



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Revelation 17:7-18

"Babylon and the Beast"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We're turning again and for the last time in this series, to the 17th chapter of the Book of Revelation and we're reading verses 7 through 18. We have, as you know, expounded Genesis chapter 11. We have made reference to Zechariah chapter 5 in some detail. We have looked at the earlier part of chapter 17 and now we want to finish this chapter. And our last study on Babylon will be when we take up the 18th chapter and we'll devote just one message to that chapter. Now verse 7 of chapter 17, and the apostle writes,

"And the angel said to me, 'Why do you wonder? I shall tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns. The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and to go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth, will wonder whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come.'"

This morning after the message, several people said to me, "This is very deep". One person said, "My head is swimming" and I think it was not a common experience,

but as a result of the message this morning. And one of the difficulties that we naturally have in understanding the Book of Revelation is the fact that so much of it is built upon other parts of the word of God and, specifically, the Book of Daniel. And we attempted to help us out a little bit by expounding Daniel 7 and 8 in connection with the beasts, but when one reads these verses, it's quite clear that we need to keep them in mind, those chapters of Daniel, if we're going to make a beginning on understanding Revelation chapter 17. The apostle in the 9th verse said,

"Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits, and they are seven kings; five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while. And the beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth and is one of the seven, and he goes to destruction."

I'm not really sure that that rendering of that Greek work "by destruction" is better than the Authorized Version's rendering of perdition. Destruction may suggest something that would be very close to annihilation. It's not annihilation and, personally, I prefer the old rendering of perdition. There is no question about the text, it's the same thing. So if you keep that in mind, this is not annihilation that is meant by the term destruction. The 12th verse continues,

"And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour. These have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast. These 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 are the called and chosen (or elect) and faithful. And he said to me, 'The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues. And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will

hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire. For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God should be fulfilled. And the woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth.' "

May the Lord bless the reading of His word and let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee and praise Thee for the Scriptures which Thou hast given to us to give us enlightenment and understanding, and, specifically, as we read the Book of Revelation, light and understanding on the unfolding purpose of God in the history of this universe. We thank Thee for the history of salvation that is recorded in the Bible and, Lord, we pray that Thou will continue to give us illumination and understanding and enable us also, not simply to know, but to by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit, live in a way in our day in a way that is in harmony with that which Thou are doing.

We thank Thee for the gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. For the light that has been brought to our hearts by that good news. For we were lost and on our way to perdition and the gospel, that record of what Jesus Christ has done, has been the means by which we have come to an understanding of Thee and of some understanding of the purposes of the ages.

Lord, we pray that Thou will continue to move us and motivate us to the study of the Scriptures and to the application of the word of God in our daily lives. We thank Thee for each person present in this auditorium and we pray that the ministry of the word of God may be suitable for each of us in our special needs.

We pray especially for the sick. We commit them to Thee. For those who are in the hospital also we ask Thy blessing upon them. Give wisdom and guidance to the physicians who minister to them and give healing in accordance with Thy perfect will. And for those, Lord, who are ill and are not in the hospital, we pray for them as well. Oh God, enable us all to realize that we are finite beings and we belong to the body of sinners, as do all human beings, that our destiny in Jesus Christ does not come, is to die physically, but may at the same time by Thy grace and the power of the Holy Spirit, we come to an understanding of the remedy through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ who gave Himself for sinners. May we recognize our condition, may we turn to Him. May we receive the eternal life that He freely offers and, Lord, enable us to rejoice in the glorious future that we have.

We pray for this assembly, for its leadership, for its members, for the friends who are here, and the visitors particularly. May this be a memorable occasion for them. And, Lord, for our country, we pray for our country. We ask Thy blessing upon our President, but help us to remember that there are things even more important than the things that are transpiring in a political way and they are the things that touch the spirits and souls of individuals over the face of this globe. Bless the preaching of the word of God wherever it goes forth. And now, Lord, we ask Thy blessing upon us as we sing, as we hear the word of God. May it be a fruitful time and an edifying time for all of us for Jesus sake. Amen.

[Message] The subject for today as we continue our study of the apocalypse is "Babylon and the Beast" and the subject that we have had over the last few weeks has been "Babylon and the Bible". And we acknowledge, very readily, that it's not been a very easy subject and the chapter that is before us is a difficult chapter. And particularly, if you haven't been reading the Book of Daniel recently because so much of the things that the apostle writes here have to do with things that are first set forth in some detail in

Daniel's prophecy. But let me review, in a few sentences what we have seen and what we have said up to this point.

We have seen that the city of Babylon, as a place, is a place where collective rebellion against God began resulting in idolatry, debauched, illicit worship, a kind of worship that has spread over the whole of the East in the past centuries. We traced, or tried to trace, the history of the city and its spirit, "Mystery Babylon". For that term evidently refers to Babylonianism from Babel and the tower and God's destruction of it, to the penetration of the west and its assimilation in measure into Christianity.

We laid a special stress upon Constantine's place in that because when Constantine declared that Christianity would be the religion of the Empire, at that point, it's quite plain that the idolatry and the false religion characteristic of the Roman religion at that time became a part of the Christianity of that time as well.

One Bible student had said, I think rather perceptively, "That in the New Testament, Satan is revealed in two characters". That is, he is revealed as "a roaring lion" who seeks to terrorize and then he's revealed as "an angel of light", to deceive. Historically, Nero is the illustration of the one. That is Satan active as a roaring lion. His persecution of the early Christians would illustrate the point, but Constantine may well be the illustration of the second. The testimony of the centuries clearly shows that while Nero's persecution and violence had largely the effect of driving Christians out of Rome to preach the word of God elsewhere, in other words, spreading the word. In the case of Constantine, "His patronage of Christianity inflicted on the church of God is a blow from which she has never recovered" -- John Wesley.

That shows you how nice I am. Here I am a Calvinistic theologian and I'm citing an Arminian. That proves I have love for all the brethren, doesn't it? And so I'm citing Wesley again. We have referred to him previously, but his words, I think, are very appropriate. He said, "I have been long convinced by the whole turner of ancient history, that from this very event," Constantine calling himself a Christian, "And pouring a flood of

wealth and honor upon the Christian church was productive of more evil to the Christian church than all the ten persecutions put together."

He's probably correct because when the world becomes a part of the church and the church becomes the world, in effect, the truth of the gospel suffers. We also went on to try to point out that various Babylonian doctrines, as a result of that, have made their way into the Christian church. Among them, the practice of confession, baptismal regeneration, not something associated simply with the Roman Catholic Church, but with Protestant churches as well, celibacy, the worship of the Madonna and the child, characteristic of eastern religions, and other things as well.

We made the point last week that I do not regard Babylon as the Roman Catholic Church. The story of Babylonianism is broader than the Roman Catholic Church or any specific church. In fact, in verse 6, we read here, "I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the witnesses of Jesus." It's almost as if the woman represents that which has persecuted all of the faithful of God. And then, not only there, but in the 18th verse, we read, "The woman whom you saw is the great city which reigns over the kings of the earth." In the 18th chapter, it becomes even clearer that Rome as the Roman Catholic Church is only a part of this great apostasy. "Rejoice over her," in the 20th verse, we read of chapter 18, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets," notice the prophets, "because God has pronounced judgment for you against her."

In other words, Babylonianism was on the earth and active before there ever was a Roman Catholic Church. In verse 24 we read, "And in her," in Babylon, "was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who had been slain on the earth."

So when we talk about Babylonianism, and Babel, and Babylon, we should not center our attention as the Reformers did simply upon the Roman Catholic Church. We've indicated from Zechariah chapter 5 that there is evidence that the system eventually returns to the Euphrates Valley, and if you haven't read those verses, Zechariah 5:5-11, you should read them because they are important in that particular question.

The structure of chapter 17 is rather simple. We have the vision of the harlot and the beast in the first six verses. We have looked at this and then in verse 7 through verse 18, we have the interpretation of the vision characteristic not simply of the Book of the Revelation, but characteristic of Daniel, a vision given and then an explanation or interpretation given; an inspired interpretation.

One of the things we need to avoid when we are reading apocalyptic literature is to interpret the interpretations and we should let them stand as they are as a general rule. So I will try to do that, try to avoid interpreting the interpretations. But after the vision of the harlot and the beast in verse 1 through verse 6, then there is an interpretation of the meaning of the beast in verse 7 through verse 14 and finally an interpretation of the meaning of the harlot in verse 15 through verse 18.

If you read the Bible carefully, you will notice the little clues that will enable you to see things like this. For example, in verse 7, after giving the vision of the harlot and the beast, the apostle writes, "and the angel said to me" and then in verse 15, he again says, "and he said to me". So these are the things that mark the division, the interpretation of the beast and then the interpretation of the harlot.

Now we will just make a few comments regarding the first six verses before we pass on because if I don't make a few comments regarding the harlot as we begin, then I would only have two points in my message and everyone knows that a two point message does not have any claim to any kind of inspiration, so I need to have at least three points to be credible at all, for anyone interested in homiletics.

One point I do want to remind you one, in verse 1, the text begins with "And 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' ". Now that term "judgment" is a term that indicates that we are looking at a future scene. That chapter 17, verse 1 and the subject of Babylon and Babylonianism does not really conclude until chapter 19 and verse 10, as we shall see.

So these things have to do with the ultimate judgment of Babylonianism and the harlot. What we have then is a vision of Babylonianism, a universal false religion. It has no divine Christ and it has no blood of the cross. It is dominating and served by the secular ruler, the persecutor of the faith, Babylonianism.

There is a wonderful statement made by Principal Denny some years ago that I think tells the story of what Babylonianism has stumbled over in the cross. Principal Denny once said, "I had rather preach with a crucifix in my hand and the feeblest power of moral reflection than have the finest insight into ethical principles and no Son of God who came by blood." Let me repeat that. It's a very insightful comment, I think. "I had rather preach with a crucifix in my hand," he regards that as the minimum of a Christian approach, obviously, "I had rather preach with a crucifix in my hand and the feeblest power of moral reflection than have the finest insight into ethical principles and no Son of God who came by blood."

That's the fundamentally essential thing in the preaching that is found in the word of God, the Son of God who came by blood. If that is not the truth around which our preaching gathers then we're not preaching the kind of preaching that is apostolic.

Today we live in the day of ecumenism. One of the characteristics of the Ecumenical Movement has been to unite on any kind of principle that will enable us to unite and if it's necessary to abandon the unique place of Jesus Christ and the Cross and of salvation only through Him. That must be sacrificed for unity. Unity is the principal thing. One of our greatest 20th Century theologians speaking about this, spoke about the fact that what he looked for was the union of the Roman Catholic Church, the Protestant Church, and the Jews, and he said, "If the Jews should come then I think that we have no basis whatsoever to evangelize them with the gospel." In other words, we evangelize everyone else, but we do not evangelize Israel.

No, the Scriptures tell us everyone needs evangelism. Jewish people need evangelism. Gentile people need evangelism. We are common sinners according to the

word of God and any desire to unite in any other grounds than the grounds of the Son of God who came by blood is false according to the truth of the word of God. We're not looking for one great world church perhaps under Roman leadership. We are looking for a unity in Christ and the future does not look good so far as the enjoyment of what lies ahead of believers.

Now we turn to the interpretation of the beast in verses 7 through 14 and it would certainly help if you find what I'm going to say difficult. Blame it on two things. One, I have not been as clear as I should have been in the exposition; and two, perhaps you do not have the kind of understanding of Daniel and the prophecies there that you should have. And if the first is true, well then there's nothing you need to do except find someone who can teach you more plainly and more clearly. But, if the second is true, go home and study the Book of Daniel. It's a marvelously, interesting book, but you will discover also that it's the clue, "the clue" if there is "the clue". Revelation's broader than Daniel, but it's one of the major clues for the understanding of the Book of Revelation.

The identity of the beast is, of course, determined from the Book of Daniel. And now, since we are in chapter 17, from the things that have been said about him previously, chapter 13, for example, we read in chapter 13 and verse 1, "And he stood on the sand of the seashore and I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names." In verse 6 of chapter 13, we read, "And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven." And in verses 7 and 8,

"And it was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. And all who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of the life of the Lamb who has been slain."

Now we reverse the order and made that "slain from the foundation of the world", both are possible interpretations. The second is the one that I prefer. Now the beast's identity is made plain there. He is the antichrist of the last days. The second beast is specifically called, remember, the false prophet. So we're talking about the anti-Christ when we read about the beast.

The time of this particular prophecy is the final stage of the woman during the rise of the ten kings on earth before the universal rule of the beast. We are evidently told from the Book of Revelation and the Book of Daniel that there will rise ten great kings over the face of the earth and then the little horn, remember? One of the ten kings shall arise, destroy three of them, and to him shall be given universal dominion. It is he who will punish the saints and persecute them and be responsible for the deaths of many of them. So the kingdoms arise before the beast arises, but he's one of them who is made known after they have come to power. Now turning to verse 8 then, with that as a background, we read,

"The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and to go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth will wonder whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come."

Four things are said of the beast. He was, he is not, he is about to come up out of the abyss, and he goes to perdition. These four things, where immediately, if we're thinking about this prophecy and asking ourselves questions like, "What does this mean?", we have to make a decision. Is this written from the standpoint of John's day or is it written from the standpoint of the future?

Now if it's written from the standpoint of John's day, many hundreds of years ago now, then the beast would have to refer to a past historical figure and various speculations have taken place as to who that might be. For example, it is the opinion of some that the beast is Nimrod. And there is the view of others that the beast is really Judas because he is the son of perdition.

You'll remember that in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, the Apostle Paul writes about the coming of the antichrist and in the 3rd verse he says, of chapter 2 of 2 Thessalonians, "Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come," that is the day of the Lord, "until the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction", or the son of perdition. And you also will remember that in chapter 17, when our Lord is giving his High priestly prayer, he makes reference to Judas and he calls Judas by a similar term. He says in the 12th verse of John 17, "While I was with them, I was keeping them in Thy name, which Thou hast given me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition that the Scripture might be fulfilled."

So it has been the opinion of some that the antichrist will be Judas returned to life. There at least is some reason for that in that Judas is called the son of perdition. Paul speaks of the antichrist as being the son of perdition, and so Bible students have wondered if the return of Judas is not the return of the beast. But it's not the normal prophetic perspective for the prophet to write from the standpoint of his own day.

So the great majority of interpreters have rather thought of the beast as being a future prophetic figure. I'm inclined that way. In fact, I believe that is supported by more of the text than the other viewpoint. So "the beast that was, and is not, that comes from the abyss that goes to destruction" is a future figure, one we know as the antichrist.

In verses 9 and 10, we read further things about this one. The writer says, "Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sits, and they are seven kings; five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while", the seven heads.

Now he says, "The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits". Now Rome, as you know, was known as the City of the Seven Hills. In fact, in Rome that was so well known, and so well known in the ancient world, that they had a festival called the Septimontium or the Festival of the Seven Hills. That seems to be an identification of the city of Rome in John's day.

We were sitting around the table after the 8:30 service and someone asked a reasonable question, "Why is it that the apostle writes in such difficult language?" "Why does he use symbolism?" "Why doesn't he just tell us straight out what things are going to happen?" Well, of course, if you put yourself in John's day, I'm sure that the Christians of that day would say, "We couldn't possibly do that". The minute we did that, the Roman authority would seek out all of the Christians and execute them if they had any Christian testimony at all. And so, the apostle wrote in symbolism for safety sake and perhaps also he wrote in symbolism to test our own interest in understanding the word of God.

As I mentioned in one of the first messages in this series, Revelation is written in what biblical scholars have called "cartoon language". Now we can read cartoons, we all read cartoons, and when we see a bear, we immediately think of Russia, or if we see a man in striped outfit, it's not latest style, it's Uncle Sam, and so on.

So this is a book written in cartoon language that people who understand Scripture would have a key to and a clue to, but the world would not. And thus, it was safe for the apostle to write as he wrote.

Now I suggest to you that perhaps when he says that "the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits" that he's telling us that at that time Babylonianism resided in Rome. Babylonianism, that is the system, the antipathy to Christianity because all over the Roman Empire, Christians were being constantly persecuted and put to death. In some places, worse than others, but generally that was the attitude of the Roman government. But, he goes on to say, "and they are seven kings", in verse 10, "five have

fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while."

So we have to ask ourselves, "What does that mean?" and I'm suggesting, without absolute authority of an inspired interpretation, of course, that what "the seven kings" or "seven empires", for remember in Daniel as well as in the Book of Revelation, a king can stand for a kingdom, just as one of the French kings was Louie maybe the XIV said, "I am France" so the kings can be kingdoms or empires energized, in this case, by the spirit of the dragon or Satan. But what are the seven kingdoms?

If you think about the flow of the history of salvation, seven do stand out. The first that stands out is Egypt and we reflect upon the Exodus and all of the relationships of Israel with Egypt through the years. The second, the kingdom of Assyria, and then in Daniel's prophecy, remember the prophecy of the great figure, then Daniel is told of four kingdoms that will arise from his day. And the four kingdoms are the kingdoms of Babylonia or Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and then an indescribable kingdom, which he doesn't identify specifically until the 9th chapter, the clue is given that the prince shall come from that particular kingdom, which is responsible for the destruction of the city of Jerusalem.

Now we know from history, it was Rome that destroyed Jerusalem. So we have six. We have Egypt, we have Assyria, we have Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, but now he said that there are seven kings. So we have to, in the light of the fact that the beast is to have a twofold existence, he is to appear on the scene and then he is to have a wound, which appears to be a fatal wound. We have read that back in chapter 13 in verse 3 where John writes, "And I saw one of his as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed and the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast." He had an experience that was something like the resurrection of Christ. No wonder that the world should follow after him as if he were truly a divine being.

So I suggest to you that the seventh kingdom is revived Rome. So we have then the seven kings: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and revived Rome, but as we will see, I believe, in the next chapter, and this is more speculation, not all Bible scholars follow me in this, a capitol of that final revived empire, I suggest will be Babylon itself, in light of the return of the woman to the land of Shinar according to Zechariah chapter 4. Now, is your head swimming? That's what someone told me this morning after the meeting. So if you're head's swimming, you have fellowship with others! [Laughter] So let's move on.

Now we read in the 11th verse, "And the beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth and is one of the seven". So perhaps I've been a little bit confusing here, but when he says, "the beast is an eighth", we have Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, revived Rome, with Babylon as the capitol, but then in the experience of the beast, we have the twofold aspect of the mortal phase in which he lives as the ruler of the ten kingdoms, but then his superhuman phase is after his wound and his return to life from that wound. We'll talk a little more about that later on. So he has an eighth. The last kingdom and the seventh kingdom, revived Rome has two phases: mortal and superhuman phase. We read in the 8th verse here remember "the beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss". So he will have an origin from the Authorized Version renders at the bottomless pit.

Mr. Spurgeon had a grandfather who was a preacher. He had a great influence on him and his grandfather said that the boy, Spurgeon, asked him a question that he found very difficult to answer. That the young boy already had obviously a very acute mind, asked his grandfather the question. You remember the Authorized Version renders this "out of the bottomless pit". He said to his grandfather, "Where do people go when they fall out at the other end?" And his grandfather found it very difficult to answer that particular question.

Actually, the term that is used here and translated "abyss" in the Authorized Version, or in our version here as yes, translated the "abyss" translated the "bottomless pit" in the Authorized Version that is a word that refers to a vast, profound, unexplored region. And so in the Septuagint, the common references to the unexplored ocean depths, you may find if you ever read translations derived from that. The 12th verse we read, "And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour."

Now Daniel tells us that the rise of the ten kings over the face of the earth precede the coming of the beast because he arises as a little horn among the ten horns and overcomes three of them. But this is a future confederacy of the nations that will arise in the last day. There will be, as someone has put it, an effective United Nations one of these days, but it's not the kind of United Nations that anyone would want to be involved in. So the ten kings precede the beast. They refer to the future confederacy of the nations.

The supreme irony of the human situation in every age is that one thing, and only one thing, in which all mankind is concretely at one, is sin. And down through the years there's been the desire to have unity, everything at the expense of unity, if we could just have unity. All of our political life is filled with this kind of thing, the ways by which we and the nations of the earth may have unity. We may have unity with Russia, we may have unity with the new Germany that is arising, or we may have unity among the nations.

It's the one thing that we're all interested in, but the unity for which men strive in so many different ways is always negated by the one unity that they have, which they never need to strive for and it's their union in sin. The nations are already unified, but unified in sin, and because they are united with his fellowman in sin, he's forever divided from him because sinners cannot be united since their interests are themselves. And so, consequently, we can never have the unity that men would desire to have for the simple

reason we're already united, but unfortunately united in sin. If we could just remember that, it would help us to read the newspapers.

In the last century, the 19th Century, in eighteen forty-eight, there went out the Marxian call "Workers of the world unite; you have nothing to lose but your chains". *The Communist Manifesto* of 1848. It's difficult for our generation to understand the thrill that that meant for some people who lived in atrocious conditions. The First International was founded by Marx who assumed that the root of disunity was the external complex of class relations. All history said Marx has been the history of class struggle. Capitalism has so developed the age long class struggle that it has reduced the classes participating in the struggle to two; the proletariat and the bourgeois. "Let the workers transcend their secondary divisions", for example, the nationalist divisions that they have, the things we're seeing today in the society of Eastern Europe, "and they will usher in the new classless society. Abolish the capitalist class and society will at last enter upon the era in which it will become finally one." The decisive step Marx taught to this consummation was to secure the unity of the workers. What's interesting about this is that Marx and Engels and the First International could not get along. They couldn't get along. That whole movement was riven by jealousies and rivalries. Marx couldn't get along with LaSalle. That was resolved by the death of LaSalle in a duel. Later, there rose a bitter and vicious strife between Marx and Bakunin, the old revolutionist.

And then, ultimately, we're coming down to modern days and we have seen in the history of the Communists, Internationals, all three of them, one fight after another. And finally the International was abolished, the Third founded by Linen was beset with disunity, and today we have that same disunity seen in the Communist world. The one thing in which we are united, our sin, prevents us from every having unity. Unity, true unity, only exists in Jesus Christ by those who are in Him. Let us remember that. If we can just keep that in our minds, it's remarkable how the *Dallas Morning News* begins to make sense. [Laughter] It really does. I think it was Wesley; he also used to say, "I get

up in the morning. I read the newspapers in order to see what Satan has been doing."
[Laughter] It's almost that way in our society.

We read in the 12th verse that "they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour". A brief flash of the climax of satanic power, the enemies of heaven finally agree in opposition to heaven. They can agree on that, the tragedy of man's search for unity.

You remember that when the Lord Jesus Christ was here and when Herod and Pilate, who had had a long history of disagreement with one another, when Jesus arrives on the scene, even Herod and Pilate can get together. We read in Luke chapter 23, "Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day". That is when our Lord is now in captivity. In that day, "for before they had been at enmity with each other". They can get together in their opposition to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the prophet goes on to say in verse 14, "These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them". Can you imagine that? A beast with horns? A wild beast with vicious horns? And he faces only a poor, little lamb. Of course, it's an illustration of the utter depravity of man that he would attempt to overcome the Lamb of God. The sacrifice by which we have eternal life, but nevertheless, they try as the general confession of the Anglican Church says so beautifully, "There is no health in us." There is not. We'll even attack the Lord Jesus Christ if we're put in the proper situation.

But we read, "The Lamb shall overcome them". James Denny is right, "I'd rather preach with a crucifix in my hand and the feeblest power of moral reflection than have the finest insight into ethical principles and no Son of God who came by blood." Victory comes only through Him.

Now the interpretation of the woman is very simple. Our time is really up. I'll just make a few points and then we'll have to close. Remember this is of her judgment as verse 1 says. Not her rise or her history, her future judgment. Verse 15, "The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and

tongues." We've already seen the waters as figurative of nations in this book. "This woman will dominate politics in the area of the ten kings, seducing the kings of the earth using the secular arm to persecute the faith."

We saw illustrations of this in Czarist Russia where the Czars were used by the Greek Orthodox Church to persecute evangelical believers in the land of Russia. So in that case, the secular power is under the control of the church. But we shall see in the future that while there shall be a time in which that is true, it shall come to its end for the 16th verse says, "And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and burn her up with fire." Like cannibals, drunk with her abominations and from lust they turn upon her with loathing as in the case of Amnon was turned upon by his own brother because of his sin.

We read in the 17th verse, "For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God should be fulfilled." First, the destruction of idolatrous Babylonianism; second, the ripening of the body politic for the wrath of God, so the political power will destroy the religious power. But in so doing, they ripened themselves for the wrath of God and John concludes by saying, "And the woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth."

The city and characteristic of the city is, of course, the system of Babylonianism that resides there. This is the judgment of the great harlot who sits upon many waters. So then to sum it up, for our time is up, Babylonianism then represents a satanically crafty adaptation of God's plans for salvation and the government of the human race.

Unfortunately, Babylonianism regards the Lord Jesus as just one point in the history of salvation. He's no point in the history of religion. As Horrace Bushnell put it, "He is the unique Son of God". In a remarkable statement, Horrace Bushnell, a preacher in the earlier part of this century said, "Take the range, if you will, of all the great philosophers and saints, and choose out one that is most competent; or if, perchance,

some one of you may imagine that he himself is about upon a level with Jesus, let him come forward in this trial and say," can you imagine someone doing this though, "let him come forward and say, 'Follow me!' 'Be worthy of me!' I am the Light of the world!"

Can you imagine Gorbachev saying, "Follow me!" Well, I can imagine him probably saying that. "Follow me!" "I am the light of the world!" "Be worthy of me!" "You are from beneath, I am from above!" Can you imagine George Bush saying something like that? We'd call out those who come to put you in the hospital. "I am from above, you are from beneath! Behold, a greater than Solomon is here." George Bush should say in his Inaugurational speech. How ridiculous! We'd laugh. We'd still be laughing.

"Take on all these transcendent assumptions," Bushnell said, "and see how soon your glory will be sifted out of you by the detective gaze, and darkened by the contempt of mankind! Why not? Is not the challenge fair? Do you not tell us that you can say as divine things as he?"

These are words addressed to the professors of our day. The ones that could be regarded as something that as an office that had no place whatsoever in New Testament theology. There were no professors then. No professors ever had any authority biblically in the word of God.

"Is it not in you to say as divine things as he? Is it not in you too, of course, to do what is human? Are you not in the front rank of human developments? Do you not rejoice in the power to rectify many mistakes and errors in the words of Jesus? Give us, then, this one experiment, and see if it does not prove to you a truth that is of some consequence, that you are a man, and that Jesus Christ is more." How true that is.

I've lived for a long time around a group of people who seek to investigate the New Testament text in great detail. Many of them seek to point out the things that were mistakes or wrong in the word of God. Things that should have been said a different way. I've one thing that I like to say them, "Why don't you give us a little paragraph of

Scripture? Isn't that a fair test? You have the authority and the power to judge the word of God and to tell us what is right and what is wrong about it? Would you give us just one little paragraph of Scripture?"

There have been some attempts, incidentally. There was an individual back before Luther's time who did write an epistle and wrote an epistle that he thought was indicated by part of the New Testament. And he wrote that epistle and passed it out as an epistle from the Apostle Paul and, as a matter of fact, it found its way into one or two editions of the German Bible. But then, if you read it, I used to read it to my students in New Testament introduction courses and when I finished reading it, they all laughed. You know why? Because all it is, is a collection of phrases from the Apostle Paul's other letters. It has practically no meaning at all, but it phrases sounded biblical. "So write us a little paragraph, if you will. Tell us, you who are able to judge Scripture, tell us how Scripture ought to be written. Give us that paragraph!" I've never found anyone who is able to do anything like that. Well, I've gone too far. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] We desire, Lord, that men should come to Him and be saved and if there should be some in this audience who need His salvation, may at this moment in their hearts, they give thanks for Him and receive Him as their Savior.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.