yourself. But you are worshipping something because you were hardwired to worship, and nothing will ever change that. You are either worshipping Jesus Christ and you belong to His Bride, or you are engaged in some form of idolatry and spiritual prostitution and you belong to the spiritual harlot described in this passage. And you are an idolater. Those are the only options. So be clear about this and be clear about the people in our world. You know, we can get a little sentimental in our thinking when we see somebody who appears to be seeking God. Now God may be at work in somebody’s heart, drawing them to Himself through the truth of the Gospel but usually when we use that expression “seekers” we mean somebody who is engaged in some false somewhere and says that they are seeking God. They are not seeking God. They are running from God. They were made to worship, and they are worshipping something other than the God who has revealed Himself even in creation.

Number two. In every generation, including ours, the wide gate, I am referring now to Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount where He brings it in for a landing there in Matthew 7. The wide gate and the broad road that lead to destruction are easier to find and more heavily travelled than the narrow gate and path that lead to heaven and eternal life. It’s true during the Tribulation, and

don't be discouraged that it is true now. We will talk about this when we get to chapter 20 but there is a fresh push among believers of post millennialism: that we are going to bring in the Kingdom. Things are going to get better and better, and more people are going to be saved and we are going to get everything, and the Spirit is going to make everything right and then Jesus is going to walk into a Kingdom that already exists prepared by our sharing the gospel. Well, the truth is until Jesus returns, most people find the wide gate and the broad road that leads to destruction.

Number three. False religion is generally more powerful, wealthy and influential than the true church. Don't be concerned about that. Don't look at the glitz and the glamour. Don't walk into some cathedral where an aberration and apostate form of the true Christian faith is worshipped and celebrated and be impressed by the smoke and mirrors. Don't be impressed by the gold and the wealth and the opulence. Whatever it is, it won't be what this harlot will have. So don't be deceived by what looks impressive.

Number four. False religion often works with fallen governments to persecute true believers in the true church. Those are the two of the greatest persecutors of believers down through the years and they often work together. I've seen it in countries in our world where I have visited. Don't be surprised.

Number five, and this is a great way to end. Jesus Christ is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, and He will one day destroy all who have abused His people, dishonored His Father, slandered His name and rebelled against His rightful authority. Notice, He will do it against religious Babylon. Look at chapter 17, verses 16 and 17. Chapter 17, verse 16: "The ten horns which you saw [these kings who serve along with Antichrist and Antichrist himself] these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire." Where does this come from? Verse 17: "For [because] God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose." But Christ will also destroy political Babylon and He will do that all by Himself. Look at chapter 17, verse 14: "these [kings with Antichrist] will wage war against the



Lamb and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him [this is us] are the called and chosen and faithful.” Don’t be discouraged. Jesus wins. Let’s pray together.

Father, thank you for the privilege of studying Your Word. Lord, we live in dark times, but it is going to get darker before our Lord returns in the Second Coming when He puts His feet on the Mount of Olives and establishes His Kingdom. Father, thank you that He comes first for us, His church. That we will celebrate His victory in Heaven as it unfolds on the earth. But Father, we thank you that we have a Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ who is the King of kings and the Lord of all lords. That He will overcome them by His power, and we will be with Him. Lord, we thank you that in the end this false religious system will be destroyed, and the Lord Jesus Christ will get the glory that He deserves. Lord, help us today to give Him that glory in our own hearts and lives and help us to live looking as we were reminded this morning to live looking for the Blessed Hope and the Glorious Appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. It is in His name we pray. Amen.