



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Revelation 17:1-6; 17:15-18

"Babylon and the Great Harlot"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] The Scripture reading we are turning to is Revelation chapter 17. We're going to read verse 1 through verse 6 and then verse 15 through verse 18, but we will spend our time on verses 1 through 6 this morning. Next week, the Lord willing, we will cover the remainder of the chapter. Chapter 17 and verse 1, and remember we are in the section of the book in which we have the judgments that have been called the "bowl judgments" and the seventh angel had sounded in chapter 16 and verse 17 and then in verse 19, we have read, "And Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath", and since we are still in the judgment of the seventh angel, chapter 17 begins:

"And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, 'Come here, I shall 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 her 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. And 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 upon her forehead a name was written, a mystery, (Incidentally, those of you who may have the King James Version, you will have a rendering of this text that makes the term mystery part of the name, Mystery Babylon, the Great, but it's much more likely that this is not part of the name, the word mystery, and so, we are reading it that way) a name was written, a mystery, (and here is the name) '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 blood of the witnesses of Jesus and when I saw her, I wondered greatly."

[Message] May the Lord bless this reading of His word. When I, this morning, expounded chapter 17 and verse 6, and walked out of the building, a man who attends regularly said to me, "Well, I must say that it really takes a lot of understanding to understand this section of the Book of Revelation." To tell you the truth, I think he said "the whole Book of Revelation", but at any rate, he would have sympathized a great deal with the apostle who said, "And when I saw her, I wondered greatly."

So if you have the experience of not understanding everything that you find in this book, well, you have a great company of people who are sympathetic with you. Luther himself said that so far as he was concerned, he found this "a very difficult book" and, furthermore, he didn't really respond to the fact that the person who wrote it then urged you to believe its promises, and lean upon them, when he found it difficult to understand them. And Ulrich Zwingli, another of the better known reformers said, "The Apocalypse is not a book of the Bible."

So I think you can understand why you have a little difficulty with it, but let me encourage you so far as orderly presentation of the truth, this book is one of the most orderly of all of the books of the New Testament, and the key to understanding it is not giving up after the first five or ten times, but to keep reading it, and keep studying it, and

reading the Bible as a whole because to understand the Book of Revelation, it is really necessary, that is for the full understanding, that you know the Scriptures.

And so I encourage you to read and study the Scriptures, and you will find that once you come to understand some of the Book of Revelation, I don't understand all of it myself, and you will no doubt see that in the exposition of chapter 17, you will nevertheless find it one of the finest of the books of the word of God because it's doubtful that there is in, in any part of the Bible a more significant presentation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The things that are said about Him by the author of this book are remarkable and I hope that you don't miss that next week.

I'm going to go to Toronto to lecture in a Theological Seminary there and the topic will be the "Christology of the Apocalypse, the Doctrine of Christ" found in this book. And, of course, in four lectures, I cannot do a whole lot, but the thing that has really impressed me again, as I've prepared these lectures on the original text, is the fact that so often the author of the Apocalypse and the character who is preeminent in the Apocalypse, our Lord Jesus Christ.

The author uses terms, and our Lord uses terms, that are taken from the Old Testament and are applied to Yahweh, Jehovah, the Lord God of the Old Testament and in the New Testament they are applied to our Lord Jesus Christ. That's why a number of New Testament scholars have pointed out that there is no book in the New Testament that says more majestic things about our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the covenant keeping God with whom Israel dealt in Old Testament times. So I encourage you to read it and study it. Let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee and praise Thee for the word of God. We thank Thee for the revelation that it contains concerning Jesus Christ because we need Him. We thank Thee for the blood that was shed on Calvary's cross by which we have redemption, and we thank Thee for the gift of the Holy Spirit who has been given to bring us to

Christ, and to guide us and direct us, and be our companion until we enter the presence of the Triune God. And so today, Lord, we worship Thee and we give Thee thanks for all that Thou hast done within our hearts. We pray for every individual in this auditorium and ask Thy blessing upon them, and may, O God, their hearts too, continue to be blessed and opened by the Holy Spirit as they ponder the word of God.

We pray for the sick especially. We have some who desperately need our prayers, and we ask Thy blessing upon them, each one of them, those in the hospital and others who are troubled with very serious diseases. We ask that Thou wilt give, if it please Thee, healing and encouragement, and give wisdom and guidance to those who minister to them, and may it please Thee, Lord, to glorify Thy name in their illnesses.

We pray for our country. We pray for the whole church of Jesus Christ and we ask, Lord, that Thou wilt be with us in our meeting today. Bless the singing of the hymn and the ministry of the word of God for Jesus sake. Amen.

[Message] The subject for today is "Babylon and the Great Harlot". Just as we have been saying, chapter 17 is not an easy chapter and, consequently, it's often misunderstood, and, in the case of most of us, there are, even if we think we have some fairly good idea of what this book teaches, we know that there are gaps in our knowledge. Often it is referred specifically to the Roman Catholicism. For example, in the old Scofield Bible, you will find a note that says, with reference to chapter 17, that it has to do with "Apostate Christendom headed up under the papacy." In the New Scofield Bible, evidently there's been a little change of opinion about the breadth of its application because in the New Scofield, it has simply "Apostate Christendom", which will include not only the Roman Catholic Church, but Protestant churches as well. In my opinion, that is a more accurate designation of what is the subject of this chapter.

When I think about chapter 17, and having gone through it many, many times in the past, I think of it as a very difficult chapter. I am reminded of a conversation, which

is said to have taken place between the famous German scholar Adolph von Harnack, one of the greatest of the historians of the Christian church of the 20th Century, who wrote scores of books, literally, and his elderly aunt. She reported that she and a group of elderly women were studying the Book of Revelation and when he suggested that this was a very difficult book to understand, she replied, "Yes, it is difficult, but when we cannot understand something, we just explain it to one another." And that reminds me of a lot of Bible studies that I have participated in, in which not being studies in which someone who had an understanding gave us an understanding of the book, but rather when we gathered and just discussed the book, it was rather something like that. "Pooling ignorance" someone has called it [Laughter], but when we cannot understand anything, we just explain it to one another and then together we leave in the darkness [Laughter].

I was preaching 25 years ago in 1965 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida and a lady came up to me, her name was Mrs. Clella Mason, and she was a Sunday School teacher in the Griffin Road Baptist Church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, I was not speaking in the church, but she was attending the meetings, and I had heard from someone, perhaps afterwards, that she was a very effective teacher of the word of God, and she came up to me and with a smile on her face and she said, "I've been following you all along in my notes in my Bible in these meetings, and I have agreed with you until tonight. In my Bible, I have Roman Catholicism above this chapter", and I had said that this chapter is a chapter that does not apply only to Roman Catholicism.

So I think we'll see that the apostle's vision is much broader and more far reaching than the Roman Catholic Church because many of the things that are found in the Roman Catholic Church are things found in Protestant churches as well now. This is a very important chapter in one respect. The infusion of Babylonianism into the church and its worship has had a deeply corrupting influence and a vast system of world religion, with its visible priestly priesthood or clarity, has done much to destroy the significant simplicity

of the apostolic church. And so, from that standpoint, it's important for us to note the source of some of the things that we find in our churches, but may not recognize from whence they have come.

The early church met very simply, all of the believers were priests. The men who were priests had freedom to express themselves in the assembly. They exercised their priesthood. Ministry was not the privilege of one person who stood behind the pulpit, as I am standing now, as the president of a corporation, or as the person into whose hands was committed the ministry of the church, but the ministry of the church was given to men with spiritual gifts, who had gifts of teaching, gifts of evangelism, gifts that specifically prepared them for ministry. Not one man, but gifted men.

Now, of course, if there was only one gifted man in an assembly, as long as there was just one, that one exercised his gift. But, ordinarily, there would be more than one gifted man in the assemblies. Read Acts chapter 13 and you will see that there were prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch and no one person was the head of the church. No epistle in the New Testament is ever directed to the pastor, for there was no "the pastor" in the early church. I challenge you to find it. You cannot find it. There was no "the pastor" with organizational authority in the early church. There were gifted men.

But now we are a long ways away from the early church and many of the things that have come into the church are so settled within the church that it is very hard for us to escape them today. We try to do it, but even in our attempts, it's difficult to get back to the simplicity of the early church and their meetings. I think it is important to understand, therefore, how Babylonianism has crept into our church and, of course, there are much more significant things than that simple fact, but that is one of the great facts to bear in mind, the simplicity of the early church and its meetings.

Now we have sought to show that there have been stages in the history of Babylon and its spread through what is now the Christian church through Israel, then the successor, the Christian church. We suggested and, incidentally, I do not put this forth as

being "the word of God," you understand, it's an attempt to expound things that I think I see in the word of God.

First of all, Babylon was the origin of collective religious rebellion against God. In Genesis chapter 10 and Genesis chapter 11, I think we have the beginnings of what is rebellion against God in an organized way. That's important, "in an organized way". Rebellion against God began in the Garden of Eden, but in the organized sense in the erecting of the tower of Babel by the Babylonians.

Now that rebellion led to idolatry and a debauched illicit worship. One can note from that point the development of that kind of worship. Secondly, we sought to show that the history of the city of Babylon and its spirit, which may be called Mystery Babylon, that is Babylon as a mystery, may be traced from the tower of Babel on through the Near East and, ultimately, into a penetration of the west. Perhaps through Pergamum, since Pergamum ultimately became part of the Roman Empire as a special gift from Attalus the Third, where Babylonian religion existed.

But at any rate, it made its way to the west and I think that this is seen very clearly in the amalgamation of eastern paganism into Romanism. We talked about Constantine and how at the Milvian Bridge, he is reported to have seen a vision in the sky *In hoc signo vinces*, "By this sign, you shall conquer", the sign of the cross and that Constantine then having had some contact with Christianity became a Christian and Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire.

Up until that time, there was not the identification that we are talking about, but then it happened because Rome had its priests, its priestly ministry, its religion, but it was pagan at that time largely.

Now the priests of the pagan religions that were characteristic of Rome and the Roman Empire, when those individuals realized that the empire was becoming officially Christian, there's really a question about Constantine's Christianity, but at least professed so, they realized that the source of their income would be cut off. And so, as someone

has put it, I mentioned it last week, the priests of Mars and Venus quickly came to their baptisms and thus, became part of what was Christianity at the time.

Emmanuel Deutsch said "When the gods of Greece and Rome went into exile either degraded into evil spirits or promoted into Christian saints," so the amalgamation of Eastern religion and the idolatry of it with professing Christianity took place at approximately that time.

The result has been a constant departure of the professing Christendom and now within Christianity or Christendom, to use the broader term, within Christendom, the Doctrines of Christendom speaking broadly, inclusive of the Roman Catholic Church and also of our Protestant churches as well, the Doctrines of Confession, that may be traced to the ancient eastern religion known as Babylonianism, baptismal regeneration, purgatory, signing with the form of a cross, turning to the east, incense, celibacy, title of Pontifex Maximus, which is now a title held by the Pope, the tonsure, the way in which the priests cut their hair (that was an ancient Babylonian or Near Eastern practice), the use of holy water, the worship of the Madonna and the child as well. Throughout eastern religion these types of things existed, but now they have come to be in the Christian church. So we suggest to you that Babylonianism has come into the Christian church in that way.

Now, of course, in the Scriptures, as we shall see, the future of Babylon, as John sets forth, points to a rebuilding of the city and a return of the system to its ancient abode. So if the interpretation I'm going to suggest to you is correct then we may expect a rebuilding of the city of Babylon and we may expect also a return of that system to the place of its ancient abode. There shall exist at that ancient location a vast religious, political, and commercial system controlling the world presided over by the beast.

What makes this more interesting to us now is the fact that Iraq has already begun the rebuilding of Babylon, which may be some of the beginnings of what may ultimately develop as set forth in the word of God. We do not set this forth, I want you to understand, do not set this forth as being the word of God. It's my interpretation and I

fully understand that these are difficult questions. They're something, however, for you to think about.

Now we're going to look at the verses as John sets them forth here in chapter 17, verse 1 through verse 6, we'll save the interpretation for next Sunday because the remainder of the chapter has to do with the interpretation of the great harlot and the interpretation of the beast upon which she sits according to these verses.

Now you'll notice chapter 1 begins with no reference to "and I saw" so John is still in the vision of the seventh bowl angel and here is further explanation of things that will happen when that bowl judgment is poured out and it's going to include the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters.

The term judgment, incidentally, suggests that we have something that will have to do ultimately with the future. So he's not looking at something in the past, but something that has its full reference in the future, the time of judgment. So this chapter, the next chapter, even into chapter 19, will have details that have to do with the future judgment of Babylon and Babylonianism.

And, of course, finally, in the coming of our Lord, will be shattered all opposition to the truth that is found in Him. John writes, "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.'

It's very instructive that the woman is called the great harlot because you know from the reading of the Bible, and here's an instance incidentally of how important it is to read the Bible over and over again that you might understand the Bible, and this book especially, the great harlot, harlotry in the Old Testament, if you read through the Old Testament, you could not help but see because it is so often, harlotry is devotion paid to illicit lovers. Well you might say, "Well, yes, of course. Harlotry is devotion paid to an illicit lover." But as the man who commits adultery with a prostitute, engages in harlotry and he has given devotion to an illicit lover (the licit lover is his wife), but he has

engaged in adultery with a prostitute. Harlotry, yes, but, of course, in the Old Testament, that forms an illustration of spiritual adultery, spiritual harlotry. So harlotry is devotion paid to illicit lovers, true, but it's the standing symbol of religious apostasy and debauched worship.

Read Jeremiah chapter 3. Read Hosea chapters 1 and 2. Read other passages in the Old Testament and God frequently warns and then condemns Israel for their harlotry of turning to false gods, to rendering to the false gods the devotion that they should render to Yahweh, the true God. You find many illustrations of this in the history of Israel.

When Israel ran to Egypt for help, they were engaging in spiritual harlotry. When they went for help to Assyria, they were engaging in spiritual harlotry. When they went for help to Babylon, they were engaging in spiritual harlotry. When the Maccabees appealed to Rome against Syria, they were engaging in spiritual harlotry. Someone has even suggested that in our times today, Zionism has engaged in spiritual harlotry too because when Zionism came into existence for help in the founding of the nation Israel in Palestine, they first turned to the Sultan of Turkey. And then second, they turned to the Kaiser of Germany. Then they turned to England.

In other words, in the very foundations of the country in the land, there was spiritual harlotry in the sense that they did not simply turn to the Lord God and expect Him to do the miracle for them.

Now what makes this so bad is the fact that God regards this as a horrible sin. Listen to what he says about the worship of the false gods. He says, "It's this abominable thing that I hate." The idols are called abominations and He calls it an abomination that He hates. And, of course, in addition to the actual worship of a false god, there were also the vile practices associated with them for the literal, physical adultery was often associated with the spiritual adultery as part of the worship of the fertility gods.

So when we read here of the great harlot, we are talking about illicit love. That is, she represents illicit love, illicit worship. Now he says, "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 her immorality." Seduced by her splendid, but foul attractiveness, they indulge in her vile worship of idols.

General idolatry existed on the earth, but it existed in Israel and will exist in the end times. In chapter 9 and verse 20 of this book we read, "And the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk." In other words, Babylonianism persists right down to the end.

Now secondly, John points us to the vision of the woman in verse 3. He says, "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." He's now to see the coming judgment of the harlot. He's in a state of ecstasy for he says in the 3rd verse, "He carried me away in the Spirit".

You read this four times in the Book of Revelation that the apostle had a vision in the Spirit. I think it's prophetic ecstasy and that's what he's speaking about, the state of ecstasy, and it's an obvious contrast to what he will write later on in chapter 21 because in chapter 21 and verse 10, he says, "And he carried me away in the Spirit (but this time not to the wilderness, but) to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God."

So in the mind of Scripture, we have on the one hand, Babylon, the apostate city, from whence have come all of the evils that have infiltrated true worship down through the centuries. And on the other hand, we have the holy city, the city of the new Jerusalem. So these things are obviously opposed one to another. "He carried me away then in the Spirit into the wilderness."

Now that's an appropriate setting for a vision of judgment, the wilderness. Not heaven, but the wilderness. It's suitable for Babylon likened in the Old Testament to that very thing. Incidentally, this is probably a clue that we are not talking about the ancient city of Rome at this point, but primarily of the system because Rome was anything but a wilderness.

Of course, you could say that Rome was a moral wilderness and if that were the sense, that is a moral location, it would be inclusive of Rome and it would be inclusive of Dallas as well because we are something of a moral and spiritual wilderness ourselves. But, the wilderness, every life touched, seared, scorched, and the water of life unknown. What a vivid picture of Babylonianism and false worship, for anyone who ever is involved in false worship knows that it is truly a moral wilderness and very, very unsatisfying.

Now he says that "He saw the woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns." I suggest to you, that at this point, he's talking not primarily about the city, but not excluding the city, he's talking primarily about the city and the system, and the system, at this point, is prominent. The system found in the city of Rome at that time seen as a woman and the fact that the system is seen as a woman is suggested by the temptation of Adam in the Garden of Eden by a woman. That appears to be the reason for the use of the figure. He's not trying to suggest that women are inferior, but in the biblical revelation and in the story of Genesis, that is helpful as a figure. So the system is seen as a woman and that suggests the original fall in the Garden of Eden taking place through Eve and affecting also Adam.

What this suggests also that the harlot sits upon the scarlet beast representative of the anti-Christ, is that the woman will dominate the politics of the ten kingdom empire for a time, using the secular arm as a tool. Ultimately, the Book of Revelation tells us that the political beast, an anti-Christ, will overthrow the woman. We'll read about this in this very chapter. And that had used politics. We'll discover that politics destroys the religious arm as well.

But at any rate, the church and state combine to persecute the faithful and if you can look around at the history of the world where Christianity has been, you have often, no doubt, seen this very fact that professing Christendom has united with the state to persecute believing Christians.

We in our society today have many illustrations of it. In Soviet Russia, in Romania, and Bulgaria, many of the other countries, you might say, "Well, they have church; the Greek Orthodox church, Russian Orthodox Church, the church is there." Yes, the church is there and the head of the church, the bishop, is an employee of the government and one of the things that they generally do is to be sure that evangelicalism does not have an opportunity to express itself freely in their society. And even in those limited ways, we have anticipations of what we find in this particular chapter. That's not to mention the many other places where the combination of the state and religion opposed to true Christianity is even more definite and more devastating too.

In verse 4 through verse 6, John describes the woman, her appearance and her acts. He says, "And the woman was clothed in purple and scarlet", that tells you right in the beginning since purple dye and scarlet dye were very expensive and very hard to obtain, that we are talking about a commercial kind of relationship that is associated with luxury in its apostasy.

So "the woman was clothed with purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls". It's not the 20th Century, it's not any century, it's designed to express to us the fact that characteristic of this union of the religious and the political arm is a kind of life that is characterized by luxury in apostasy. Scarlet was the color also of magnificence and so we have materialism brought to its extreme.

You turn over to chapter 19 and verse 8 and read the description of the children of God, the bride of the Lamb, and you cannot help but see the studied contrast, for over there we read in chapter 19 of the Book of Revelation, "And 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."

So the two are opposed, the two cities and the people who inhabit the two cities. The Babylonians, idolatrous, wicked, evil, vile; the new Jerusalem composed of individuals pure, clean, dressed in the fine linen of the righteousness of God through Christ. Not anything that they have except given them as a gift by our Lord Jesus Christ.

I remember reading in one particular place that the Italians had an expression about the papacy in that country and they called the papacy "the Pope's shop" and the reason they called it "the Pope's shop" was because it appeared to them that the church was interested primarily in their monies. I'm sure that you realize that this was one of the great things in the reformation that disturbed those that were with the Roman Catholic Church at the time. The indulgences, the money that was required to be spent, and even today attending many of the churches in other lands, you will find the same kind of thing, "the Pope's shop".

I also read a commentary by an individual who was traveling in the land of Russia, pointed out how Russia, he was traveling in the early days of the Soviet Union, but the Russians had been indoctrinated with the worship of Babylonianism and that had manifested itself in the worship of Lenin with a mighty statute of "that monster of cruelty" he described it, his embalmed body, the object of reverence in the Communist cult. The present leaders of Germany labor to inculcate reverence in the old Nordic gods. He's writing in the days of Hitler and the same kind of thing. Today, we see the cult of Stalin has been bashed and not entirely that of Lenin until more recently, but anyway, I think you can see the witting of the commercial with the religious.

He also mentioned that he was in Russia, at the time, in a certain village where the Greek Orthodox priest, though he was in the cemetery at the time refused to bury an infant unless the extremely poor and widowed mother would sell her only cow to pay his fee, and so deprive herself and her little daughter of milk. The association of the church with money and its demands upon the adherence of the religion is something that you know as well as I.

So she is described here as "A woman clothed in luxury of purple and scarlet, adorned with gold, with precious stones and pearls, and has in her hand a gold cup full of abominations (the idolatries) and the unclean things of her immorality". He also says in the 5th verse, "And upon her forehead a name was written, which is a mystery (a secret, that is, it's something that is understood only by divine revelation) and the name is 'BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.'" The secret sign of Babylon the great as a city with a vast system of idolatry connected with it.

The Apostle Paul tells us that the mystery of iniquity doth already or still work and this in thorough harmony with it. Notice the reality is the city, the woman is the secret sign of what the city means, the heady draft of carnal satisfaction contrary to the word of God.

The acts are also described here. Notice the name contains notices of the acts because it's "Babylon the Great, and she is the Mother of Harlots and of the Abominations of the Earth". Notice the combination of the two. She is great Babylon, Babylon the Great, and mother. Great and mother combine to show that the woman is the embodiment and the source, being the mother, the source of rebellious false religion without God.

Now the system, in my opinion, goes beyond what we know as Romanism. As a matter of fact, it was not in existence as Romanism in John's day, so we're talking about something that's bigger than Romanism and bigger than Protestantism and is more original. It's the Babylonianism religion of separation from the Lord God and rebellion against Him. This is what John is speaking about.

Joseph Seiss, a Lutheran commentator, says with reference to this, "This wine", that is the system, "This wine was bottled and labeled before the first dispersion. It began in Nimrod's day and it has persisted to our present day."

Notice the second thing that is said about her acts. "And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus and when I saw her, I wondered greatly."

So we picture a woman, she is reeling with the blood of the saints as a kind of alcohol and drug that have caused her to reel. She is drunk with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus and the blood of the saints.

Now, of course, the Apostle John, when he wrote this, he had already had some contact with Babylonianism in his day because Nero had been on the throne and Nero had persecuted the Christians, and that was well known, and many others also had as well. So, undoubtedly that was in the apostle's mind. But let us not forget that it is not the apostle who gives us the Book of the Apocalypse. It is ultimately our Lord through the Apostle John.

So "drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the witnesses" to our Lord, is even broader than anything that Nero might have done. Rome was known as a wicked, vile, corrupt city. Tacitus writes about the city. Juvenal writes about the city, we know about Nero, and it's not surprising to find that John says, "And when I saw her, I wondered greatly." John's astonished by what he sees. He'd never imagined that it was as bad as it appears to be.

Well, we stop at this point, as far as the exposition is concerned, and we'll turn to the interpretation because we read in verses 7 and 8, "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' ", and then the remainder of the chapter is the interpretation of what John has seen in the vision. Lord willing, we will look at that next week.

I'd like to close with just a few thoughts that I think are important and stressed by this particular section. There is no doubt that the important thing that comes to you as we look at these verses that we've looked at is the implicit admonition against Babylonian

defiance of God. "He will tell those who are in Babylon to flee outside of the city" and surely that expresses the attitude that one has as he reads these things. He would want to do just exactly that. It's false safety to find any sense of assurance in anyone but the Lord God. As Proverbs chapter 18 and verse 10 has put it, "The name of the LORD is a strong tower and the individual who flees to the Lord will find safety."

So false safety anywhere else, false ambition outside of the truth of the word of God, "Some trust in chariots, some in horses, but we'll remember the name of the Lord our God", that characterizes a spirit contrary to Babylonianism.

The Babylonians thought that they could find true unity without Christ, but as our Lord's prayer in John 17 indicates as the apostles teach, there's only unity, true unity, the unity that satisfies, the unity that builds us up at and encourages us, the unity that gives us a sense of safety and assurance, that unity is found only in Christ. Please remember that.

Our Lord's Prayer in John 17 sets it forth so plainly. The Bible proclaims the unequivocal separation from the deeds and the ideas of Babylonianism to seek the city of God and its holy order is our goal, or as we said last week, as John put it, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

When the Apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, he reminded them that they had turned from the idols to serve the living and the true God and to wait for His Son from heaven. What better picture could one have of true conversion in Christ? That we have turned from the idols to serve the living and true God.

The idols? No, I don't mean the physical idols. I don't mean the picture of Jesus that you have on your wall because I know you don't worship that picture, but the idols that represent our failure to worship the Lord God: materialism, ambition, a sense of things that cloud of vision of the Lord and cause us to have priorities that are not the priorities of the truth of God in the word of God. May God deliver us from those things, may He help us to remember that the important thing, the fundamental thing for our lives is our relationship to the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Do you have that relationship? Are you sure that your trust is in Him? And are the activities of your life, activities that could be called true worship and not the illicit worship of the adultery of false worship? If you're here today and you've never believed in Christ, we remind you that our Lord has offered the saving sacrifice upon Calvary's cross and through Him you may have the assurance of everlasting life.

Come to Christ, trust in Him. Believe in Him. That's a decision that the Holy Spirit will bring you to as you look to Him and ask Him to give you what He promises in the word of God. So come to Him. Make that decision. Don't leave this auditorium without the assurance of everlasting life. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee and praise Thee for the admonitions of the word of God and, Lord, deliver us from anything that smacks of Babylonianism, rebellion against Thee, our only good, our only hope, our only refuge. And, Father, if there should be some in this audience who have not yet come, give them no rest and peace until they rest in Christ for Jesus' sake. Amen.