

THE SCARLET HARLOT - Revelation 17

In **chapter 17** we find the demise of the “great harlot.” The great harlot is *depicted* here as the false church of the tribulation period. She is called a harlot, due to her *unfaithfulness* toward her “husband,” Jesus Christ! The false church of the tribulation will be the full manifestation of an apostate church! As one commentator writes; “The harlot is Christendom estranged from God and become thoroughly secularized and degenerated.” The warning here in **chapter 17** is a clear one, because the church today is in danger of playing the harlot.

God considers the rejection of His authority in our lives to be spiritual harlotry. Recently, the United Methodist Church *experienced* a split within their denomination due to a vote at their conference, February 26, 2019: *“America’s second-largest Protestant denomination, the United Methodist Church, is set to split, as the church’s top policy-making body voted Tuesday to maintain prohibitions on homosexuality and to expel gay pastors. Today’s vote at the UMC’s General Conference in St. Louis—delayed by filibusters, amendments, and other tactics by progressives—comes after two compromise options were rejected by narrow margins.”* (a 53% to 46% margin). thedailybeast.com

How did the margin become so narrow? Because the church is now *embracing* the same spiritual fornication that we find here in the great harlot, the *false church, of the tribulation period*. As His church, we are betrothed to Christ. ***But far too often the church is found in the arms of its lovers. There are basically three lovers. (1 John 2:15-17) Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the***

eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. Our only remedy is repentance – to *return* to our first love by doing the will of our Father, *according to His word!* (1 Timothy 6:20-21)
O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge — by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. Grace be with you. Amen.

(Read: v.1-2). The harlot sits on “many waters.” She sits on many waters – “waters” are explained in (v.15); her harlotry is world-wide (v.2); and those who follow her are “made drunk.” The people who mourned the UMC’s decision rejecting LGBT pastors are those who are drunk, under the *influence* of the world, rather than the word of God! As far as the world is concerned, the harlot is *one of them* (v.2a).

(Read: v.3, 4) she is arrayed in purple and scarlet. Scarlet was also a popular color in Rome; purple (royalty) and scarlet were associated with rank and riches (v.4a). In the eyes of the world she is beautiful, but in the eyes of God, she is *nothing more* than an unrepentant, royal sinner! She’s adorned by what matters to the world, gold and precious stones (v.4a). In Christ we need not to be adorned by what the world considers beautiful to be beautiful to God! ***Society has especially burdened many young girls and women with this lie!*** (1 Peter 3:3-4) **Do not let your adornment be merely outward — arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel — rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.**

Jesus warned: (Luke 16:15) “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.” What God values is what really matters.

(v.3) She is seated also on a scarlet beast – who is the anti-Christ (v.7,8).

Note: Scarlet is the color of the beast, the *color* of **satan** (Revelation 12:3), “the fiery red dragon.” It’s also the color of **sin**. (Isaiah 1:18a) “Come now, and let us reason together,” Says the Lord, “Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow.” Scarlet (crimson) is a dye, which the Egyptians made from shell-fish, and Hebrews made from an insect (a parasite) called coccus-ilicis; it is known to *infest* oak trees.

Sin is like a parasite which *hopelessly* stains (dyes) the soul of mankind. **But Jesus died for our guilty stain; through *faith* in Him our *stain* can be made as white as snow!** The “scarlet harlot,” *however*, *refuses* to reason with God. Her color (scarlet), once a symbol of *shame*, has now become a badge of honor, as with many of the sins we see celebrated in *society* today! (Isaiah 5:20) **Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!**

(Read: v.5) Here we find written on her head these words, “**Mystery, Babylon the Great...**” Babylon is not only a place but is considered by God to also *represent* a spirit of rebellion. Its name is *derived* from the word “**babel**,” which is *associated* with confusion; because God confused the languages of the people, in order to stop mankind’s *attempt* to be exalted, *like* God (Genesis 10:8-11). The **religious system** of the great harlot will be one of **confusion**, *inspired* by the *author* of confusion, **the devil!** It will be a religion of *no absolutes*, which fashions God in their image!

Also, on her head we find these words, **“The Mother of Harlots, of the Abominations of the earth.”** Her *illicit, spiritual* “intercourse” with the world’s system is contrary to the behavior of Christ’s true church. Thus, in **(v.6) she is found intoxicated on the blood of saints and the martyrs of Jesus.** She has fully embraced the anti-Christ’s *spirit* and *message*, promoted by the false prophet **(Revelation 13:12-18).**

It is possible to have Jesus on our lips and minds, but not in our hearts! **(Isaiah 29:13) Therefore the Lord said: “Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths And honor Me with their lips, But have removed their hearts far from Me, And their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men.”** (Read v.7-11) The “mystery of the harlot” – that is the secret of the harlot – is now revealed. **(v.8)** The beast is the anti-Christ, *carrying (supporting) the woman.* It is never a good thing when the world starts supporting the church! **Because in order to have the world’s support the church will always have to appease the world!**

(v.9) The “seven heads” are seven mountains, where the harlot resides. Most Biblical scholars *agree* that the seven mountains, *where the woman resides*, is the city of Rome. The seven hills (mountains) are named: Palatine, Capitoline, Quirinal, Viminal, Esquiline, Caelian, and Aventine. Thus, many have speculated that the Roman Catholic Church, *aligned with protestants*, may be at the helm of the false church in the tribulation period.

(Read: v.10,11) There are also “seven kings.” According to **verse 10, five of these kings (kingdoms) had passed away; one, however, was present in John’s day, and one was yet to come.** Many believe that the five past kings refer to five past kingdoms: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Greece. The present kingdom, *in John’s day*, would be the Roman Empire, and the future kingdom, *not yet come*, would be that of the **beast**, anti-Christ. Other scholars believe

the **five kings** to be Roman rulers: **Julius Caesar, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero**; the sixth being **Domitian**, who was alive when John wrote the **Book of Revelation**; the seventh being *the anti-Christ*. Both interpretations, however, end up at the same spot: **the kingdom of the beast, the anti-Christ**.

(v.10b) He will continue a short time - only seven years (tribulation period).
(v.11) The beast was of the seven, in that he will be the seventh kingdom, **the revived Roman Empire in the last days (Daniel 9:27)**; but he will also be of the eighth, in that he will rule over the newly formed **10 nation Confederation (Read: v.12,13)** - *“they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast.”*

“One hour” (v.12b) in this context – literally: a certain (short) time, season. Daniel *prophesied* this confederation will be *ruled* by the anti-Christ for **3 ½ years**, *“a time and times and half a time”* – a **short time!** **Daniel 7:24, 25.** They will experience a *demonically inspired* unity of sorts (v.13a). **But their worldly solidarity will crumble before the Lamb! (Read: v.14).** Like Muhammad Ali, the devil will seem to have the true church up against the ropes; but what he doesn’t realize is, Jesus is the King of the “rope a dope!” **God is setting the devil up for a TKO!**

The same applies in our lives as well today. ***It’s a reminder to us; there is nothing which enters our lives, as believers, that Christ does not stand over, as “King of Kings” and “Lord of Lords!” (Micah 7:8) Do not rejoice over me, my enemy; When I fall, I will arise; When I sit in darkness, The Lord will be a light to me.*** Notice: the difference between what the devil calls you – *hopeless, loser, forsaken, etc.* – and what the Lord calls you, in Christ (v.14b) – **chosen and faithful! Because our righteousness is not of us, but of Him!**

(Read: v.15-18) Note: (v.17) God is in control. Psalm 2 – “Let the nations rage...” The more rebelliously people respond, the more vehement (violent) society rages against Christ, they are merely aligning themselves with God’s divine purpose! **Here the harlot is destroyed – the nations, her support, turn against her.** Thus, she is destroyed by the very thing that once supported her!

“Gingerbread boy – wolf.” This is the nature of sin. **It supports you only to condemn you!** People support their rebellion against God with pride, drugs, financial gain, political power, etc., only to discover the thing they arrogantly rode in on will lead to their demise! **The “scarlet harlot’s” false religion will prove to be false security!** **(Mark 8:36-37) For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?**

APPLICATION: What distinguishes a true church from a false church? There are **three** questions we should ask. **1) What have they done with the Son?** Many *so-called* Christian churches will seek to lower the status of Christ. Jehovah’s Witnesses declare Christ to be a god (with a small g), *but not as Christ declared Himself to be, God incarnate!* When Christ said: **(John 14:9)** **“Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”** Or they will make Him equal to other *so-called* deities, which is religious pluralism – the belief in many ways to God. But Jesus said: **John 14:6 – “I am the way the truth and the life...”**

2) What have they done with the Word? “Sola scriptura!” Latin – “**by scripture alone.**” Is God’s word redacted, censored? Do they believe in the whole counsel of His word, the inerrancy of *scripture* and its *authority*? **(2 Timothy 3:16-17) All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is**

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profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

3) What have they done with each other? (John 13:35) “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (Galatians 5:6)

Paul said, what really matters is **faith working in love!** We can't just hear the word, we must **do** the word; ***“faith without works is dead.”*** *In order to not devour one another, we must, by faith, actively love one another – not in word only, but in deed, as a genuine manifestation that we are followers of Christ! (1 John 3:18) My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.*

CONCLUSION: As the church, let us *resist* the spirit of harlotry we find in the world today. **Ezekiel 16** – there God expresses His divine perspective on spiritual harlotry.