

# 75. The Book of Revelation—17:4-5

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(4-6-22)

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In our study in the Book of Revelation we are currently studying Chapter 17.

As we pointed out last time, Chapters 17 and 18 are inserted into the chronological flow of Revelation—as parenthetical Chapters.

The pouring out of the seventh bowl (16:17) is actually followed chronologically in time by the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to destroy His enemies that have gathered together in the Valley of Megiddo to fight against Him (19:11).

Chapters 17 and 18 become the *last* parenthesis in the Book of Revelation (the first being Chapter 7, and then Chapters 10-14) which gives us a more detailed look at the world system led by Satan, Antichrist, and the False Prophet—before recording its destruction.

Remember that, near the end of Revelation 16, God spoke of the destruction of Babylon—

## Revelation 16:19 (NKJV)

<sup>19</sup> Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath.

Chapter 17 gives us a look at the *religious* aspects of “*Babylon the Great*”; and Chapter 18 zeros in on the *commercial* aspect of this final world empire.

Because false religion is so much a part of this fallen world, it is no surprise that it will play a major role in the end times—especially when it comes to establishing the final world governing empire.

## Revelation 17:1-5 (NKJV)

<sup>1</sup> Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, <sup>2</sup> with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication." <sup>3</sup> So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast *which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.* <sup>4</sup> The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. <sup>5</sup> And on her forehead a name *was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.*

Now as we come to Chapter 17, the very first thing we are introduced to is a woman riding on a scarlet beast.

Last week we explored the ‘clues’ from the passage to try and determine just who or what this ‘woman’ is (go online and listen to the study).

A few points we presented last week—first of all:

### **Don't confuse the woman with the beast she rides.**

She is seated on the beast which means she is steering and controlling the beast much like a rider on a horse would dominate and control and steer the direction of that horse.

Here's the thing we must understand—in the beginning, she rides and controls the beast—but only for a time.

Initially, the '**beast**' (the 10-region world government) tolerates and even appears to 'partner' with her ('her' being the religious harlot or 'world church'—i.e., ecclesiastical, or religious Babylon) during the first half of the Tribulation Period.

But after the power of this global government is solidified, they (the 10 kings) turn on her, destroy her and replace her with the Antichrist as their global leader.

We read about this in Revelation 17:16-17—

#### **Revelation 17:16-17 (NKJV)**

**<sup>16</sup> And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. <sup>17</sup> For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.**

So again, the 'beast' (Antichrist and his 10 kings) tolerates and uses this religious harlot during the first half of the Tribulation Period to gain power for their new world government.

Once their power is solidified—they no longer need her and so they turn on her (the harlot/world church) and destroy her so the Antichrist can lead this world government and establish his own religion where he is worshipped as God. (Matthew 24:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:4)

- Ecclesiastical Babylon is destroyed at the *beginning* of the last three and one-half years of the Great Tribulation.
- Commercial Babylon is destroyed at the *end* of the last three and one-half years of the Great Tribulation right before Jesus' Second Coming.

### **This harlot is dressed in purple, scarlet, gold and jewels.**

In other words, she is unashamedly wealthy, expensively adorned and outwardly attractive—to the world.

When the Church becomes so outwardly beautiful due to its great wealth so much so that the world honors it—that's always a 'red flag' for the Church of Jesus Christ.

(*'For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.'*—Luke 16:15)

### **She carries in her hand a golden cup.**

#### **Revelation 17:4 (NKJV)**

**<sup>4</sup> The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, **having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication.****

A golden cup is expensive and beautiful to behold—something in the Old Testament that was used in the worship of God in the Temple.

However, a golden cup was not used when Jesus first instituted communion since those in the upper room that night were simple fishermen, and a golden goblet was the cup of a king.

Also, remember that John is a first century guy whom God transported 2000 into the future.

The Church he remembers was poor and persecuted (and yet victorious over the world)—this church he is looking at in Revelation 17 is rich and admired by the world.

John knows this is not the true Church he remembers—the true Church of Jesus Christ would never be in possession of such an ornate and expensive cup to use in the worship of God.

And yet he sees this harlot (world church) holding such a golden cup (one that's filled with abominations)—this is not the true Church of Jesus Christ it's a monstrosity a hideous abnormality.

Many commentators associate this golden cup with the golden chalice used by the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) during the Mass (listen to last week's study).

**Revelation 17:1 (NKJV)**

**<sup>1</sup> Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters,**

In Chapters 17 and 18, 'Mystery Babylon' is called a "harlot" 4 times and the "great city" 8 times—so she is both a harlot and a city.

Many commentators think what is in view is the Roman Catholic Church and the Vatican.

It says she sits upon "many waters"—this is explained in v.15:

**Revelation 17:15 (NKJV)**

**<sup>15</sup> Then he said to me, "The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues.**

So, this is a *universal* church, encompassing people from all over the world (the word 'catholic' means 'universal').

**Revelation 17:1-2 (NKJV)**

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

The kings of the earth joined with her and were intoxicated with "the wine of her fornication (idolatry)".

It is a fact of history that for 1500 years it was the RCC that controlled the countries of Europe.

She (the RCC) was very powerful and held enormous control over the kings of Europe who feared being excommunicated for not following the popes demands. You see, the RCC taught back then (and still teaches today) that there is only salvation thru the RCC and being in good standing in the RCC—excommunication meant you were doomed to spend eternity in hell).

And because the popes held the fear of excommunication (hell) over the heads of the kings of Europe—they therefore gave the popes their loyalty and did their bidding.

Now listen, the Church was never intended by God to rule on earth until her Bridegroom returns and she is wed to Him and sits with Him on His throne—and then and only then will we reign on the earth alongside the true King, the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 20:6).

**Revelation 17:3 (NKJV)**

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

➤ You might want to read Isaiah 47 and 48 this week.

Verse 9 tells us that the ‘**seven heads**’ of the ‘**scarlet beast**’—are actually seven mountains (we will talk about this next time).

This ‘**scarlet beast**’ is the same one described in 13:1 where the beast is the final world empire under the Antichrist.

**Revelation 17:4 (NKJV)**

**<sup>4</sup>The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication.**

“**Purple**” was the dominant color of Roman imperialism—in fact, each of the members of the Roman Senate wore a purple band on their robes and the emperor wore robes of all purple.

“**Scarlet**” is the official color of the Vatican.

If you tour the Vatican and their art treasures, you will see a number of paintings of a woman seated upon a scarlet beast—that they themselves will tell you represents the RCC!

In fact, from what I am told by those who have gone to the Vatican, there is a large tapestry in one location and on that tapestry is a scarlet-colored beast with 7 heads and the 7<sup>th</sup> head with 10 horns.

There is a prostitute riding that beast, just like in Rev.17 and there’s a sign under it that says, “**The Mother Church.**”

Verse 4 talks about “**a golden cup full of abominations**”—abominations in Scripture are synonymous with *idolatry* (one example being Isaiah 44:19).

“**Blasphemy**” (**verse 3**) in this context would include any doctrine that attempts to add to, subtract from or modify in any way what God has done.

One primary example would be when groups or individual teachers try to add works to faith as a way of attaining salvation.

**No doubt the biggest lie the devil has ever fed the human race  
is the lie that you go to heaven by being good—  
that heaven is a reward for deserving people.**

**That is the lie of religion.**

All religions got their start in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve disobeyed God and tried to cover their shame (sin) with the works of their hands (fig leaves) which God did not accept but instead covered them with the skins of animals—why?

Is it because animal skins cover better than fig leaves—no. It was to lay down a principle that sin can only be covered (atoned for) by blood:

**Hebrews 9:22 (NKJV)**

<sup>22</sup> And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.

**Leviticus 17:11 (NKJV)**

<sup>11</sup> For the life of the flesh *is* in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it *is* the blood *that* makes atonement for the soul.'

This became the basis for all false religion (Adam and Eve trying to cover their sin with the works of their hands).

There are really only two 'religions' in the world—

- the religion of *human achievement*, and
- the religion of *divine accomplishment*.

Every religion and religious system in the world apart from Christianity falls under the category of human achievement—what we do for God to earn His favor.

Only Christianity (which is not a religion but a relationship) falls under the category of divine accomplishment—what God has done for us.

**Religion says “DO”—Christianity says “DONE” (as in “it is finished”—John 19:30).**

Religion comes from man and is an expression of his pride (to show he's good enough to work for and earn a place in heaven)—and therefore it is man-centered and works oriented.

Christianity comes from God and is Christ-centered and grace oriented (i.e., 'salvation isn't something we earn by works it is free gift we receive by faith'—Ephesians 2:8-9).

Trying to add any work or works (no matter how religious and well intentioned they might be) to the completed work of Jesus on Calvary's Cross as a way of earning salvation—is an abomination in the sight of God Who will not share His glory for the work He has done with anyone!

I grew up in the RCC and we were taught that religious practices and observances like—the lighting of candles, the keeping of holy days, praying the rosary, the abstaining from food during lent and other acts of 'piety' would earn us 'installments' of grace that would accrue and eventually earn the faithful Catholic their salvation.

For centuries the RCC taught (and still teaches) that we must punish ourselves as a way of paying for our sins and lessen our time in purgatory. So faithful Roman Catholics, in extreme forms of piety, would (and still do) walk barefoot on rocky roads while flagellating themselves with whips until their feet and backs were raw and bloody as a way of earning God's favor and meriting heaven.

This is an unmitigated blasphemy against the completed work of Jesus Christ Who said from the cross, *"It is finished"* (John 19:30)—also:

**Isaiah 53:5-6 (NKJV)**

<sup>5</sup> But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. <sup>6</sup> All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

Anyone who offers God the works of their hands as a way of atoning for their sins and earning heaven are practicing false religion no matter how sincere and well-intentioned, they might be.

Jesus said in John 4 that the Father is looking for *'true worshippers'* who will worship Him in Spirit and in truth.

By Jesus saying that the Father is looking for *'true worshippers'* it implies there are false worshippers in the world—that not all roads lead to heaven, *"there is a way that seems right to a person but in the end, it leads to eternal death."* (Proverbs 14:12)

Paul hits this hard in the book of Galatians—*"If human works, rituals, ceremonies, sacrifices etc. could save us—then Christ died in vain."* (Galatians 2:21)

Seeking to add anything in the way of human works to earn your salvation is blasphemy and will damn you to hell for all eternity—as one pastor put it: *"If you add one ounce of works to a billion pounds of grace you would negate grace."*

In other words, you forfeit grace (God will not offer you grace anymore) and have divorced yourself from the completed work of Christ on Calvary's Cross. (Galatians 5:2-4) In other words, what Jesus did in paying for your sins will not help you at all if you try to add to it in anything in the way human works as a way of *"helping"* to purchase or earn salvation.

**Galatians 3:1-3 (NLT2)**

<sup>1</sup> Oh, foolish Galatians! Who has cast an evil spell on you? For the meaning of Jesus Christ's death was made as clear to you as if you had seen a picture of his death on the cross. <sup>2</sup> Let me ask you this one question: Did you receive the Holy Spirit by obeying the law of Moses? Of course not! You received the Spirit because you believed the message you heard about Christ. <sup>3</sup> How foolish can you be? After starting your Christian lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort?

**John 1:29 (NKJV)**

<sup>29</sup> The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

**Psalms 49:6-9 (NKJV)**

<sup>6</sup> Those who trust in their wealth And boast in the multitude of their riches, <sup>7</sup> None of them can by any means redeem his brother, Nor give to God a ransom for him-- <sup>8</sup> For the redemption of their souls is costly...

**1 Peter 1:19 (NKJV)**

<sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

The RCC teaches that it's faith plus works that saves a person—we evangelicals respond, *"We are not saved by faith plus works—we are saved by a faith that works."*

**Ephesians 2:8-10 (NKJV)**

<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not of works, lest anyone should boast. <sup>10</sup> **For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.**

If a person has true saving faith in their hearts, it will be demonstrated by good works—but the Bible clearly teaches that we are saved by faith alone!

➤ *“Yes, but what did James mean when he said that we are not saved by faith alone?”*

**James 2:14 (NKJV)**

<sup>14</sup> What *does it* profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?

Martin Luther believed that James was teaching salvation by works so he rejected the Book of James as being uninspired (non-canonical).

James was not teaching salvation by faith plus works—he was teaching about a faith that works!

Spurgeon put it well, *“We are convinced that a man is saved by faith alone. But we are also just as convinced that the kind of faith that saves a man is never really alone!”*

The testimony of the Reformation martyrs was that millions were tortured and murdered by the Roman Catholic Church for the belief that salvation was by faith alone apart from any works (Sola Fide and Sola Gratia)!

This isn't a heresy that only the RCC teaches, it is also taught by the cults (J.W.'s, Mormons etc.)—that it is faith plus works that saves us.

Even Christian Evangelicals fall somewhat into this trap that—*“I have to add to what Jesus did on the cross if God is really going to love me and accept me”* (go to church, pray, read the Bible, witness etc.).

Don't get me wrong, we serve the Lord on earth to earn rewards in heaven—but not to earn heaven!

Don't let the devil put you back under the law by getting you to think you have to earn God's favor and love—that will put you in a place where the devil can constantly condemn you.

**God loves you and accepts you and will do for you thru His amazing grace—PERIOD!**

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